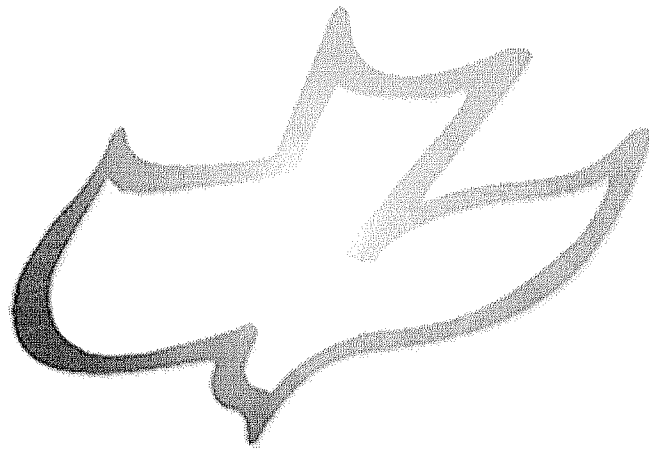


WELS Tongue Speakers: The Charismatic
Movement at Our Savior Lutheran Church in
Pomona, California



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The Pentecostal movement originated at the dawning of the 20th century and has spread rapidly to this day. Identified by the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing, the Pentecostal movement, though constantly growing, remained in its own denomination. This all changed in the 1960s as the ideas of Pentecostalism crossed over into the mainstream denominations of the Christian church. This charismatic movement, as it came to be called in the mainline denominations, continued to spread rapidly through established churches. It began in the Episcopal Church and eventually spread to Roman Catholicism as well as Lutheranism. Clergymen and laymen in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) embraced this movement. This is not surprising due to the size and variety of beliefs within these large church bodies. However, this movement also crept in, on a much smaller level, into the more conservative and doctrinally consistent Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). One congregation in particular was uniquely and seriously affected by the birth of the charismatic movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The WELS congregation, Our Savior Lutheran Church in Pomona, California, was literally torn apart because of charismatic tongue speakers in their midst. By the grace of God, Our Savior also experienced a strengthened unity that coincided with a recommitment on a congregational and individual level to the Word of God as the only source for doctrine and comfort. This recommitment led to a proper understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit and a full dependence on Jesus Christ as Savior.

Why did these things happen at Our Savior in Pomona? This is surely a question only the Lord can answer, but by reviewing the background information of the

charismatic movement and the WELS mission work in California and by the recollections of those involved we will set forth to give a brief history of the tongue speaking incidents in Pomona. We will also look at the effects this incident had on those involved as well as their lasting impressions nearly 35 years after the events.

Father Dennis J. Bennett is credited as the father of the modern charismatic movement. While some clergy in the mainline denominations had been practicing their own gifts in private, Bennett, an Episcopalian priest, was the first to make public his own experience with tongue speaking. On Sunday, April 3, 1960 Bennett announced to his congregation, St. Mark's Episcopal Church, in Van Nuys, California, that he had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and it manifested itself in the gift of tongues, which he had been practicing in private with a few other members. This public announcement tore his church apart and by the third service on that Sunday morning he had decided to resign his position at St. Mark's. He later moved to a new parish in Seattle which was much more amiable to the charismatic movement and continued to make a name for himself in Washington. However the results of Bennett's revelation started to be felt in California, the rest of the country, and the world. Many other clergy in other mainline denominations said they received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and began to practice the charismatic gifts of tongue speaking, healing and prophecy.¹

Even a WELS mission congregation in Pomona felt the effects. Our Savior in Pomona was one of the first missions started by the WELS in California. For many years of the Synodical Conference, the LCMS and WELS had a gentlemen's agreement regarding missions in the west. Missouri would take care of California's mission field and Wisconsin would focus on Arizona. As the split between Missouri and Wisconsin

approached, Wisconsin began to do mission work in California. There were congregations organized in Tarzana and Santa Monica in 1952.² One of the missionaries who was instrumental in the early California years for the WELS was Pastor Paul Hein. Our Savior in Pomona was organized as a congregation under his leadership in 1958.³ A school was opened and the congregation began to grow. Pomona was only forty five miles away from Van Nuys where Father Bennett's 1960 announcement of his charismatic tongue speaking had set off a firestorm. So as Our Savior grew as a WELS mission, the charismatic movement also spread in Southern California. It was in this environment of charismatic fervor that the young mission in Pomona found its home. This would prove to have an effect on this young congregation very soon after the charismatic movement began.

It is difficult to point to an exact date when Our Savior in Pomona began to run into difficulties with the charismatic movement. But it is believed to have had its beginnings while Pastor Hein still served the congregation. Some pastors in the area remember hearing of an incident of tongue speaking during a service at Our Savior in the middle to late 1960s. A member recalls the incident this way. "During the service a lady stood up and said something. I didn't know what it was. I couldn't understand her and it happened fast. There was a little bit of a disruption and then it was over."⁴ The woman was Mrs. Elizabeth Sundberg. This incident was perhaps the only one that occurred while Pastor Hein served the congregation. Written records of this incident being dealt with were not available. Perhaps it was such a new phenomenon that no one knew how

¹ Clement, *Pentecostals and Charismatics*, pp. 42-47

² Information obtained from WELS statistical report from Pastor Hermann John

³ Information obtained from WELS statistical report from Pastor Hermann John

⁴ Information obtained in personal interview. Name withheld per request.

to handle it. Another member remembers that Pastor Hein asked Mrs. Sundberg if she could interpret her message. She said that she was able to interpret. Pastor Hein apparently dealt with it quietly according to the member.⁵ It soon became evident that while this was the only public occurrence in the early years, privately the charismatic movement was spreading through a group of members in the congregation. It was not until a few years later under Pastor Daniel Sabrowsky that more incidents occurred and the number of people involved came to light.

Pastor Daniel Sabrowsky was installed at Our Savior in Pomona on August 27, 1967. Pastor Sabrowsky recalled a few individuals in particular who were involved in tongue speaking during his tenure. He remembers that Betty Nelson, a member at Our Savior whose husband, Charles, was chairman of the board of elders, was focused on emotions and looking for something “a little more exciting” at church. He also remembered that Mr. & Mrs. David Mishler, who had been going through some troubled times, became involved. Mrs. Sundberg the woman who was involved in the original incident during Pastor Hein's ministry was also involved. One incident, which occurred in the early 1970s, he recalls vividly. “We had an evening Bible class and she stood up and started speaking in what she said was tongues. She didn’t know what she was saying and there was no other interpreter. I could go to that church today and point out the seat she was sitting in.”⁶ Pastor Sabrowsky seemed to indicate this woman was Mrs. Betty Nelson. Another member recalls the incident involving a different member. Principal James Dallmann remembers that incident also. “Mrs. Sundberg, who was just a wonderful woman, asked if she could say something at the end of a meeting. She stood

⁵ Information obtained from personal interview. Name withheld per request.

⁶ From personal interview with Daniel Sabrowsky

up and said something that no one understood. That was the only time I heard tongue speaking while I was at Our Savior."⁷ After this public display, Pastor Sabrowsky knew that this "obviously couldn't go on,"⁸ and they "had to put a stop to it." However, he didn't know quite how to deal with it. He realized it was a unique problem to have especially in a conservative church body such as the WELS. There was really no precedent for dealing with this kind of problem in the WELS at that time. Although the phenomenon had certainly been written about in the *Northwester Lutheran*, this was the first time it had to be dealt with on the congregational level.

This was the only time tongue speaking occurred in a public setting at church during Sabrowsky's ministry. But it was certainly enough. Pastor Sabrowsky remembers that there were people in the congregation who were upset by the incident, people who were wondering about it, and people who were sympathetic to the movement. As he recalls very few were sympathetic, most were upset because they understood it wasn't a good thing. After finding out who was involved, Pastor Sabrowsky and the board of elders together with a few other men began to meet with the people in question. In some meetings with Betty Nelson, Pastor Sabrowsky recalls hearing her speak in tongues two more times. Each time he asked what she said and she could not tell him. She just said, "It was a message God gave her and she had to say it, she couldn't even give the gist of what she was saying and she couldn't control when it started."⁹ Pastor Sabrowsky realized that this gift was of no value and, therefore, it was different than the gifts of the Apostolic church which were for the edification of the congregation. He discovered that her "gift" was mostly used in private prayer.

⁷ From personal interview with James Dallmann

⁸ From personal interview with Sabrowsky

One of the first recorded actions taken by the pastor and board of elders was the sending of a letters on April 12, 1972 to certain members including: Mrs. Virginia Duncan, Mrs. Betty Nelson, Mr. & Mrs. David Mishler, Mr. & Mrs. Roger Sundberg, and Niles Sundberg. These letters asked seven questions dealing with the charismatic movement. One of the questions included a quotation from the Lutheran Confessions which the congregation promised to uphold in its constitution. "Comment on this statement: 'Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil.'"¹⁰ A meeting of the pastor and elders as well as congregational president John Parlow and Principal James Dallmann was held with Mr. & Mrs. David Mishler, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Nelson, Mrs. Virginia Duncan, and Mrs. Elizabeth Sundberg. At this meeting Pastor Sabrowsky warned them of the dangers of falling into Pentecostalism and the false doctrines associated with it.

