



Deceiving Spirits and Counterfeit Manifestations: How Wounds, Lies, Internal Parts, Repression, and Denial Can Give Them a Place

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This essay describes my experiences with physical phenomena/manifestations, and also offers some of our thoughts/interpretations regarding these experiences. The format is a combination of case-study description, personal journaling, and discussion/commentary.

In the fall of 1999 Charlotte and I attended a charismatic teaching and healing seminar. The teaching was excellent and inspiring. The worship was energetic and fun. There was also a presenter who has a ministry of prayer for emotional healing, and she described powerful healing results. At that time I was getting *some* good results, but was also still experiencing a lot of frustration. I wanted so badly to see increased efficacy in my own work with prayer for emotional healing, and I remember thinking “I want whatever she has.” I was thrilled when they had a prayer time especially for people who wanted more anointing for healing ministry. This presenter and her team were especially offering prayer for “impartation” – prayer to impart the anointing they were experiencing (“carrying”) to the people who were receiving prayer from them. I enthusiastically requested and received this prayer, from the presenter and also from others on her team.

I experienced physical manifestations for the first time in my life during this prayer. I started to take deep breaths, and they felt spontaneous, like my body was just “doing it on its own.” I think I could have stopped them if I had wanted to, but they felt almost involuntary. The word “compulsive” also comes to mind as I think about this memory, but I did not perceive it as a bad experience in any way. No other manifestations occurred during the conference, except that this spontaneous deep breathing also occurred during several other prayer times.

Shortly after the conference I began to experience twitching/jerking¹ as I had often seen at Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship and other charismatic events. It would be most intense when I was working on my own healing. I would most often experience twitches/jerks if I thought about something that was important emotionally or spiritually, but twitches/jerks would also occasionally come with no apparent connection to anything. I could prevent the twitching if I concentrated on suppressing all muscle movement, but as just mentioned, the twitching/jerking could come at any time during the day, with no warning or connection to anything, and would therefore feel totally spontaneous/involuntary in these situations. I assumed that the twitching/jerking was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and that this indicated some new anointing had come and/or that some previous barrier had been removed as a result of the prayer I had received during the conference.

¹ Spontaneous, involuntary twitching of small muscles (for example, a single finger or a small muscle in my face might twitch), and/or spontaneous, involuntary jerking of larger muscles (for example, my right biceps might suddenly contract gently, causing my right forearm to suddenly jerk upwards a few inches).

I also began experiencing physical phenomena when we would include prayer to address demonic opposition in my own healing work. Nothing dramatic, but certainly noticeable coughing, yawning, gagging, and occasionally sudden intense sleepiness. These phenomena would be most noticeable when I felt like we were praying about an important issue, and especially if I felt emotionally connected regarding the issue as we were praying to address it. There did seem to be some correlation between these phenomena and effective prayer against important demonic strongholds in my life. We recognized these physical phenomena as demonic manifestations, but assumed that the change since the November 1999 conference was a good thing – somehow indicating that some barrier had been removed, that I was more open to the working of the Holy Spirit, that our prayer against demonic opposition was being more effective. Note that we had often included prayer against demonic opposition in my healing work in the past, but we had never observed any manifestations.

During the winter and spring of 2000, whenever we were praying against demonic opposition I would often comment: “We must be headed in the right direction because I’m getting more manifestations.” Charlotte became concerned about the way in which I focused on the physical manifestations as information that could provide guidance in our work – the way in which I would “follow the demons” with respect to what was important to work on. We perceive that physical manifestations are “data,” and that they indicate that *something* is happening (we never saw manifestations during the years of our work when we were seeing little significant healing), but we also realized that demons are notoriously untrustworthy guides. Charlotte expressed the good concern that demons are sneaky, deceptive, and would intentionally mislead us if they realized we were following them.

Charlotte also became concerned about how pleased I seemed to be whenever either type of physical phenomena occurred (twitching/jerking or gagging, yawning, etc.). As we looked at this together, I was able to identify that the physical manifestations did make me feel special and important – like something was finally happening – like the Lord had finally noticed me, and that I was important enough for Him to hear and answer my prayers. We also realized that I usually felt the opposite of all these when I would receive prayer and “nothing” would happen.

