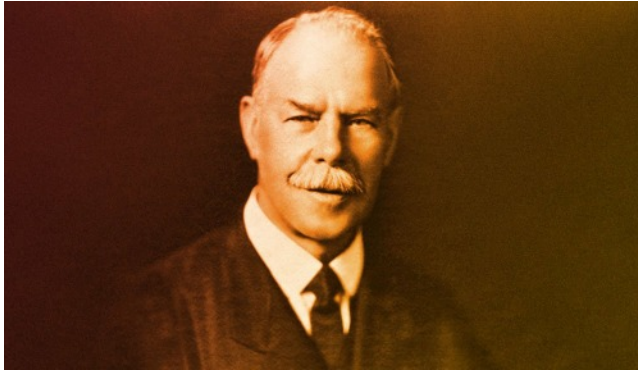




Smith Wigglesworth - The Facts

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by
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We once received a letter from a subscriber:

Dear Terry, Thank you for your effort to assist others in contending seriously for the Faith. Your newsletter is very much appreciated for it's balance and encouragement to the true believer. Like many others I have come out of the Pentecostal movement, and am testing many of the things we were taught as compared to Scripture. I have begun to research many of the 'Christian Heroes' we were encouraged to read about and admire. One such 'Hero' was Smith Wigglesworth... I am sadly disappointed with my findings:

- 1. He believed God promises perfect physical wholeness.*
- 2. He believed Christians can command [speak] things into being.*
- 3. He believed that signs and wonders should always follow the preaching of the Gospel. (He is reported to have raised 19-24 people from the dead).*
- 4. He taught against the use of all medicine and believed sickness was of the devil.*
- 5. He taught that handkerchiefs prayed over would bring life if carried to the sick.*
- 6. He claimed that Jesus Christ increased in the fullness of God and in the power of the Spirit.*
- 7. He taught a form of sinless perfection...*

There is much more I could share with you that confirms that this man was not what many of today's preachers and books are saying he was. Like many others, his reputation as a great man of God has been distorted and exaggerated to create another of today's church heroes. I would appreciate your comments on this man, and maybe there are a few more like me on your mail list, who once thought this man was great, that would like to know the truth.

(R.R. Sth. Qld., Australia)

Most Pentecostal/Charismatics are shocked when they investigate the forerunners of the Pentecostal movement. To find that Charles Parham, A.A. Allen, Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee-Semple McPherson, Kathryn Kulman, William Branham and others, were false teachers, false prophets, or had tragic lives and deaths, (see *Diakrisis (Australia)*, Nov/ 99), is a shock to many. It causes discerning Christians to question the very roots of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement. Yet, many still cling to Smith Wigglesworth as a ‘hero of the faith’.

Smith Wigglesworth (1859-1947) was a famous Pentecostal evangelist and faith-healer. He was converted in a Methodist church, confirmed as an Anglican, and later associated with the Salvation Army and Plymouth Brethren. In 1907 he claimed that he was ‘baptised in the Holy Spirit’ after hands were laid on him by a Mary Boddy.

Wigglesworth prophesied a mighty restoration of the gifts of the Spirit and revival *to start before the end of the twentieth Century*. He is reputed to have said: ‘*Australia you have been chosen by God for a great move of the Holy Spirit. This move of God will be the greatest move of God ever known in mankind’s history and will start towards the end of the 20th century and move into the 21st century. This move of God will start a great revival in Australia, spread throughout the whole world and usher in the second coming of Jesus. This will be the final revival before the coming of the Lord*’.(1)

In 1936 Wigglesworth gave a prophecy to ecumenist David DuPlessis that God would pour out the Pentecostal experience to sweep the world, and that DuPlessis would play a significant role in this movement. The possible fulfilment of this prophecy arguably proves that it was not of God. The ecumenical/Charismatic ‘renewal’ is a movement with serious heresies and has been the key instrument in building the end-time one-world ecumenical church of the book of Revelation! Most of what is written of Wigglesworth is typical of the Signs and Wonders Movement today - *unsubstantiated* and *unscriptural* stories. For example, Wigglesworth is supposed to have got on a train and before he got off at the end of the journey, all on the train were ‘convinced of sin’ by the presence of Wigglesworth

without any word being spoken. The late Lester Summral is responsible for many of the stories of the feats of Wigglesworth. Summral recounts Wigglesworth punching corpses until restored to life or repeatedly punching cancer tumour victims until they died and then raising them from the dead. *Not one account of the raisings from the dead was ever authentically documented.* Summral himself falsely prophesied that he would see the return of Jesus before the end of 1999 and that Jesus spoke this to him in an apparition. When Summral died he became a false prophet! Summral was also the subject of a national TV expose for fraud with his ‘*Feed The Hungry*’ operation.