In the midst of these discussions, on May 5, 1972, a letter was sent by Mr. Otto Kirmsse to Milwaukee. The letter was addressed: "WELS, 3512--W. North Ave. Milwaukee, Wis. 53208 Attn: (Doctrine)."¹¹ This letter was sent, apparently, because no official WELS doctrine on tongue speaking was available. The letter simply asked for "the stand of WELS regarding speaking in tongues (not necessarily Pentecostalism)."¹² Wisconsin Synod President Oscar J. Naumann responded to Mr. Kirmsse on May 11, 1972. His letter included an article by Dr. Siegbert Becker which appeared in the

⁹ From personal interview with Sabrowsky

¹⁰ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

¹¹ Kirmsse, personal correspondence with WELS

¹² Kirmsse.

Northwestern Lutheran entitled “A Look at Pentecostalism.”¹³ This letter was important as President Naumann’s words were used later by those sympathetic with the tongue speakers to defend their position.

Some other steps were taken before Pastor Sasbrowsky left. More letters were sent to the families involved. A conference paper by Pastor Marcus Nitz on tongue speaking was discussed. A paper by Pastor Sabrowsky on being filled with the Holy Spirit was also discussed and made available to the members involved. Pastor Sabrowsky also continued to meet privately with the families involved to show that what they were doing in tongue speaking was not Scriptural. When Pastor Sabrowsky took a call to Wisconsin Lutheran High School in the summer of 1972 the situation was “pretty well over and done with” as he puts it. By this he meant, “At least they were not acting publicly.” Overall Pastor Sabrowsky remembers telling those involved that this behavior could not go on publicly. That seemed to be his main goal. He was “pretty sure it would continue to go on in private as prayer.”¹⁴ He never forbade them from doing this and the church took no disciplinary action against those involved.

On July 10, 1972 Our Savior Lutheran Church held a farewell service for Pastor Daniel Sabrowsky. On July 16 of the same year Pastor Hermann John, who was serving Prince of Peace Lutheran, Yucaipa, California, started to serve the vacancy at Our Savior. This marked a change in the way that the tongue speaking in Pomona was handled. During the seven months in which Pastor John served this vacancy dramatic events took place which would effect every member of the congregation.

When he arrived Pastor John was unfamiliar with the situation. The charismatic

¹³ See Addenda

¹⁴ Comments from personal interview with Sabrowsky

movement in Pomona was not common knowledge among the area pastors. So the first time Pastor John really heard anything about it was when he was asked to serve the vacancy. When Pastor John began serving he heard a report that Betty Nelson had told Pastor Sabrowsky that Pastor Hermann John would be helping the congregation solve the tongue speaking issues.¹⁵ This was told to Pastor Sabrowsky before he took the call to Wisconsin Lutheran High School and before Pastor John was asked to serve the vacancy. Pastor John had the impression from this information that these people seemed to have the power of the girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16ff) who could tell the future and out of whom Paul cast the devil. The first meeting of the board of elders with Pastor John took place on August 10, 1972. It seemed that the board was ready to take some further action at this time but Pastor John was given time to learn more about the situation. A quotation from the minutes of that meeting reads: "Action, in regards to the Charismatic movement within our church, was tabled until Rev. H. John has had time to review the past action of the elders in this regard, as well as visit the principals involved."¹⁶

After this meeting Pastor John immediately began to meet with those involved in the charismatic movement. From these meetings he was able to eventually unfold how the movement began and how it spread throughout a segment of the congregation's membership. All of these meetings took place from August, 1972 until December, 1972. Pastor John and the elders visited each person involved individually on more than one occasion. Pastor John used papers on tongue speaking, articles from the *Northwestern*

¹⁵ James Dallmann recalls another similar incident involving Mrs. Nelson. "We had just had a call meeting to call a new teacher and Mrs. Nelson came into my office. It was almost like she was in a trance. I couldn't even look at her. She proceeded to tell me all about the teacher we had just called and she had never met her."

¹⁶ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

*Lutheran*¹⁷, and *Present Time*, as well as the paper “The Conversation of the Devil with the Dying Christian” in his counseling with the tongue speakers. Throughout this time period he also used the pulpit to preach against the falsehoods involved with the charismatic movement. One sermon in which he mentioned that unscriptural tongue speaking was a sin and of the devil prompted a letter from one of the tongue speakers to the Synod requesting the removal of Pastor John. All along the tongue speakers maintained that their gift was Scriptural and that the Wisconsin Synod did not condemn it in their stated doctrine.

What follows is a brief survey of the meetings between Pastor John, the elders, and the principals involved. This survey focuses on interviews with Mr. & Mrs. David Mishler, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Nelson, as well as Mrs. Elizabeth Sundberg. None of this information was given in confidence.

On August 13, 1972 Pastor John met with David Mishler in the church office. In this first meeting Pastor John explained the Scriptural meaning of tongues and told Mr. Mishler that the tongue speaking movement of today is of the devil. Mr. Mishler was not very pleased with Pastor John and became a bit hostile at one point telling Pastor John to “shut up.”¹⁸ On August 17 of the same year Pastor John mailed Mr. and Mrs. Mishler a copy of *Present Truth*, a magazine which explained the Scripture teaching on the charismatic movement, as well as a paper entitled “Pentecostalism and the Jesus Movement Refuted.” After realizing that Mr. Mishler was in no mood to talk or listen to him, Pastor John asked Mr. Kurt Weckworth to talk to Mr. Mishler for him and show him the errors of his thinking on tongues. Mr. Weckworth visited with Mr. Mishler in his

¹⁷ See Addenda

¹⁸ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

home on two different occasions, apparently making no progress.¹⁹

Pastor John was able to gather a few insights as to Mr. Mishler's beliefs at the time of the initial interview. He believed strongly in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. He said that when one has received the "full blessings of the Spirit," he does not have to be urged or commanded to witness. He does it spontaneously. These "full blessings" occurred only after someone experiences the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which apparently comes immediately without God's chosen means of grace. He said his sins were forgiven after he had his experience, though he changed his idea when he was shown that they were forgiven on Calvary. Mr. Mishler also revealed that he believed each person has a choice in conversion, that is, one can choose to reject or accept God's invitation. He identified tongue speaking as evidence of faith in others. To him speaking in tongues was an emotional outburst which came when reflecting on the great love of God. He said that he had had this feeling inside of him for a while and he wanted to let it out but did not until someone told him that what he felt was the gift of tongues and that he should not suppress it. Mr. Mishler described his experience of speaking in tongues as "emptying himself entirely," that is, a complete lack of control, and then "the Spirit takes over." He remembered reading a Lutheran author who said, in regards to problems in the church and in life, "Don't you do it. Let God do it." After that, he said he just let go and wham! This feeling came upon him. Mr. Mishler said he knows the experience is from God and not Satan because, "he just knows it in his heart." His assurance of the goodness of this gift was based on his own feelings about the gift.²⁰

On October 5, 1972 Mrs. Carol Mishler met with Pastor John in the church office

¹⁹ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speaking"

²⁰ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speaking"

on the subject of tongue speaking. She was given the paper “Seeking After a Sign” and two reprints from the *Northwestern Lutheran* showing that the WELS does not consider the modern tongues speaking to be Scriptural. About two weeks later Pastor John talked with her again in the church office. He read the paper “On Tongues,” (a comparison between what the Bible says and what these Lutheran tongue speakers say), and showed her from Scripture that her tongues speaking does not match the tongue speaking in the Bible.²¹

At this meeting Pastor John was able to learn the history of the tongue speaking in the Mishler family. As with many of the meetings Pastor John began with the question, “If you should die now where would you go?” Mrs. Mishler responded that she was “sure she would go to heaven because Jesus died for my sins.”²²

Mrs. Mishler then explained her family background focusing on the events in the recent years. Her mother was Lutheran and Mrs. Mishler had grown up in a Wisconsin Synod church in Wisconsin. She married David who was not a member of a church. He was confirmed by Pastor Hein in 1964. They both were quite active at Our Savior and regular in communion attendance.²³

Mrs. Mishler remembered that in 1970 Mr. Mishler was working on the stewardship program and reading “The Stewardship Call” by Waldo Werning. While he was reading he began to laugh. When Mrs. Mishler had asked him what he was laughing about, he said it was nothing. However, from that time on, he became quite enthusiastic about religion, stopped cursing, and became diligent in Bible reading. This new found religious zeal seemed to cause a problem in the household. Mrs. Mishler and Pastor

²¹From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²²From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

Sabrowsky did not know how to handle it. Their former regular attendance at communion now dropped severely, becoming almost non-existent during 1971.²⁴

In March of 1972, Mrs. Mishler went into her bedroom alone and told the Lord, “I give up.” She completely surrendered everything to him. She also prayed that if speaking in tongues would help any, she would like to have that gift. She remembered talking to another member about tongues prior to that night. Mrs. Mishler had also heard tongue speaking before. It was on this night, alone in her bedroom, that she had this strange feeling inside her which she could not describe. She felt it was the Holy Spirit within her wanting her to talk to God in the language God was giving her. She then opened her mouth and began to speak in tongues. She did not say anything about this to her husband, but about two weeks later she learned that her husband had also begun to speak in tongues about the same time she did. She claimed to not have known about her husband’s tongue speaking until after she had received the gift.²⁵

Mrs. Mishler believed that this tongue speaking was God’s gift to her. She felt that whenever she got “this feeling of the Holy Spirit inside of her” she should go ahead and speak. In fact, she reported that when she does not speak when she has this feeling, she is displeasing God. This tongue speaking was not an everyday occurrence for Mrs. Mishler, but she noted that her daughter had heard her speaking in tongues.²⁶

Though she said she did not look at tongue speaking as her assurance of salvation, but seemed to indicate that when others speak in tongues it gives evidence that they are Christians. Mrs. Mishler could not identify what benefit the tongue speaking gave her.