These concerns made sense to my adult, rational mind, and eventually I prayed with Charlotte, repenting of anything that was not of the Lord and asking the Lord to remove anything that was not of Him. I realized at the time that I wasn’t very enthusiastic about this prayer, but chose to go ahead with it anyway because it did make sense to my adult mind. Nothing seemed to happen during the prayer and nothing seemed to change after the prayer.

A couple of months later I was receiving emotional healing ministry and began getting a lot of the physical phenomena – both the twitching/jerking and the coughing, gagging, and yawning. The person who was facilitating the ministry time asked about this, and then prayed, commanding all demonic spirits present to reveal anything Jesus required and also binding them, that they would not be able to cause distracting/interfering manifestations. The demonic spirits seemed to ignore us, even with several rounds of prayer specifically confronting them. This prompted us to wonder what gave them the ability to be so resistant/defiant. As we talked more about this I realized that I had a lot of ambivalence about letting go of the physical manifestations. I was able to discern an internal child part that I perceive to be a mild dissociative phenomena.² This part

² See “Now that we have tools that work, we can look at all this stuff”: Dissociative phenomena, case study and reflections” for additional comments regarding my personal experience with dissociative phenomena.

carried many memories in which I felt small, unimportant, and un-noticed, and carried the negative cognition/lie, “I’m not special or important enough for God to spend time with me or to give me what I want.” Conversely, when I would experience physical manifestations this part would have triggered positive thoughts and emotions along the lines of, “I *am* special enough and important enough for God to spend time with me and to give me what I want! Something tangible and observable is happening, and that means that God *does* want me and *has* chosen me!”³

When we talked about renouncing any manifestations that were not of God, this internal part responded with thoughts along the lines of: “I’m happy with these manifestations. I don’t want to let them go. I like feeling special. I want to feel like something is happening. I want to feel like I have been chosen. I’m tired of feeling like I have not been chosen when nothing happens. I’m tired of feeling like God doesn’t want me, like God doesn’t think I’m special enough to give me manifestations.” As described above, I already had some awareness of these thoughts and feelings regarding these physical phenomena. However, the internal part, the wounds and lies it carried, and the way in which all of this made a place for deceiving spirits had been almost entirely hidden by repression, dissociation, and denial.

I was already aware, from previous work, of an internal part that carried memories and lies about being disappointed by the Lord. These wounds and lies would get triggered every time I was really stuck in an emotional healing session, asking the Lord for help and guidance, and feeling like He wasn’t responding. As we continued to discuss my ambivalence about letting go of these physical manifestations, I realized that at some level this internal part had been present during the prayer for impartation. It had been contributing an attitude along the lines of: “I’m tired of being disappointed by Jesus. I’m tired of depending on Jesus. I don’t want to depend on Jesus because He will disappoint me. I want ‘anointing’ so that I can do this myself and don’t have to depend on Jesus.” I had a brief, faint, vague awareness of these thoughts at the time of the impartation prayer, but I knew they were “wrong” and quickly shooed them from my mind. Again, the internal part, the wounds and lies it carried, and the way in which all of this opened the door and made a place for deceiving spirits had been almost entirely hidden by repression, dissociation, and denial.

It seemed clear that any demonic spirits producing and/or embellishing these physical phenomena had a right to stay as long as there were parts of me that wanted to keep the manifestations. It also seemed that these internal parts and the wounds and lies they carried could have “opened the door” for deceiving spirits to enter, even though I had been almost completely unaware of this internal phenomena at the time, and even though my adult conscious mind had been praying “I only want what is of God.” As all of this became clear I felt more convinced that at least part of the manifestations I had been experiencing were demonic counterfeit, and I felt much more internal unity for praying to renounce them. I prayed to renounce any spirits and/or phenomena that were not of the Lord, and experienced dramatic manifestations during this prayer. Since this renunciation prayer, all physical phenomena during prayer against the demonic have decreased significantly, but they have not disappeared completely.

