

A Gift of Healing

Kathryn Kuhlman doesn't like the faith healer tag the press has placed on her.

It's difficult, she says, to have reporters come to her miracle services who know nothing of the power of God to scrutinize her healing ministry.

Yet the press seems mesmerized by the little lady from Concordia, Missouri, to whom thousands flock to receive prayer for healing. It continues to give her nationwide exposure.

In the past year, she has been the topic of two articles in *People* magazine, one in *McCalls*, one in *Ms.* magazine, in scores of lesser known magazines and in newspaper articles, as well as a guest on talk shows.

People magazine called her "the country's reigning faith healer."

Christianity Today called her the best-known woman preacher in America.

In spite of all of this, Kathryn Kuhlman seems awed by it all.

"All I know is that I have yielded by body to Him to be filled with the Holy Spirit," she once told an interviewer, "and anything that the Holy Spirit has given me, any results there might be in this life of mine, is not Kathryn Kuhlman. It's the Holy Spirit."

This kind of simple humility makes the ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman all the more believable.

It gives her credibility in a profession of "faith healers," if you will, that is full of charlatans like Marjoe, whose self-confessed hypocrisy made him a movie star and gave a black-eye to all genuine evangelists.

This is one reason why people flock to her. In the 125 public appearances a year, she ministers to an estimated 1.5 million.

They come by the busload.

Wheelchairs line the backs of the auditoriums where she ministers.

Some are carried in on stretchers; the blind are led in by the hand.

The well come, too, just to be a part of the miracle services.

In a typical service, an all-volunteer choir sings as the people file in.

When Miss Kuhlman arrives on stage, she leads several rousing, refrains of "How Great Thou Art," or her theme-song, "He Touched Me."

Then, pronouncing each word distinctly in her own unique accent, she says "I know that not one of you has come here today to see Kathryn Kuhlman. I have not healing virtue whatsoever. I am an ordinary woman, an instrument of the Holy Spirit."

A holy hush falls over the crowded auditorium.

"Father God," she prays. "We bow in the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, careful to give You all praise; all honor; all glory. We don't want to share in that glory."

The service is lively. Jimmie McDonald, a black man from Tampa, sings. There are testimonies of healings and a light monologue from Miss Kuhlman.

She told once about meeting Pope Paul VI in Rome.

"He took my hand and told me I not only had his blessings, but his prayers," she said. "That couldn't have happened 20 years ago, or even 10 years ago. I, a Protestant lady minister. He,

the Pope. I tell you, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, moving in our day."

The moving of the Holy Spirit is a frequent topic in her meetings. She emphasizes the unity among denominations brought by the Holy Spirit. She stresses that it is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that produces the many miracles.

"It is simply unbelievable when you see these priests and Catholic sisters meeting with all the Baptists and the Methodist—you can't tell one from the other," she says. "It's the unity of the Holy Spirit."

She also talks about not knowing why God called her to the ministry she has.

"I do not believe I was God's first choice in this ministry, or even His second or third," she once said.

"This is really a man's job. But someplace men failed. I was just stupid enough to say, 'Take nothing and use it.' And He has been doing just that."

"I think that in God's plan there are those, however, whom He calls for a definite work," she continues.

"For instance, I could not do the work of Billy Graham. I do not think that Billy Graham is called to do my work."

"I believe that God has chosen certain people for certain ministries. But everyone can have just as much of the power of God. Every minister can have just as much of the power of God as I have if they will pay the price."

Miss Kuhlman began her evangelistic career at age 16 when she set out with a pianist friend on a bus to Twin Falls, Idaho. She begged the elders of a tiny Baptist church to let her preach. They did, and she packed the church.

She traveled for years, preaching where she could. During a

revival service at the Evangelical Church Alliance in Joliet, Illinois, she was ordained. She continues to hold papers with that organization, although she considers herself a Baptist. Oral Roberts University since that time has conferred upon her the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

In 1946, a woman stood during a service and testified she had been healed of a tumor the night before during one of Miss Kuhlman's meetings. That was the first healing in one of her meetings, and it set the course for the rest of her ministry.

Today, she heads the Pittsburgh-based Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, which is said to gross \$2 million a year. That funds her radio and television ministry, pays the office staff of 30 and helps fund some 22 mission stations around the world that she sponsors.

In spite of the size of her ministry, and the years she's been in it, she says she often "dies a thousand deaths before I walk out on the stage."

"You'll never know how I feel, " she once told an audience. "All people see is the glamour—the white pulpit dress. They don't see the hours in prayer, the heartache. It's a hard, hard ministry."

Yet she says that learning to believe God to do miracles is so simple, even a child can do it. "I'm overwhelmed by God and His power."

"When I come out on stage, there is an anointing that comes on me, and it is very difficult to explain."

"These things are supernatural. That's the reason it is so hard for the natural mind to comprehend. But there is an anointing that comes upon me. I am completely taken over by the Holy Spirit—just completely.

"But there is a price you pay," she continues. "You cannot

expect an anointing for four hours during a service if for 20 hours you have lived a different life than one totally consecrated to Him.

“And He gives you this wonderful anointing, but I still have nothing to do with these miracles.”

Miss Kuhlman says that even after many years of ministry, she still does not understand why some for whom she prays are healed and some are not.

“I don’t understand why God performs miracles. I don’t know why some are healed who have no faith and others who have faith aren’t healed.

“Whether or not anyone is healed is in the hands of God. At no time is it my responsibility. But I’m human and you’ll never know how I hurt on the inside when I see those who came in wheelchairs being pushed into the street again,” she says.

“I feel for them; I love them; I want them all to be healed so badly,” she continues. “And yet it is not within my power to give it to them.”

“I think that maybe by being a little longer in the service, or maybe if I had cooperated more with the Holy Spirit, they might have received their healing.”

The fact that everyone is not healed is criticized by some.

Dr. William A. Nolen in his book, *Healing, A Doctor in Search of a Miracle*, followed up some of the ones who testified of healings in Miss Kuhlman’s meetings.

Some of the people, he found, had ailments which improved if one’s attitude improved. Others had symptoms that go in cycles such as multiple sclerosis. Still others, Nolen said, were not healed at all.

Nolen, who wrote about his investigation of Miss Kuhlman’s

ministry in *McCall's* magazine, asked her if any of the "patients you cure are simply hysterical?"

"Of course," she told Nolen, laughing. "Aren't any of the patients you treat hysterical?"

"I admitted they were," Nolen wrote.

Then, he asked her how she gets along with the medical profession.

"Wonderfully well," she told him.

"I have nothing against doctors, and hope they have nothing against me. I don't cure people—the Holy Spirit cures through me. Doctors cure people too. I think doctors are wonderful."

Nolen concluded Miss Kuhlman knew little of medicine, then added, "I don't believe she is a liar or a charlatan or that she is consciously dishonest.

"I think she sincerely believes the Holy Spirit works through her to perform miraculous cures."

People like Nolen who know nothing of the power of God are unfair to themselves when they scrutinize her ministry, Miss Kuhlman says.

"(The person) may be otherwise very intelligent, but it is quite unfair, really, to himself and to the servant of God. And so I leave them also in the hands of God," she once told an interviewer.

She admits she knows practically nothing about medicine and therapeutic science.

"That's why I have doctors on the platform," she says. "One doctor who came to our service wondered how I could take the healings of arthritis so lightly. He regarded them as the greatest miracles, because as a physician he knew there was no

cure.”

But more than the healings, Miss Kuhlman says her ministry has a greater purpose.

“My purpose, she declares, is the salvation of souls. Divine healing is secondary to the transformation of a life.”