²³ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²⁴ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²⁵ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²⁶ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

She said that was not important to her. She strongly believed this was a gift of God and she refused to give it up unless she was convinced from Scripture that it was not so. To her the possibility of this happening seemed very slim.²⁷

On October 29, 1972 Mr. & Mrs. Mishler were invited to discuss the matter with the elders and the pastor at the church office. Mr. Mishler refused to come saying, “the doors of his house were open at all times for such a discussion.”²⁸ Finally, on November 5 of the same year Mr. Mishler met again with the elders and the pastor at the church office. Mrs. Mishler was invited to the meeting but said that she had met with the elders once before (April 26, 1972). She said they “knew her position, and that it was still the same, so she saw no purpose in meeting with them again.”²⁹ At the meeting, he was shown from Scripture that his tongues speaking does not match the gift of tongues of the Bible. One other interesting piece of information gained from this meeting came from a comment Mr. Mishler made. “When Mr. Mishler said that a heathen who loves his neighbor will not go to hell, he was shown from Scripture the error of such an idea.”³⁰ After the meeting two papers, “Seeking After a Sign” and “On tongues” were sent to his home.

On November 30, Pastor John met again with Mrs. Mishler in the church office for about an hour warning her about following signs and lying wonders. Mr. Weckworth attended the meeting at Mrs. Mishler’s invitation. This appears to be the last of many attempts to warn the Mishlers of the dangers of the charismatic movement.³¹

On August 16, 1972 Pastor John met with Mrs. Betty Nelson in her home for over

²⁷ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²⁸ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

²⁹ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

³⁰ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

three hours. During this meeting he explained to her that her tongue speaking was not identifiable with the gifts of tongues found in the book of Acts. On August 18, Pastor John mailed to Mrs. Nelson Luther's words on Mark 16:17-18. He also sent her an excerpt from a sermon dealing with the gift of healing, since she claimed to have this gift also.³²

From this initial interview Pastor John was able to gain some insights into Mrs. Nelson's experience with tongue speaking. Apparently, Mrs. Nelson had received the gift of tongues after speaking with Mrs. Sundberg about it. After she had spoken with Mrs. Sundberg she prayed for the gift and went into a "trance" for about an hour which included uncontrolled talking to her husband and to Pastor Sabrowsky. Mrs. Nelson remembered being afraid and unable to perform even simple tasks, such as counting change at the store. Mrs. Nelson was of the attitude that tongues made someone a better Christian. She was very critical of the Lutheran church concerning Bible study and "feelings of the Spirit's presence." She believed that the tongues spoken in Acts and the tongues spoken of in 1 Corinthians were different. Mrs. Nelson used outward signs to judge whether things were from God. She used an example from her life. She had stopped praying in tongues for a while but had experienced sickness and other problems until she resumed her use of tongues. Then everything went well again and she had courage to witness her faith. She knew that her tongues had to be from God because she prayed to God to protect her from anything of the devil.³³

Mr. Charles Nelson was present at all of the elders meetings prior to October 29, 1972 whenever tongue speaking was discussed. During one of these meetings he was

³¹ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

³² From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

given the *Present Truth* magazine which dealt with what Scripture says about modern tongue speaking. On September 26, 1972 Pastor John met with Mr. Nelson in the church office. At this meeting the paper "Seeking After a Sign" was read and discussed. Mr. Nelson also received a few pages from Prof. Gerlach's paper explaining 1 Corinthians 12-14. During this meeting, Pastor John learned about Mr. Nelson's tongue speaking.

Mr. Nelson agreed with most of the paper "Seeking After a Sign." He made it clear that he did not pray for tongues as a sign to assure him of Christ's forgiveness. He was sure of his salvation before he ever spoke in tongues. The reason he asked for the gift of tongues was simply that the Bible calls it a gift of God. He figured, "Why not have it?" He came into this gift through prayer. He prayed one night and was convinced that God would answer his desire. A few nights later when he was praying he said, "I don't know what else to say, but if there is anymore you wish to say, go ahead." It was at this point that he began to speak in tongues. Mr. Nelson said that the gift makes him feel closer to God, more diligent in Bible reading, and it gave him courage to witness. He also said he never really thought about the gift of tongues before his wife began using it. After this he began to desire the gift also.³⁴

Mr. Nelson made it clear that he would never worship with tongue speakers of a different faith. However, he hesitated to say that a tongue speaker might not be a Christian. He wasn't willing to admit that an unbeliever who speaks in tongues was given the gift by the devil. Nelson seemed to realize the dangers of speaking in tongues which included trusting in this experience rather than the means of grace and the dangers of causing others to doubt their Christianity. For this reason, Mr. Nelson did not speak

³³ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

³⁴ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

about his religious experience with anyone except for his wife and Pastor Sabrowsky. He believed that the signs given to the Apostles in the Bible are for Christians of all time. However, he realized that his gift had no value to other Christians. He said that it was valuable to him. He could not understand what he was saying but the experience edified him in some way.³⁵

In this meeting he also revealed his feelings about the congregation. Nelson felt that the congregation as a whole was dead. He thought that the congregation was not as active in spiritual matters as it should have been. He expressed doubt as to whether the other members of the congregation would be able to go into the home of another and speak about God's Word. He also spoke of the high delinquency of the recently confirmed. He openly wondered "what the school was doing wrong" because it didn't move its graduates to a more active Christian life. He felt that speaking in tongues helped him with this, but he stopped short of saying that if the rest of the congregation spoke in tongues it would help them. However, at a congregational meeting he said that he would like to bring tongue speaking into the church.³⁶

On October 22 of the same year Pastor John and Mr. Weckworth met with Mr. & Mrs. Nelson at the Nelson's home. They discussed a paper comparing what the Bible says with what Lutheran tongue speakers said. The paper "On Tongues" was read and discussed to show that Scripture does not condone the tongue speaking which was done by the Nelsons. At this meeting Mr. Nelson also claimed to have the gift of healing.³⁷

On October 29 another meeting took place between Pastor John, the board of elders, Mr. & Mrs. Nelson and Mr. Raymond Duncan. Circuit Pastor William Godfrey

³⁵ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

³⁶ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

was also in attendance. At this meeting the church leadership along with Pastor Godfrey demonstrated from Scripture that the tongue speaking going on at Our Savior was not the same as the tongue speaking found in the Bible.³⁸ This is the last available record of the meetings between the church leadership and the Nelson family.

On September 26, 1972 Pastor John met with Mrs. Elizabeth Sundberg at her home for about an hour. When asked if she thought she would go to heaven if she died today she said, "I hope so." When asked for her reason she responded by saying that she hoped her faith in Christ would be acceptable to God. During this meeting Pastor John and Mrs. Sundberg discussed the paper "Seeking After a Sign." Mrs. Sundberg agreed with most of it until they came to a section regarding outward evidence. She said that the reason for seeking a gift of the Holy Spirit was not for the assurance of salvation but out of a desire to have what the Bible says is ours. She said that anyone can have the gift if they really want it and sincerely trust in God to give it to them. Sundberg said that she believed that anyone who spoke in tongues was a Christian. She said that even if such a tongue speaking person would deny the doctrine of salvation by faith alone the person must somehow be a Christian. Apparently to her tongue speaking was a sure evidence that someone was a Christian, even if his outward confession denied it. Mrs. Sundberg, however, denied seeking the gift for personal assurance that she was a Christian.³⁹

Mrs. Sundberg agreed with Pastor John that a person should not look to the experience of tongue speaking as assurance for salvation. She did not think that tongue speakers seek the gift for this reason. She believed that there were such things as lying wonders but denied that tongue speaking was one of them. She had received her gift by

³⁷ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

³⁸ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

praying to Christ, and “Christ does not give a stone for bread.”⁴⁰ She believed that tongues were not a selfish gift to ask for, even if they edified no one else, but simply something the Bible says is ours to have.