At about this same time Charlotte and I also made an important observation specifically regard-

³ For detailed discussion of this “postive” triggering phenomena, see “Triggered ‘Positive’ Thoughts and Emotions,” available as a free download from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

ing the twitching/jerking phenomena. Over the last several years we had observed in many clients that physical phenomena similar to this twitching/jerking⁴ would begin/increase as we got closer to an important target and as the intensity of the recipient's emotions increased. During the Spring and Summer of 2000 we began to notice that the physical manifestations appeared to drain off emotional energy, at least in some situations. The person would feel relief, but at the expense of lost momentum in the healing session. A basic principle in prayer for emotional healing is that negative emotions lead to the underlying root trauma and lies. Our observation is that the emotional intensity often has to get to a certain point before important connections are made. We realized that the physical manifestations were not only bringing relief, but that they were also hindering the healing process by draining off emotional energy.

Our experience in these situations has been that if the person chooses to suppress any physical manifestations that can be brought under voluntary control, the emotional intensity builds more quickly and the healing work is actually enhanced. Likewise, if we address involuntary manifestations by binding demonic spirits and/or working with internal dissociated parts, the emotional intensity builds more quickly and the healing work is enhanced. We have recently had several experiences where people who have been stuck for months with respect to certain emotional healing targets experienced important breakthroughs when "pressure leak" physical phenomena were neutralized in one way or another.⁵

When we made this connection in our client work I realized that this was also true for the twitching/jerking that I was experiencing. With this discovery, I could immediately perceive more internal unity about getting rid of any demonic source of my twitching/jerking. I spent 30 to 60 minutes focusing on this, confessing, repenting, and praying to confront demonic infection. I could feel internal pressure when I tried to suppress any twitching/jerking, and I experienced moderate manifestations of the other variety (coughing, gagging, and yawning) during this work. Much like my experience with the other manifestations, the twitching/jerking decreased significantly⁶ but did not disappear completely.

For a while I did not spend much time or energy thinking about or focusing on the residual physical phenomena. I remember thinking that maybe the physical phenomena that still lingered were a "legitimate" residue (see comments below). Eventually (I can't remember why), I became more convinced that there was still something outside the Lord's perfect will and that it was important to do something about it. I decided that I would address the situation in prayer every time I experienced a twitch or jerk. Whenever I would experience a twitch/jerk, I would pray to confront any demonic spirits causing any manifestations outside of the Lord's perfect will and/or ask the Lord to help me connect with any parts still complicit with this. I would almost always get the coughing, gagging, yawning phenomena within seconds of starting to address the demonic spirits and/or parts involved. This confirmed my suspicion that there was still something needing further resolution. There was no observable change in the frequency or intensity of the physical manifestations during the couple of months that I did this, but I think the Lord was doing some

⁴ See "EMDR, Traumatic Memories, and Physical Phenomena" for a more careful description of the physical phenomena we have observed when using EMDR, Theophostic-based interventions, and the Immanuel Approach in our professional work.

⁵ See "Physical Behavior, Phenomena, Manifestations: 'Pressure Leaks' that can Hinder Prayer for Emotional Healing" for additional discussion of these observations.

⁶ My estimate is that I had been experiencing this twitching/jerking 2 to 3 times/hour prior to this prayer time, and that the frequency decreased to 2 to 3 times/day afterwards.

kind of quiet work (I would sometimes get glimpses of insight about the underlying issues, and would occasionally sense connection with the internal parts involved).

December 15, 2000 I woke early, feeling anxious, restless, and pressured about getting more accomplished with respect to our emotional healing ministry. I realized I was triggered about a number of things, and decided to get up and work on them. I began twitching as I focused on the triggers and negative emotions. When I asked the Lord to help me connect with the internal parts that were still allowing demonic counterfeit and embellishment, I began to experience brief moments of connection with parts that still wanted the physical phenomena. As I tried to stay with these moments of connection, I began to perceive more and more clearly an internal part carrying the lie “I need to be important and special so I can get attention” and an internal part carrying the lie “I am responsible for all the problems in the world, and I need to be important and powerful so I can fix them.” Both of these parts still wanted the manifestations because they made me feel special and important – that God wasn’t ignoring me – that something was happening. I began to experience gagging, yawning, and coughing as all of this became clear to me and as I felt increasingly connected to these internal parts. I then spent about an hour in prayer and self-facilitated emotional healing work, and I could feel the Lord healing some of the wounds involved. I also prayed again to renounce any spirits and/or manifestations not of the Lord.