Despite all the wild unsubstantiated healing claims, Wigglesworth’s daughter, who assisted at his meetings, was never healed of deafness. Wigglesworth also suffered for years with gallstones and later with Sciatica. Much has been written about this man regarding claims of healings and miracles, but *what did this man believe?*

Wigglesworth believed physical healing is guaranteed in the atonement and is part of the Gospel - a teaching not taught in orthodox historical Christianity. Those who hold this doctrine believe sickness is never a blessing of God but of the devil and that it has been defeated on the cross. However, physical healing is simply not guaranteed for this present time. God may heal in answer to prayer, but He does not *always* heal. *The redemption of our bodies is future*, (Rom.8:23; Phil.3:21; Eph.1:14; 1Cor.15:53). Some people use Scriptures such as Matthew 8:16,17 to ‘claim’ their healing in regard to the atonement. D.A Carson, observed: ‘*The cross is the basis for all the benefits which accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrected bodies.*’ (2)

We have no reason to expect that we can escape from *sickness* any more than we can expect to escape *death*! *Those who say Jesus conquered sickness for us should explain to us why we still die, since He also conquered death!* The fact is we are living in unglorified bodies of flesh in a world that is under the effects of sin and Satan. Any healing allowed by God is only temporary because eventually we die!

Like much false teaching the *results speak for themselves*. Mary Boddy, the woman who laid hands on Wigglesworth in 1907 when he was allegedly ‘baptized in the Spirit’, spent the last sixteen years of her life as an invalid. According to his own doctrine, Wigglesworth’s daughter should have been healed of deafness and he should have been healed of his own sicknesses. His wife should have been healed of the sickness that took her life (six years *after* Wigglesworth became a Pentecostal) and when she was but a young woman. His son, who died two years after that, should have been healed of the sickness that took him away in childhood.

In spite of his teaching that God promises perfect physical wholeness and that the Christian can operate in the *same* sign gifts that Christ exhibited, it is doubtful that any who sought Wigglesworth’s healing ministry were ever healed.

Wigglesworth taught against the use of all medicine. He taught that handkerchiefs which are prayed over will bring life if carried in faith to the sick. (3) He believed signs and wonders should always follow the preaching of the Gospel.

Yet all major Commentators for 1900 years stated that the miraculous sign gifts were not present at the end of the first century as they were earlier. Many refer to Hebrews 2:3,4 where the writer declares that the message of salvation ‘*was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will*’. The word ‘*confirmed*’ (‘*bebaioo*’) means ‘*to make sure, to fix*’. In this passage the writer uses the *past* tense (aorist indicative) meaning *a specific time in the past*. The English words ‘*was confirmed*’ and ‘*bearing*’ show this past tense. The same tense is used in Luke 13:13: ‘*immediately she was made straight*’. The aorist tense with the indicative mood indicates *a specific point in time past* as opposed to the imperfect tense which, if used, would indicate continuous action. The writer has also lumped together ‘*signs and wonders*’ and ‘*gifts*’ of the Spirit to show clearly that all these things were to *prove the Messiahship of Jesus Christ*.

When John the Baptist asked for *proof of Jesus being the Messiah*, the proof given was the *gift of healing and signs and wonders*, (Matt.11:2-5). The phrase '**according to His own will**' might also explain why some people in the New Testament were *not healed*. Epaphroditus was '**sick nigh unto death**', (Phil.2:27). Trophimus was '**left at Miletum sick**', (2Tim.4:20). Timothy also took medicine for his sickness, (1Tim.5:23, etc.).

Never since the days of Christ has any period even remotely compared with the miracles of Christ and the apostles. The early church Fathers *all* agreed that healings and miracles had ceased in the field of evangelism. *None of the great revivals featured healing but only the preached Word of 'the faith which was once delivered unto the saints'*, (Jude 3)! Even if one rose from the dead, unbelievers will not believe, (Lk.16:31). *Whitefield, Edwards, Spurgeon and Martyn Lloyd Jones never had one healing attributed to them - just collectively millions of sound conversions!*

Much is made of the Scripture, Mark 16:17,18: '**And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover**'. Firstly, Jesus was talking to '**the eleven**' (vs.14) and He spoke '**unto them**' (vs.15). Secondly, the word '**believe**' is in the past (aorist) tense and refers to *those who did believe, not those who would believe at that time or in the future*. Thirdly, all of the above '*signs*' in this Scripture occurred in Acts or Corinthians, except the drinking of deadly poison, (which has a concessional '**if**' clause before it).

Even apart from *Scripture and history - this fact remains: Pentecostal/Charismatic leaders, including Wigglesworth, have never been able to do the miracles that Christ performed. The Lord Jesus never conducted a healing crusade yet He could raise the dead and heal every sickness without failure.*

Although I believe God heals, can those who claim the ‘*gift of healing*’ use their ‘*gift*’ as it was used in the New Testament? In other words, can they heal ‘*all*’ (Matt.4:23,24; 8:16; 10:1; 12:15, etc.), and ‘*every*’ sickness (Matt.9:35, etc), and bring ‘*all sick*’ people that they would be healed ‘*immediately*’, (Matt.20:34). *If we are honest with the New Testament, this is an accurate description of the true gift of healing!* Will they go today to the hospitals just once and heal organic diseases *every time without fail*? Will they not heal a *Down’s Syndrome* person? (4) Will they not heal AIDS victims with proof of blood tests?