Some of the statements she made in regard to how the Holy Spirit works seemed to indicate a misunderstanding of the means of grace. While she agreed that the Spirit works through the Word alone, she seemed to mean that the Spirit works in other ways, but as long as the results agree with the Word than it was truly the Spirit working. She agreed that no fellowship existed between those who believe in salvation by faith alone and those who believe in salvation by works. However, she did not agree that other doctrines were a matter of fellowship.⁴¹

Pastor John learned that Mr. & Mrs. Sundberg had spoken in tongues even before joining Our Savior in Pomona. Mrs. Sundberg mentioned that she spoke to Pastor Hein about it before joining. The Sundbergs did not belong to a church while they were children. They were brought to the Christian faith by an elderly man. This man spoke in tongues and so the Sundbergs also began to speak in tongues. Mrs. Sundberg told Pastor John that all of her children were also able to speak in tongues. She said that she had not taught them but they had heard their parents praying in tongues at night.⁴²

In regard to the children, Pastor John recalled an instance that happened in Sunday school. The Sunday school teacher was teaching the children to pray. The children would take turns offering prayers in class. On a Sunday when it was one of the Sundberg children’s turns, the child attempted to pray in tongues. He began and then

³⁹ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

⁴⁰ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

⁴¹ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

⁴² From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

stopped saying, "I can't do it as good as mommy does it."⁴³ This seemed to indicate that they had learned it from their parents at home and were trying to put it into practice. This certainly was not a gift for them.⁴⁴

Overall she wanted the gift of tongues to help her live her Christian life. She believed that it was part of the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit which enabled her to be a better Christian and a better witness to her faith. She made no comment when Pastor John told her that it was the message of the cross that gives that power.⁴⁵

From these meetings it was apparent that the idea of tongue speaking had come into the congregation through the Sundbergs. From them it had spread to a few other members and friends in the congregation. From these interviews the pastor and elders were able to understand the issue and how it arrived. The members involved had more in common than their friendships. Pastor Sabrowsky recalled that the members involved had other "issues" which they were dealing with. Pastor John was able to learn more about these issues from his interviews. All of those who spoke in tongues had learned about it from someone else. Those involved had not desired the gift until their spouses had gained it or someone else had spoken to them about it. Those who had received this "gift" had also been going through other difficulties in their lives at the time they received the gift. They were facing emotional stress and family problems as well as problems at church. None of the members miraculously were suddenly the gift but received it only after hearing about it from someone else and then praying for it. Often

⁴³ From personal interview with Pastor John

⁴⁴ Pastor John recalled another incident involving the Sundbergs. Apparently one of their children was sick. Pastor John found out about this on a Sunday morning, so he offered a prayer at the church service. The child's parents became angry with Pastor John because they said they possessed the gift of healing and wanted to take care of it themselves.

⁴⁵ From "Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers"

times these prayers included “emptying one’s self” and “losing self control”⁴⁶ as well as a trance like state.

It was clear to Pastor John and the other members of the congregation that the tongue speaking going on in their midst was not Scriptural and was very harmful. The danger to the other souls in the congregation was great. The danger to the souls of the tongue speakers was also great. Yet, after patient and loving encouragement and admonition no change had taken place and the congregation decided to act. Our Savior held a voter’s meeting on December 3, 1972. The topic for this meeting was tongue speaking. This meeting was continued the following week on December 10. At this meeting the congregation voted to remove from fellowship Mr. & Mrs. Charles Nelson and Mr. & Mrs. David Mishler, by a vote of 19-3.⁴⁷ It was made clear that this was not an excommunication. Nor was this a judgment of their saving faith. It was a recognition of their tongue speaking as something contrary to Scripture and a warning of the tremendous danger that this would cause to their spiritual welfare. An announcement in the bulletin for December 17, 1972 recounted the act of love which was carried out by the voters a week earlier.⁴⁸

The leaders of the congregation had hoped that this act of warning would stop the turmoil in the congregation. They hoped that the warning offered to the Nelsons and Mishlers would cause these families to see their errors and return. Pastor John and the elders also hoped that this would serve as a warning to others of the dangers of the charismatic movement and cause them to renounce these ideas completely. This December voter’s meeting, however, did not mark the end of the turmoil at Our Savior in

⁴⁶ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

⁴⁷ From “Extent of Dealings with Tongue Speakers”

Pomona. Many other members left the congregation. Not all of these members were tongue speakers. Some were sympathetic with the movement. Others felt the families involved had not been treated fairly. Problems and questions continued within the congregation.

Pastor John received a call to serve at St. John's Lutheran Church in Tarzana. He would eventually accept that call and was installed in Tarzana in March of 1973.⁴⁹ However, the months preceding his departure were still eventful.

Throughout the months that followed many within the congregation and those now removed from membership questioned the decision that had been made. On February 1, 1972 Mr. Robert Papsdorf wrote to WELS President Oscar Naumann asking him for permission to make Naumann's letter in response to Otto Kirmsse (see above) available to the congregation. Some in the congregation wanted to use this letter to defend the tongue speakers and condemn the actions of the congregation's voting assembly in regard to the Nelson and Mishler families. They believed that President Naumann's letter would lend support to the tongue speakers as long as it was done in private.

On February 8, 1973 Pres. Naumann wrote to Pastor Herman John. An excerpt from the letter follows:

I am more than willing to have my letter of May 11, 1972 to Mr. Otto H. Kirmsse, Jr., read to the congregation if this will serve to quiet the disturbance that this matter has brought into the congregation. But I gathered from what was said on Christmas Day after church and in conversation with you that some people conclude from my letter that I would have not proceeded as the congregation did in dealing with the tongue speakers. I cannot understand how this can be found in my letter.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See Addenda

⁴⁹ From personal interview with Hermann John

⁵⁰ From personal correspondence with Pastor Hermann John

A copy of this letter was also sent to Mr. Papsdorf.

In response to this letter, Pastor John wrote to President Naumann in order to clear up the misunderstandings some members of the congregation may have had with President Naumann's original letter of May 11, 1972. In the letter Pastor John asked for clarification on the meaning of some of President Naumann's words. One of the questions he asked was whether those who claim to have the genuine gift of tongues but do not actually have it should be given the advice to speak to themselves and to God in private.

In a letter of February 21, 1973 President Naumann responded to Pastor John's inquiries. An excerpt from that letter follows:

Any one claiming the ability to speak in tongues today is, in my opinion, seeking personal glory and recognition for himself. He is claiming that he has been blessed by God with a gift that others have not received. Pointing to himself, in that manner, that person is certainly not being a faithful witness to Christ nor is he glorifying Christ. My answer to your question under (1), Pastor John, is an emphatic, "No!" We should not condone in our members that which is not worked of the Spirit of God. My advice was to have them keep silent. What they call tongue-speaking today is not a gift from God. What they erroneously consider a gift, is no gift at all, and it serves no wholesome purpose. But the possibility remains that humble and sincere people have been misled by a false prophet and it becomes our duty to rescue them from his clutches.⁵¹

Along with this letter, President Naumann enclosed another letter which was to be read to the congregation if Pastor John felt it would serve to aid their understanding. In that letter President Naumann wrote:

I subscribe fully to what both Dr. Becker and Prof. Gerlach have written. If my letter appears to contradict either author, I must have expressed myself unclearly...It is my strong conviction that I should not become involved in the affairs of the Pomona congregation. The congregation has

⁵¹ From personal correspondence with Pastor John

a responsible pastor, and the district has responsible officials.⁵²

President Naumann's words regarding Dr. Becker and Prof. Gerlach refer to their statements included in Pastor John's February 12 letter to President Naumann. These statements come from some of the articles which Pastor John used in dealing with the tongue speakers. The statements clearly condemn the present charismatic movement as unscriptural.⁵³

In February of 1973 Pastor John also began a series of Sunday afternoon Bible classes at Our Savior in Pomona. The Bible classes served to further the congregation's understanding of tongue speaking in Scripture and its relationship to the plan of salvation. Many attended these classes, including those who had been asked to leave the congregation and those who had left of their own will because of the tongue speaking incident. On February 11, 1973 the first class in the series was held. The topic of this first class was "God's Plan of Salvation." This class reviewed for the congregation how we are saved because of Christ alone, and how our faith is a gift of God which the Holy Spirit strengthens through the means of grace. The second class, which was held a week later, was on the topic "Power for Christian Living." This class reviewed the Christian's life of sanctification which flows out of justification. It also emphasized how every Christian has God's Holy Spirit within him and that the Spirit's work is connected with the means of grace. The third class, held on the following week, was an "Explanation of

⁵² From personal correspondence with Pastor John

⁵³ Dr. Becker's words as quoted to Pres. Naumann: "Anyone who knows what the Bible says on the above subjects knows that such attitudes and beliefs are not the work of the Spirit of God. We can only conclude that where laxity of doctrine prevails, glossolalia can scarcely be considered the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence."

Prof. Gerlach's words: "When speaking in tongues does not serve the purpose of edifying, it has no place in the church. Then it does not unite, it divides. Then it is not a tool of the Spirit, but of Satan." "As far as the charismatic movement is concerned, it is apparent from a testing of the spirits that it is not a

1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14.” This class focused on the gift of tongues in the Apostolic church in regard to their reason and purpose for existing. Many recall these classes as quite beneficial, but those who had left did not return.⁵⁴

The WELS statistical report shows that Our Savior in Pomona had 169 communicants and 45 children in school in 1971. In 1972 there were 149 communicants and 50 children in school. The 1973 statistical report shows the dramatic effect the tongue speaking incident had on the congregation in Pomona. In 1973 Our Savior in Pomona reported 72 communicants and 30 children in school.⁵⁵ The congregation was literally torn apart by what occurred in the years of the tongue speakers. It was truly a traumatic experience for all involved, those who stayed and those who left. However, the congregation would eventually experience growth and recovery under later pastors.

After Pastor John left for Tarzana, a retired pastor by the name of Luther Voss served the vacancy in Pomona. Pastor Voss formerly served as a chaplain in Vietnam. Between the time that Pastor John left and Pastor James Humann arrived as the next full time pastor, Pastor Voss had a real calming influence on the congregation. His tenure with the congregation was beneficial and his leadership allowed Our Savior to get back to normal after the uproar which had occurred. By the time Pastor Humann arrived everything was settled and there were not reoccurrences during his ministry in Pomona.