With this work on 12/15/2000, both types of physical phenomena decreased further but did not resolve completely. During the following week I experienced only one twitch, although I still experienced moderate yawning, gagging, and coughing as I prayed to confront any spirit causing this twitch as a manifestation outside of the Lord’s will. During this same week I experienced only the mildest gagging sensation in a situation that had previously usually resulted in marked manifestations.

Journal entry 12/22/00: I can tell there are internal parts that are still complicit with counterfeit and/or embellished physical phenomena. I can feel that the “I’m not important/special enough to spend time with” lie is still not fully resolved. The internal part that carries this lie continues to contribute twinges of ambivalence about letting go of physical phenomena (twitching/jerking) that make me feel that I am not being neglected. Also, my devotional reading⁷ this past week helped me to connect more clearly with an internal part that contributes significant ambivalence about letting go of the yawning, coughing, and gagging phenomena. This part believes the Lord won’t provide adequate guidance, and therefore does not want to let go of physical manifestations that can provide direction by giving me information about what is happening during ministry sessions. This part also believes the Lord cannot really be trusted to fulfill His promises (e.g., to hear and answer prayer), and likes observable reassurance that something is really happening when I pray. Interestingly, I began gagging, coughing, and yawning as I read the texts that helped me identify this additional contribution to my ambivalence about these very symptoms.

I know that these wounds and lies contribute to my ambivalence, and I know that this wound/lie-based ambivalence continues to give deceiving spirits authority to counterfeit and/or embellish physical manifestations. But I wonder if there might still be *some* component of the twitching/jerking that is a legitimate manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and whether there might still be *some* component of the yawning, coughing, gagging that God allows as a part of His

⁷ I have been reading *The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard and *The Final Quest* by Rick Joyner, and have found these to be very helpful in finding wounds and lies regarding the nature and trustworthiness of the Lord.

legitimate guidance regarding demonic infection (in the same way he allows observable physical inflammation to guide our medical care when treating physical infection).

Journal entry 3/17/02 (a couple of interesting observations during the fifteen months since 12/22/00): First, I feel like my “I’m not special or important enough for God/Dad to want to spend time with me” lies have been almost completely resolved. They feel like 0.5s instead of their original tens (on a scale of 1 to 10). I feel like my overall relationship with the Lord is better than it has ever been. I cannot detect any desire and/or need to have twitching or other manifestations as reassurance that I really am special, although I do long for the intense subjective experience of the Father’s love that others have described. Interestingly, the twitching/jerking seems to have stopped completely as these lies have been resolved, and I don’t feel any sense of loss with respect to the twitching/jerking going away. In my assessment, these observations indicate that my twitching/jerking was not a direct manifestation of the Holy Spirit, but rather phenomena produced by internal parts and/or demonic spirits, or physical manifestations produced as the Holy Spirit interacts with unresolved issues carried by internal parts and/or interacts with demonic spirits infecting these unresolved issues.⁸