Of the 42 occasions of New Testament healing, 32 were by Jesus, 9 through the apostles, and 1 through the seventy. In each case healing was *total, permanent* and *always* successful, and included incurable diseases, (Matt.8:3). Compare this with *any* of today’s faith healers and *any* ‘healing ministry’!

Wigglesworth claimed that Jesus Christ *increased* in the fullness of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit: ‘*I want you to understand that after the trials, after all the temptations and everything, Jesus comes out more full of God, more clothed in the Spirit, more ready for the fight.*’(5) This is a subtle attack on the deity of Christ! The Lord Jesus could not be ‘*more full of God*’. He was *always* fully God. He was also given the Spirit *without measure*! (John 3:34).

Wigglesworth taught that a Christian can be justified and sanctified but still not have everything necessary from God. He stated: ‘*People are never safe until they are baptized with the Holy Ghost.*’(6) This Pentecostal ‘Baptism in the Spirit’ (with the evidence of unknown tongues) is the *distinctive* teaching of Pentecostalism which is traced to the late nineteenth Century and to Charles Parham, (see *Diakrisis* May/99). It effectively does what all of the cults do - it falsely separates ‘Christians’ into two classes.

Wigglesworth claimed that the Christian has the power to speak things into existence: *‘God declares, ‘You have an anointing.’ Believe God and you will see this happen. What you say will come to pass’.*(7) This is exactly what the Word Faith teachers and false prophets such as Copeland, Hagin and Hinn have heretically taught for decades! Thus Wigglesworth taught that the Christian can operate in the same omnipotent power that Christ exercised: *‘Dare you come into the place of omnipotence?...He shall bring many sons and daughters unto glory - unto son-likeness, son-perfection.’*(8) This is the false *Manifest Sons of God* or *Latter Rain* theology of the perfectibility of certain saints, and a confusion of this present life with that which is to come.

Wigglesworth in fact taught a form of *sinless perfection*. He stated: *‘...there is a sanctification of the Spirit where the thoughts are holy, where the life is beautiful, with no blemish.’*(9) Yet the Apostle Paul stated: *‘For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not...who shall deliver me from the body of this death’*, (Rom.7:18,24); and John said: *‘If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,’* (1Jn.1:8,10). Although we are not to be in habitual sin (1Jn.3:4,6), the Bible stops short of sinless perfection. Wigglesworth taught the destructive heresy of perfectionism and complete sanctification, which has led multitudes down the road of confusion, despair, demonic delusion and fleshly fanaticism.

Popular Bible commentator Harry Ironside sought the sinless perfection experience and at one point thought he ‘had it’. However, he soon realized his old sin nature was still present. He had an emotional breakdown and was committed to a hospital. After receiving literature and teaching on Biblical sanctification he went on to have a fruitful ministry and wrote a book *‘Holiness: The False and the True’*.

In summary, the stories of the feats of Wigglesworth are myths. They have deluded many saints into staying in systems of theology that by their fruits have led to extremes and excesses. Further to this, the beliefs of this man were unscriptural and dangerous. ***‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them,’*** (Is.8:20).

Source & Recommended reading: *Biblical Discernment Ministries*

- (1) Letter (on file) from ‘Catch the Fire Ministries’, 2011
- (2) *‘The Expositor’s Bible Commentary’*, Vol.8, P.267
- (3) *‘The Anointing of His Spirit’*, P.231
- (4) *Downes Syndrome* cannot be healed by psychosomatic means. No such disease has ever been miraculously healed.
- (5) *‘The Place of Power’*, 6/16, reprinted in *‘The Anointing of His Spirit’*, p. 146
- (6) Ibid, p. 151
- (7) *‘Speak the word and the bound shall be free, the sick shall be healed’* Wigglesworth, *‘Power from on High’*, *Pentecostal Evangel*, 27/5/44
- (8) *‘The Privileges of Sonship’*, 8/24, reprinted in *‘The Anointing of His Spirit’*, p. 221
- (9) *‘Count It All Joy’*, 8/25, reprinted in *‘The Anointing of His Spirit’*, p. 226

About the Author and the Ministry

Terry Arnold holds a Doctorate in Theology (Dth), a Masters degree (MABS) and several diplomas. He was founder and president of *South Pacific Bible Institute*, a Bible college training and equipping people for ministry. In addition he was the founder of Hervey Bay Bible Church in Queensland, Australia. He has for 25 years served as an elder and then pastor.

Terry is the author of several books and is involved in a full time ministry of *teaching, informing* and *equipping* the church. He is also editor of a growing worldwide publication '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

His ministry includes preaching/teaching and conducting seminars and conferences in a wide range of churches and colleges.

TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.