The events which took place in Pomona in the early 1970s tore a small WELS congregation apart. It certainly was a very traumatic time for the members of Our Savior Lutheran Church. The events are still recalled vividly today by some of the members.

phenomenon of the Spirit. It is a movement which distorts God’s truth into another gospel. Therefore we cannot regard its tongues speaking as authentic.”

⁵⁴ See Addenda for copies of these Bible studies

⁵⁵ From WELS statistical report from Pastor Hermann John

While the remembrance and responses vary for each individual all involved agree that it was a troubling and painful incident. But it was also one that provided an opportunity for growth, reevaluation of personal faith, and a recommitment and dependence on God's Word. Nearly 35 years later those involved reflect on these events, what they felt then, and what they feel now about what occurred. What follows are some of the current reflections of key individuals involved.

Some of the members reflected on why they thought the situation arose in the congregation. Principal James Dallmann remembers arriving at Our Savior in 1971. He speaks of what was going on in the congregation at the time. "After being there a few weeks my wife and I looked at each other and said, 'I don't think we're in the WELS.'"⁵⁶ He noted that there were fifty dead orange trees on the property, the playground was in disrepair, and there were problems with the budget. The spirit and zeal to do God's work was very low. It appeared as if the Lord was not blessing this congregation during this time. It appeared to Principal Dallmann that Pastor Sabrowsky had become very discouraged with what was going on at the congregation.

The tongue speaking had already started when Dallmann arrived. It seemed to him that there was a need that was not being fulfilled, the people were discouraged and this is where their desire for tongues came from, in order to fill the void they felt in their spiritual life. This perhaps showed itself in the fact that some of those involved with the tongue speaking were from the discouraged church leadership, a chairman of the congregation and school board members. These people were looking for new ways to improve the zeal in the congregation. They had seen what was going on in the charismatic movement, which started nearby, and desired those kinds of blessings for Our

Savior. However, this was not the place to look for zeal to do God's work. This can only come from the gospel message. The congregation would learn through this painful situation to go to the Word again and again.

John Parlow, the president of the congregation at the time of the tongue speakers, felt that the tongue speaking arose from the charismatic movement in the area as well as the lack of catechesis for new members. He believed that the people who were involved had not grown up in the church and had not received the foundation they needed to distinguish the dangers of false doctrine. Parlow remembered that the school served as an outreach tool, bringing families into the church. He thinks that there could have been more efforts for education of the adults so they would have a firmer basis in the faith. At this time the congregation really didn't have a "religious tone." By that he meant that it had become more of a club built around the school and athletics, etc. There was not a lot of Bible study that went on. He called it a "Sunday morning church." That was the extent of participation by the people. This situation of apathy in the church left it vulnerable for something like this to happen. "It was really partly our fault as a congregation. We could have done a better job with teaching new converts and giving them a better foundation in the faith. We were really happy to see people in church on Sunday. Unfortunately, for many, that was good enough."⁵⁷

Parlow also pointed to the young age of the WELS' mission program in California. "At the time of the tongue speakers, I'm not sure our Synod had the right

⁵⁶ From personal interview with James Dallmann

⁵⁷ From personal interview with John Parlow

people in place in the mission churches. I think today that those in these positions are better prepared for the mission congregations.”⁵⁸

Some members reflected on this trying situation and the traumatic effect it had on their lives. One member said, “Not many people really like to talk about it. Some people left the congregation not because they were tongue speakers but because they didn’t like how the situation was handled.”⁵⁹ Another member believed that situation was blown out of proportion. “Not very much really took place. I was quite upset when the families were voted out of the congregation. I didn’t think they needed to vote the people out as long as the people weren’t doing anything (publicly).”⁶⁰ Many left the church and never came back because of the way the situation was handled. Another member who stayed said, “I was so upset that I would have left and gone to another WELS church if there was one in the area.”⁶¹

Mrs. Carol Mishler, one of the tongue speakers who had been a life-long WELS member, remembered the experience as being very painful. “It was as if my congregation had turned its back on me. It was very traumatic. I had been a member of the Wisconsin Synod my whole life and then to have this happen was a hard thing.”⁶² Still today she is convinced that she received a special gift of God. She believes she still possesses this gift but doesn’t really “use” it. “It was just something that happened to a number of us back then. It wasn’t really a big deal. I remember when it happened to me [the tongue speaking] I had an incredible feeling of comfort. I remember repeating over and over again, ‘Holy Comforter stay with me. Holy Comforter stay with me.’ I knew

⁵⁸ From personal interview with Parlow

⁵⁹ From personal interview with member. Name withheld per request.

⁶⁰ From personal interview with member. Name withheld per request.

⁶¹ From personal interview with member. Name withheld per request.

that it was from God.”⁶³ Mrs. Mishler didn’t believe that what they believed was incorrect. She believes that it was different and people did not know how to handle it. She reflected on all the trouble this caused the congregation. “Sometimes I think I just should have kept it to myself as a private thing. I should not have told Pastor Sabrowsky because it scared him and I don’t think he knew how to handle it. Maybe if I wouldn’t have told anyone what happened it wouldn’t have caused a problem.”⁶⁴

John Parlow reflected on being a relatively young man and a leader of the congregation and the trouble it caused him. “It absolutely hurt me. I had questions on why I got into this so far. I felt I was in over my head and overwhelmed. It seemed like we looked for help but none was there. I didn’t crack up or anything, but did it hurt me? Emotionally? Yes. Physically? Yes. But did it hurt my faith? No, it strengthened it.”⁶⁵

James Dallmann remembered that it was a difficult time for those who held to the truth to stand up for it. “The other people stood back and didn’t say anything. It was a small congregation. Even the good people who knew something should be said didn’t at first.”⁶⁶ Dallmann also recalled the animosity that formed between those trying to warn of the dangers of tongue speaking and the tongue speakers. “Another member, a very Christian lady, sent a letter to the Synod because they blamed Pastor John for causing problems. Some of the people who signed the letter were pillars of the church. There was probably some influence by the tongue speakers.”⁶⁷

⁶² From personal interview with Carol Mishler

⁶³ Mishler

⁶⁴ Mishler

⁶⁵ From personal interview with Parlow

⁶⁶ From personal interview with Dallmann

⁶⁷ Dallmann

Mrs. Rachel John, Pastor John's wife, also recalled that this was a difficult time for her husband. "I remembered that he would come home and be visibly upset by what had happened. I would listen to him and wanted to support him and let him unload what was bothering him."⁶⁸ She remembered that some of the comments made to him during his interviews were quite unpleasant. "I don't remember exactly what they said to him, but it was not nice. They made some biting comments to him. He tried not to let it affect him, but it affected me."⁶⁹ Mrs. John said it got so bad that she sought some encouragement. "I remember at one point calling the mission board chairman, Pastor Hochmuth, to speak with him about it. I wanted to keep our home a safe haven for my husband and not let him know how it was affecting me."⁷⁰

It is obvious from speaking with those who were members of the congregation at the time of the tongue speaking incident that both sides experienced pain from the events that took place. One can see the truth of that statement by these recollections and the number of people who left the congregation. This also proved a time of great growth and recommitment to the Word for those involved. It served to strengthen their faith. To the faithful it was truly a refining fire. Parlow recalled, "There are always challenges that come with congregations and there are things you have to go through. This situation taught me not to question God's way of doing things. Just trust him. Though, it was emotionally trying God gets you through it with his Word."⁷¹ He remembered just how great of a danger God had rescued the congregation from. "The tongues speakers edified themselves instead of glorifying God. As we got into the discussing what the tongue

⁶⁸ From personal interview with Mrs. Rachel John

⁶⁹ Rachel John

⁷⁰ Rachel John

⁷¹ From personal interview with Parlow

speakers believed, Christ became less and less important.”⁷² Parlow noted that they didn’t reject Christ as Savior, but somehow downgraded him. “Christ was still the Savior. But he wasn’t the Savior like we think of him. Christ is the Savior, but I have gifts and that is more important. They really thought that their gifts were more important than Christ. Just ask them they would tell you that.”⁷³

Parlow noted that the Bible studies which were given during this time were beneficial. “The classes were beneficial to everyone and really strengthened their faith. The congregation grew from this. After the incident the congregation became very united.”⁷⁴ Others also recalled the Bible studies and how they strengthened the people. Principal Dallmann remembers how the people who had once remained silent stepped up when they were needed. “The people who knew what was right and remained silent really took over the leadership of the congregation. John Parlow became chairman at a young age and really took the bull by the horns.”⁷⁵ Dallmann recalls the final meeting. “After we had discussed that there was a need to separate if these people [the tongue speakers] didn’t recant there was a silent prayer. Following the prayer a motion was made and seconded to make this separation. When it came to a vote those men who once had remained silent stood straight up, they didn’t hesitate.”⁷⁶ This was an important moment for the congregation. They were not willing to compromise the truth. They were not willing to compromise God’s Word.

Pastor John echoed these sentiments. “Depend on the Word of God. Always be a little suspicious of emotions and feelings. Hold to the promises of God which are only

⁷² From personal interview with Parlow

⁷³ Parlow

⁷⁴ Parlow

⁷⁵ From personal interview with Dallmann

found in his Word. The written Word is where our confidence comes from. That is what we depend on. Don't look at what is inside of you. Look back to the Word."⁷⁷ This perhaps is the lasting lesson of this incident.