Second, my insecurity with respect to the Lord’s guidance has decreased, but is not yet completely resolved. I can still occasionally feel anxiety that the Lord will not give me *enough* help/guidance – that He is asking me to do something, but not giving me what I need to be able to get the job done – and this feels like it comes from my experience with dyslexia and other grade school memories that I am still working on.⁹ “The Lord won’t provide adequate help/guidance” feels like a four instead of the original ten. Also, my ability to perceive guidance that the Lord is sending in other ways seems to be increasing steadily as my insecurity and lies regarding the Lord’s guidance decrease. Interestingly, the frequency and intensity of my yawning, coughing, gagging, etc. have decreased significantly. My assessment is that they have decreased to the same degree that my insecurity regarding the Lord’s guidance has decreased, and inversely to the degree that my ability to receive His guidance in other ways has increased. It is also interesting that I experienced mild yawning and gagging today as I re-read the above comments about an internal part that believes the Lord won’t provide adequate guidance, and that doesn’t want to let go of phenomena that can provide information about what is happening during the session, etc. At this point, I am thinking that the Lord may allow demonic manifestations as a way of providing guidance, but that this is less and less necessary as we remove the lies that hinder our ability to perceive His guidance in other ways. **I will continue to update this essay if we get more clarity regarding the yawning, coughing, and gagging as we make additional observations.

Summary comments/conclusions: I can think of several possible explanations for the observations and experiences I have just described. One possibility is that I picked up one or more deceiving spirits during this conference, especially during the prayer where I felt that an internal part was opening the door by feeling/saying: “I’m tired of depending on the Lord and being disappointed by the Lord. I want anything that can give me the power/ability to make it work.” Another possibility is that the demonic spirits involved had been present for some time, infecting

⁸ I realize that these observations do not *prove* this explanation, but these observations do seem most consistent with the hypothesis that the twitching/jerking manifestations were not a direct, inherent manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

⁹ See “Dissociation, Repression, Denial, and Avoidance: ‘Where did kindergarten and first grade go?’ ” on the Case Studies page for a description of these grade school memories and their associated lies.

some wound and lie that had not yet been resolved, and that they chose this time to begin causing more physical manifestations in order to cause confusion. It is also possible that the demonic spirits involved were already attached to/infecting wounds and lies in my life, and that they were forced to reveal their presence by producing manifestations because the Lord removed internal barriers, gave me a fuller measure of the Holy Spirit, and/or did some other good thing during the prayer and worship at this conference. Finally, some combination of these other possibilities may have occurred¹⁰.

Whether demonic spirits were already present or came in at the time of this conference, and whether I began experiencing manifestations because I moved forward spiritually, because the demonic spirits chose to begin manifesting to cause confusion, or because I picked up more demonic infection at this conference, it still seems clear that some kind of deceiving spirit was trying to interfere with my healing, spiritual growth, and ministry by causing and/or embellishing the physical phenomena described above. It also still seems clear that they have been able to resist prayers and commands to the extent that my own wounds, lies, denial, repression, and internal parts gave them a place.

Even though I had certainly had these underlying wounds and lies for many years, Charlotte and I had never before perceived that deceiving spirits were able to take advantage of my vulnerability. I had received prayer for being filled with the Holy Spirit and for receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit on many, many occasions prior to this conference (at Toronto and elsewhere), but had never experienced even the smallest physical manifestation – during or after the prayer times. We have wondered about what was different. Just the Lord's timing? He had protected me in the past, and knew that allowing this now would produce little damage and would quickly lead to valuable learning that we would share? Could it have been that the wounds and longing that opened that back door were steadily growing? (This doesn't really seem to fit, since it seemed that the Lord had been steadily healing these wounds and lies, and that they had been feeling less and less powerful.) Could it have been something about the impartation prayer and my particular interaction with it? This was a new piece, that I had never asked for or received in the past. My perception is that this was the place in the whole experience where I was most open to, and most asking for, "anything that's out there that would increase my efficacy," as opposed to "only the Lord's will, only gifts from the Lord."

Part of what concerns me about this whole experience is that I went into this conference and prayer time with my adult, conscious mind earnestly seeking the Lord's will. I was consciously praying and asking for only what the Lord had for me. In my adult conscious mind I was even aware of all the concerns regarding vulnerability to other spirits. I had heard, understood, and agreed with the teachings about "Don't focus on the experience, but rather on the Lord," "Don't desire the gift more than the giver," and "If you are focusing on the experience and the manifestations – if you are wanting them and not the Lord, you can open yourself up to deceiving spirits." I was even thinking about all of this during the conference and during the prayer times, saying out loud: "I want only what you have for me, Jesus." But at the same time there were wounds, lies, and internal parts opening the back door to deceiving spirits and counterfeit phenomena. The whole process was hidden by repression, mild dissociation, and denial, so that I was almost completely unaware of it at the time of the actual prayer. My guess is that the deceiving spirits and counterfeit phenomena would have remained undetected as long as

¹⁰ I am hoping that Christians on both sides of the controversy regarding physical phenomena/manifestations will carefully consider each of the possible explanations for my experiences and observations.

repression, dissociation, and denial enabled them by hiding my internal complicity.