James Dallmann emphasized the importance of faithful work by God's representatives. "The Lord blesses you when you do his work faithfully. If we don't problems creep in. If we aren't faithful with the Lord and his Word, if we don't take a stand against those who oppose God's Word we will certainly not be blessed."⁷⁸

Dallmann also pointed out the importance of Christian education for children and adults. "People need to be given a good, solid foundation in the faith. That is of utmost importance. I remember a situation in Washington where a pastor tried to lead his congregation away from the synod. The people there were such solid Christians that not even their pastor could lead them astray."⁷⁹ Another lasting lesson from the tongue speaking incident in Pomona is the importance of Christian education. Education is so important so that people may know the truth, stand on it, and stand against those who oppose it.

The charismatic movement at Our Savior in Pomona literally tore this small congregation apart. Though this was a very difficult time for all involved the situation also served a positive purpose. While we cannot know his ultimate purpose and hidden will, it is obvious that the Lord used this situation to serve his people, to strengthen them with lessons only learned through experiences, experiences which drove them to his Word. In that Word they found the only place for assurance, the only place for comfort

⁷⁶ From personal interview with Dallmann

⁷⁷ From personal interview with Hermann John

⁷⁸ Dallmann

⁷⁹ Dallmann

and zeal. In the center of that Word they found Christ. It was not as if they had never found him or didn't know him before, but now they knew him better, to their benefit and to his glory.

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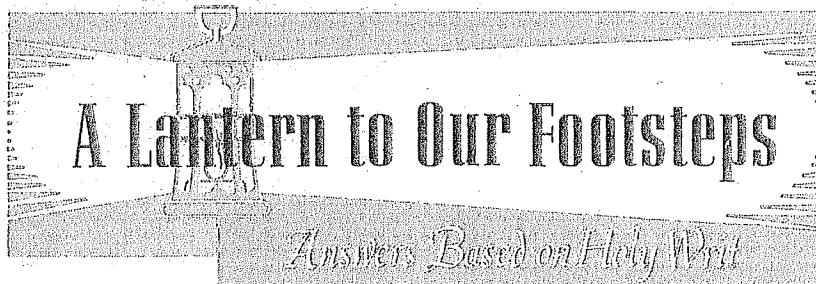
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ADDENDA

X NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN
Whoever, therefore, teaches the true doctrine, but doesn't warn against false doctrine, and against wolves in sheep's clothing, is not a faithful steward of the mysteries of God, not a faithful watchman on the walls of Zion. Rather, as the Word of God says, he is a wicked servant, a dumb dog, a traitor. Certainly, none of our

pastors want to be traitors to their Savior, who placed them into the ministry.

So don't criticize your pastor when he does his job, which also includes labeling a lie a lie, but thank God for him, and follow his advice, and avoid all false teachers and false teachings. KENNETH W. VERTZ



Topic: What Does the Bible Say About Speaking With Tongues?

"Please explain what is really meant by 'talking in tongues.' There is much talk of it now even among Lutherans and all claim a Biblical basis for the practice or 'gift,' as they feel it is. My understanding has always been that the occurrence related in the Bible meant that all assembled were given a common language, enabling them to understand each other as they had come from diverse places and each had his own language until the miracle occurred. The present belief seems to be that it is a special communication with God and a sort of 'transported' feeling." This is not the first reader to inquire about this subject.

We shall not be able in a brief article to examine everything that Scripture says about speaking with tongues nor how Scripture has been understood by various people. We shall, however, take note of some points it will be well to remember.

What Happened on Pentecost

On Pentecost Day the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was accompanied with the gift of speaking "with other tongues" (Acts 2:4). In a miraculous manner it happened that "every man heard them (the disciples) speak in his own language" (v. 6). This is not called a special language different from other human language. It was that each heard what was said *in his own language*.

Other Instances of Speaking With Tongues

Speaking with tongues is also referred to in two other places in the Book of Acts. When Peter preached to Cornelius in Caesarea, the Holy Ghost fell on those who heard him, and Peter and the others with him "heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (10:46). Later when Paul preached at Ephesus to some people who had never before heard of the Holy Ghost and knew only the baptism of John, "The Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" (19:6). These two examples, however, tell us nothing as to what this "speaking with tongues" was like.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul refers to the gift of tongues at greater length. There are various references throughout chapters 12 to 14.

All the Same Kind of Speaking?

One question that arises is whether these other occasions of speaking with tongues refer to the same kind of speaking as occurred on Pentecost Day. Some believe they do. Others point out that in I Corinthians we are told that "he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him"

(14:2). If the congregation is to benefit from his "speaking," either he himself or someone with the gift of interpretation must explain what he said (vv. 5, 6, 27). This gives the impression of a speaking that does not involve the mere use of any ordinary human language.

How Important Was This Gift?

How important a spiritual gift was this? St. Paul makes no reference to it in any other letter. Even when he writes to the Romans about spiritual gifts in chapter 12, he says nothing of speaking with tongues. And in writing to the Corinthians he mentions it last among the gifts listed (I Cor. 14:27, 28). Although he recognizes this as a gift of the Holy Spirit, yet he is concerned that the Corinthians should not value it above prophesying (vv. 5, 19). "But covet earnestly the best gifts," Paul tells the Corinthians (v. 31).

"Tongues Shall Cease"

Furthermore, we are told that "charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (13:8). In the following verses it is evident that prophecies will fail, that knowledge shall vanish away "when that which is perfect is come" (v. 10), that is, at Christ's return on the Last Day. But concerning tongues we are simply told that they shall cease. There is nothing to indicate that they will, however, continue until "that which is perfect is come."

Some Questions We Must Ask

In view of what we can learn from Scripture about speaking with tongues, these are some valid questions we must ask about those who claim such gifts today. Is the description in the Scriptures so clear that the unintelligible gibberish that is considered speaking with tongues can without doubt be recognized as this spiritual gift? Can there be certainty that this gift is continuing in view of the statement that it would cease? Do not those who claim to have this gift usually view it as a special, higher gift? Does not that make it suspect? Does it not tend to downgrade the simple, clear proclamation of the Gospel?

Rather than concerning ourselves about this lesser gift, may we covet earnestly the best gifts. Not some unintelligible sounds, but the clear, simple, understandable words of Scripture will thrill our hearts. Not vague, doubtful, meaningless sounds uttered in a state of high emotionalism, but the sure proclamation of the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ will strengthen faith, comfort the sinner, lead to salvation. ARMIN SCHUETZE

What It Is

When the Holy Spirit was given to the early Christians after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, His coming was accompanied by outward signs—the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues as of fire, and the ability to speak in languages which the disciples had never learned. These were real languages, understood by people who had come from many different regions of the Roman empire.

Modern Pentecostalism, which originated at the turn of the twentieth century, teaches that the Holy Spirit still makes His presence known by outward signs. But for all practical purposes, the one sign above all by which He is supposed to manifest His working is glossolalia, or speaking with tongues. A secondary mark of His presence in many Pentecostal fellowships is the gift of miraculous healing. Whatever difference one may find among Pentecostal churches, some of which are Trinitarian and some Anti-Trinitarian, all of them are agreed that the "full Gospel" must include speaking in tongues.

Origin of the Movement

Pentecostal churches in America are numbered by the dozens. Most of them trace their origin to the work of Charles Parham, who conducted a Bible school in Topeka, Kansas, and to William Seymour, a black evangelist, who had been trained by Parham and who conducted the famous Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles for many years. Both of these men laid great stress on "Holy Spirit baptism," consisting mainly in the bestowal of the gift of "tongues."

Early converts to Pentecostalism were encouraged to go back to their own churches and to introduce the blessings of "Holy Spirit baptism." When their efforts were not appreciated, they began to form Pentecostal congregations, which had a tendency to group themselves around the person of some outstanding leader. In this way the Assemblies of God, the Church of God, the Fourquare Gospel Mission, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, the Pentecostal Church of God of America, the United Pentecostal Church, the Pentecostal Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, the Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God, the National David Spiritual Temple

A LOOK AT

Pentecostalism

of Christ Church Union (Inc.) U.S.A., and scores of other bodies came into existence.

Antecedents of the Movement

Pentecostalism, understood as emphasis on outward evidences of the Spirit's working, is not something new. Even though Paul said that "tongues shall cease," and even though the phenomenon of glossolalia seems to have disappeared very early, yet Montanus, a heretic of the second century, who claimed to possess the gift of prophecy, also claimed for himself and others the gift of tongues.

In America, the "revivals" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, led by Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield and their successors, were also characterized by outward, visible displays of "Spirit" power. "Holy laughs," "holy barks," and "holy jerks"—terms which are self-explanatory—followed the preaching of these men.

Such signs were looked for, prayed for, and also promised by the early Pentecostal preachers. One of the first leaders of the movement described a successful camp meeting in these words: "Men, women and children screaming, shouting, praying, leaping, dancing, and falling prostrate under God's overwhelming power. Wonderful!" Such excesses are usually discouraged by second and third generation Pentecostals.

How Are We to Judge?

Admittedly the "spirit" that produces glossolalia and healing miracles is not easy to identify. A rushing mighty wind that can be heard by all, cloven tongues as of fire seen by all, identifiable languages understood by hundreds of people, healing that is invariably effective—these are manifestations never produced by

modern Pentecostalism. Modern glossolalia often is the result of self-hypnosis and occasional healing miracles may be nothing more than subjective self-deception.

But, as Paul clearly teaches in I Corinthians 12, where he discusses the gifts of the Spirit, the only true basis of judgment is the confession of faith made by those who claim the Spirit for themselves. And here Pentecostalism fails the test. While the movement is generally fundamentalistic, insisting on such doctrines as the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the reality of miracles, Pentecostalism allows the widest divergence on most other religious and doctrinal questions.

Early Pentecostalism was characterized by dissension and schism. Churches separated from each other over the question of bright neckties or the length of women's skirts. Questions of Biblical doctrine were seldom involved. It is also noteworthy that women preachers, such as the notorious Aimee Semple McPherson, have been among the most successful evangelists of the movement.

The Pentecostal sect accepts premillennialism as one of its fundamental doctrines. Most Pentecostals are also Arminian in their theology, that is, they deny the total inability of men to come to Jesus by their own reason or strength. The efficacy of the sacraments is universally denied by them.

Many of the early dissensions and schisms are deplored by modern leaders of the movement, and efforts to unite the various branches of Pentecostalism are apparently finding much success. But Pentecostals admit that such unity is achieved on the basis of "love" and not on the basis of agreement in doctrine. There is outspoken agreement to avoid all controversial questions and to allow each person to hold to his own opinion. The movement is therefore essentially unionistic.

Anyone who knows what the Bible says on the above subjects knows that such attitudes and beliefs are not the work of the Spirit of God. We can only conclude that where laxity of doctrine prevails, glossolalia can scarcely be considered the manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence.

PROF. STEPHEN W. BECKER
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

Why Continue The Ecumenical Courtship?

Bishop Underscores Ecumenism's 'Nots'

Steubenville, Ohio — (NC) — Steubenville's Bishop John King Mussio emphasized that ecumenism flows from Christ, not from the plans of men.

"In the light of what it is not ecumenism gives us a good picture of what in reality it is—a conscientious and personal striving to fulfill in our life and in that of those about us Christ's prayer that we all might be one, as He is in the Father and the Father in Him."

Bishop Mussio lined up the "nots" in ecumenism like this:

- A gradual whittling away of our Catholic Faith in order to fit it into some manmade picture puzzle of Christian unity.
- A compromise of basic doctrine to meet another compromise.
- A thing that will thrive on the evisceration of the Church's authority to please those who dispute that authority.
- A term to signify for any Christian the espousal of what he considers to be wrong.
- Strange prophecies and brinkmanship practices which perplex the minds of reasonable Catholics.
- A freedom of disputation that calls into question the fundamental truths of our Faith.
- A dialogue that strives to break down rather than strengthen a man's faith in the Divine Word.
- A concept that encourages a slighting of the teaching and declarations of our spiritual superiors, the Pope, and the bishops.
- An opening of the window to the night, where only shadows move, and darkness gradually takes over.
- Arguing about religious positions.
- Another word for proselytism.
- The dishonor of a violated Faith, the cowardice of a betrayal of religious conviction, or the transient enthusiasm nourished by novelty.
- A notion that we may now participate actively in the worship of others.

• A gadget that enables us to talk glibly of understanding and cooperation, while allowing the individual to wallow in prejudice, bias and the pride that divides.

• Defeatism.

• A device for world rearrangement.

Operation Understanding,
April 12, 1964

Speaking In Tongues

Vine Evangelical Free Church (Minneapolis) has been expelled from the denomination because its pastor and some members engage in speaking in tongues and other practices "Pentecostal in nature," according to *The Sunday School Times* of December 28, 1963.

The Twin Cities seem to be suffering from an epidemic of glossolalia [speaking in tongues]. A staff writer for the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* reports in the issue of December 22, 1963: "Some estimate that hundreds of church members — Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists and others — are attending prayer meetings at which tongues are spoken throughout the Twin Cities area. Most of the meetings are in homes because the denominational churches tend to be suspicious of tongues speaking."

"There are," continues the same writer, "some 50 Pentecostal churches in the Twin Cities area with perhaps 8,000 members to whom tongues speaking is nothing new. What is new, and somewhat amusing to their Pentecostal brethren, is the appearance of tongues among the more formal denominations."

To one somewhat acquainted with the Twin Cities clergy it is a shock to learn the names of some of the men prominent in this fanatical movement.

Faith healing is combined with tongues speaking. A woman afflicted with cataracts was told by one of the pastors that "a boy received sight in a glass eye at a previous meeting."

One of the leaders says there may be five or six prayer meetings on a Friday night, and others throughout the week. "To avoid disrupting their churches," says our reporter, "Twin Cities tongues speakers do their

enthusiastic witnessing at meetings in homes mostly."

Speaking in Tongues is a helpful paperback on this subject. H. J. Stolee is the author, and Augsburg of Minneapolis is the publisher.

* * * *

The following story, printed in the February 1964 issue of *Sudan Witness*, reveals heart-breaking experiences in the especially hard field of Muslim missions and should serve to remind us of the need of intercession for our workers in foreign lands.

Heartbreak in Arabia

A reminder that missionary work is not always victory and joy

Aden, Arabia: Out of these sun-swept deserts in 620 A.D. came the prophet Muhammed, with his "revelations" from Allah and the declaration, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is His prophet." With this *shahada* (witness) emblazoned on their standards and ringing from their lips, the Arab hordes swept out of Arabia's sandy peninsula, pushing westward across North Africa to the very threshold of Europe, and eastward to the confines of China. In this cradle and heartland of Islam the evil one does not easily let go of his subjects.

And so, when a group of six young men walked down into the blue waters of the Gulf of Aden in 1959 and identified themselves with Christ in baptism, our joy knew no bounds. At last, after years (since 1946) of toil, the cross was struggling upward against the forces that had held it captive for centuries. The cross would yet fly above the crescent of Islam!

We sent word home. "Pray! Pray that this will grow!" The believers grew in the Word. They loved their fellowship. They gave freely of their frugal means. Their testimony sounded out into the city, and our hearts rejoiced. But unknown to us, the thunderclouds were gathering.

The first young convert left Aden for the United Kingdom. He had gone through much persecution. Perhaps he wanted respite . . . and

(Continued on page 190)

ON TONGUES SPEAKING

What the Bible Says

What Lutheran "Tongues Speakers" Say

PURPOSE

1. A sign to confirm (verify) that the word preached by the Apostles was God's Word. "The Lord...confirming the word with signs following." Mark 16:20.
2. (Acts 2:4ff. Pentecost) A sign by which God showed that the promised Comforter (the Holy Spirit) had come. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."
3. (Acts 10:44-46 Cornelius) A sign by which God showed that the Gentiles were to be included in His gift of salvation. "God bare them witness giving them the Holy Ghost even as He did unto us." Acts 15:8.
4. (Acts 19:6 At Ephesus) A sign by which God showed that the "Baptism of John" is now to be replaced by the baptism in Jesus' name.
5. (1 Cor.12-14 At Corinth) Containing a revelation given by God to be interpreted for the edification of the people assembled. "Let all things be done unto edifying." 1 Cor.14:26. "If any man speak in an unknown tongue...let one interpret." 1 Cor.14:27. "To the edifying of the church." 14:12.
6. A sign of God's rejection to those who will not believe His words. "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." 1 Cor.14:22.
7. "Tongues shall cease." 1 Cor.13:8. Now that the Scriptures are written, God has no need of confirming signs, nor of speaking to people apart from the Word.

1. Help in times of difficulty. "Lord, I have a problem in my family. If tongues will help me, then I would like to have the gift of tongues."
2. Evidence of being controlled or "filled" with the Spirit. "Since I have received "the gift of tongues", I feel closer to God, have more courage to witness, more desire to read my Bible." "Was previously frustrated because of lack of spiritual power and ability to serve the Lord effectively." "Looking for signs of spiritual life since the church seemed spiritually dead."
3. Evidence that the other person who speaks in tongues has the Spirit of God and must therefore be a Christian, even if he is a Catholic priest.
4. "The Bible calls it a gift so why not have it."
5. Evidence of the "latter rain" - the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. (This is a misunderstanding of the prophesy of Joel. Peter explains it correctly in Acts 2:16 when he says its fulfillment began on Pentecost.)

HOW RECEIVED

1. Pentecost: God gave the gift suddenly - no previous preparation, prayer, desire, or training.
2. Cornelius: The gift came while Peter was preaching the Word.- No previous preparation, prayer, desire, or training.
3. At Ephesus: "When Paul had laid his hands upon the " - No previous preparation, prayer, desire, or training.
4. No feeling of ecstasy upon receiving the gift.
5. No prayer that others might receive the gift of tongues.

1. Had a desire for the gift of tongues.
2. Heard tongues speaking from someone else first.
3. Prayed for the gift of tongues.
4. Emptied self completely of all self-control.
5. Improves with practice. (A kindergarten when asked to lead a prayer in class, began speaking syllables, then shook its head and said "Oh, I can't do it like mommy does. Mommy says it is a gift from God.")
6. Feeling of ecstasy upon first receiving the "gift".
7. Prayer that others might receive the "gift".