On one hand, I am sobered by the ease with which I was deceived by counterfeit and/or embellished manifestations, by the way in which my unresolved stuff may have “opened the door” for deceiving spirits, and by the way in which my internal ambivalence gives demonic spirits the ability to resist prayers and commands. On the other hand, I am encouraged and assured to see again that “the Lord works all things together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He used these deceiving spirits and counterfeit manifestations to help me find important wounds and lies in my life. The Lord certainly has continued to bless our ministry and my spiritual growth during the years following these experiences – I have continued to get my own healing, I have continued to become more effective as an emotional healing facilitator, and I have continued to display more and more gifts and fruits of the Spirit. All of these blessings have continued in the face of the enemy’s best attempts to deceive and confuse.

These experiences, thoughts, and observations make me think again about Rick Joyner’s comments in *The Call* (p.13):

“Discerning the True from the False: Jesus also warned that in the last days there would be many ‘false prophets’ (Matthew 24:24). This is to be expected because as the Lord also taught, whenever He sows wheat in a field, the enemy comes along and sows tares in the same field (Matthew 13:24-30)....Satan will immediately try to counterfeit everything that God is doing, creating confusion and, if possible, deceiving even the elect. However, Satan could not do this if God did not allow it. Obviously the Lord wants us to learn to distinguish the real from the false and allow the real to be tested by the false in order to purify that which is true.”

“That false prophets [could we replace ‘prophets’ with ‘manifestations’?] are also becoming more prevalent should not surprise us, but rather encourage us to seek the real with greater determination. If we do not want to be deceived by the false, the answer is not to reject all prophecy [manifestations?], but rather to know what is true....” *The Call*, p.13.

Addendum #1, January 2026: The experiences described in this essay provide an excellent example of how triggering, both positive and negative, can impair discernment.¹¹

Addendum #2, January 2026: Since the 3/17/02 journal entry, the “I’m not special or important enough for God/Dad to want to spend time with me” lie has continued to feel resolved, I have not detected any desire and/or need to have twitching, jerking or other manifestations as reassurance that I really am special, the twitching/jerking has never come back, and I have not felt any sense of loss with respect to the twitching/jerking going away.

Addendum #3, January 2026: During my first several years of working with EMDR and Theophostic-based¹² tools, I observed visible physical manifestations associated with emotional

¹¹ For detailed discussion of this phenomena, see “Guidance from Holy Spirit Vs Triggering,” both available as free downloads from the Special Subjects/Advanced Topics section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

¹² We use the term “Theophostic-based” to refer to emotional healing ministries that are built around a core of Theophostic principles and techniques, but that are not identical to Theophostic Prayer Ministry as taught by Dr. Ed Smith. Our own ministry between 1998 and 2003 would be a good example – it was built around a core of

healing and/or demonic opposition/interference at least every week, and sometimes almost everyday. Curiously, this has become less and less common over the past twenty-five years. Now I rarely see any physical phenomena/manifestations associated with emotional healing or demonic opposition/interference. For our thoughts regarding this progressive decline with respect to physical manifestations see: “Our changing experience in dealing with the demonic,” Section VII of the essay “Dealing With Demonic Interference/Opposition During the Session, Prayers and Commands to Neutralize Demonic Interference,” available as free download from www.immanuelapproach.com.

Theophostic principles and techniques, but it sometimes also included material that was not a part of what we understand Dr. Smith to define as Theophostic Prayer Ministry (such as our material on dealing with curses, spiritual strongholds, generational problems, and suicide-related phenomena, and our material on journaling, spiritual disciplines, and medical psychiatry).