What the Bible Says

What Lutheran "Tongues speakers" Say

HOW USED

1. Controlled. "God is not the author of confusion." 1 Cor.14:33
2. "Let your women keep silence in the churches." 1 Cor.14:34
3. Not to be used in public without an interpreter. "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God." 1 Cor.14:28.
4. Least of all the gifts of the Spirit. "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding..than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 14:19. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." 13:31. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." 13:4. "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood,..ye shall speak into the air." 1 Cor.14:9. (Self-edification may be a by-product of the gift, but it should never be the goal.)
5. In Acts, every tongues speaking was in a foreign language. In 1 Cor. the tongues speaking is not defined.
6. God speaks to us in His Word, and no other way today. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom.10:17. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Eph.6:17.
7. The Word of God is our solid foundation. Human feelings are "sand", and therefore not trustworthy.

1. Uncontrollable by some when first received.
2. Women have spoken in tongues in the church service.
3. Tongues speaking is often done in the presence of others without interpretation.
4. Gift of tongues desired instead of and in preference to the greater gifts which serve to edify the church. Gift used for self-edification.
5. "Tongues" is a combination of vowels and consonants not understood by the person speaking or the person hearing. (Note: speaking in a foreign language never previously learned by the speaker cannot be faked. However speaking in gibberish or in unknown sounds can easily be simulated by anyone. Example, the kindergarten making sounds and then saying "Oh, I can't do it like mommy does.")
6. Many tongues speakers think that God is able to communicate directly with them apart from His written Word.
7. Some have a feeling within that the Holy Spirit within them wants to talk to God in the language God has given to them. They feel that God is displeased if they do not speak in tongues when the feeling is present.

CONCLUSION: God says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world 1 John 4:1. From the above comparison, we conclude that the tongues speaking done among Lutherans today is not the gift of tongues as was given by God to the Apostles and early Christians as recorded in Acts and 1 Corinthians. The tongues speaking today is either satanically, psychologically, or artificially produced. Therefore it must be renounced if one wishes to remain faithful to Christ and His Word.

(Same ton as usual)

December 17, 1972

TODAY'S WORSHIP

Third Sunday in Advent

Order of Service: Hymnal page 5
Epistle and Gospel: (back of bulletin)
Sermon Text: Luke 3:2-14
Hymns: 70, 61, 441v 1, 87, 97v 1-2

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ATTENDANCE last Sunday 12^o

VOTERS MEETING today at 1:30 for election of officers Lynwood, CA
MISSION WORKERS meet Thursday at 1:30 at Herbert Reihers, 11065 Fenwell Dr.
NO ADULT TITLE CLASS on Thursday mornings until January 8th.
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL every Sunday at 9:30. This class is taught by Mr. Al Nelson and is open to all adults and young people above 8th grade.

LOVE IN ACTION It was love for us that prompted Jesus to come to this earth to give His life as payment for our sins. It was love for us that prompted Jesus to give us His Word so that we might be brought to know Him, believe in Him, and remain faithful to Him until death. It was love for us that prompted Jesus to instruct His people to pray that His Word be kept holy among us by being taught in its truth and purity ("Wallowed by Thy Name"), for Jesus knows that error is poison to the soul. It was love for us that prompted Jesus to instruct His people to admonish those in error so that they might give up their error and thus not be harmed by its poison. If a Christian brother or sister refuses to renounce his error, Jesus, again prompted by love for the erring persons and for all of His people, instructs the congregation to remove the erring brothers and sisters from the congregation in order that the erring ones may recognize the seriousness of their error, and that the leaven of error may not spread among the rest of God's people ("Now we commend you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us . . . and if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." 2 Thess 3:6, 14, 15).

In obedience to Christ's command and out of love for Him and for our erring brothers and sisters in Christ, this congregation voted last Sunday that Mr. & Mrs. Charles Nelson and Mr. & Mrs. David Hishler be removed from our membership until such time as they renounce their unscriptural belief on the matter of tongues speaking. (Material on tongues speaking is available on top of the organ). This action is not a judgment upon their personal faith in Christ as Savior, but is a warning to them that their error is extremely dangerous to their soul. Let us all pray for them that they may see the error of their ways and return to the truth of Scripture.

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:

SUNDAY, Dec. 24th: Regular morning service at 11 a.m.
Sunday, Dec. 24th (Christmas Eve): Sunday School children will present a service of song and verse at 7:30 p.m.
MONDAY, Dec. 25th: Christmas Day service at 11 a.m.
SUNDAY, Dec. 31 Church service with Communion at 11 a.m.

May 11, 1972

Mr. Otto H. Kirmsse, Jr.
8204 San Gabriel Canyon Rd.
Azusa, California 91702

Dear Mr. Kirmsse:

Herewith I am forwarding to you a copy of the Sept. 26, 1971, issue of the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN. On page 317 you will find an article by Dr. Siegbert W. Becker of our Seminary. The title is A LOOK AT PENTECOSTALISM, but there is a great deal said about glossolalia, the speaking in strange tongues.

At the same time I am sending a photocopy of page 135 of the NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN of April 23, 1972. There Professor Carleton Toppe comments in his editorial "Soundness in Missouri" about the charismatic movement in the Missouri Synod and quotes approvingly several statements from an official study by Missouri's Commission on Theology and Church Relations concerning this so-called charismatic movement. I do not have their entire statement at hand.

Our Commission on Christian Literature, which is meeting in my conference room at this very hour, is planning to publish a booklet on this subject, but it is not as yet ready for distribution.

I believe I. Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 speak very clearly on this subject. The gift that we should covet or ask for above all is Christian charity, which is genuine Christian love. This is set forth in Chapter 13.

Chapter 14 states: "Follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Here 'prophesy' means to teach and proclaim the Word of God. It does not mean to predict the future. It means proclaiming God's Word so that it can be clearly understood by those who are listening.

The next verses state "2. For he that speaketh in an UNKNOWN tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. 3. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

Verses 9 and following are very significant: "9. So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.... 11. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.... 13. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.... 18. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: 19. Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, than by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Mr. Otto H. Kirmsse, Jr.

2

May 11, 1972

The soundest advice for today's so-called speaking in tongues is found in verses 27-28: "27. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at the most by three, and that by course, AND LET ONE INTERPRET. 28. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God."

Why should any congregation use twice the amount of time required to proclaim a message? Why should we first have our pastors read an Old Testament text in Hebrew and then in English so that the congregation may know what he was saying in Hebrew? We have him right from the moment he opens his mouth use the language that all present can understand.

The same would certainly hold for any one who claims the ability to speak in strange tongues. Let that person speak to himself and to God IN PRIVATE, but not in the church or the Bible class where no one can understand what he is saying.

This advice of God through His Apostle Paul is very sound. And I am sure that most of those claiming the ability to speak in tongues will soon be discouraged if they must do so in private. They will grow tired of listening to themselves even as the congregation or their own family would weary of listening to sounds that tell no one anything.

Let us always remember: On that first Pentecost Day, the Apostles and disciples spoke in real languages and were understood by those who had come to Jerusalem for the festival. God wrought a special miracle that day to speed the spread of the Gospel to many lands. For those who heard the disciples said: "We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." Acts 2:11.

I hope this will prove helpful.

Sincerely yours,



OSCAR M. NAIMANN

WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN Synod



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Rev. Oscar J. Naumann

3512 West North Avenue

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Office: 445-4022

February 21, 1973

Residence: 463-6071

The Rev. Hermann John
31785 Yucaipa Blvd.
Yucaipa, California 92399

Dear Brother John:

Your letter of February 12 has been received. In my letter of February 8 to you, I wrote that my letter of May 11, 1972, to Mr. Kirmsse could be read to the congregation "if this will serve to quiet the disturbance." The February 8 letter was addressed to you because you, as the vacancy pastor, must make the decision.

The conditional clause suggested that my letter of May 11, 1972, may not serve the cause of peace. That letter was written in response to a request that came to the Synod office asking for the WELS view on "speaking in tongues." The letter was not intended as a practical guide for a specific discipline case. When I wrote the letter, I was completely unaware of any such specific discipline case. If I had been, I would have declined to become involved.

I subscribe fully to what both Dr. Becker and Professor Gerlach have written. If my letter appears to contradict either author, I must have expressed myself unclearly.

It is my strong conviction that I should not become involved in the affairs of the Pomona congregation. The congregation has a responsible pastor, and the district has responsible officials.

It is my hope that this will take care of any problems my letter may have caused in the specific case of discipline.

Once more let me wish you the Lord's richest blessings as you begin your ministry at St. John's, Tarzana!

In Jesus Christ,

Oscar J. Naumann

OJN:vas
cc: President I. G. Frey
Vice Pres. Marcus Nitt

Intro.: (Questions to answer) 1. If you would die today, are you sure you would go to heaven?
2. If you would die today and stand before God and He would ask you: "Why should I let you into My heaven? What would you say?"

I. God is our Judge

1. God's Law demands Perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt.5:48).
"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal.3:10).
"A certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."
(Luke 10:25-28.)
2. ALL HAVE SINNED AND ARE GUILTY BEFORE GOD. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23).
"That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Rom3:19
3. ALL ARE CONDEMNED BY GOD AND SENTENCED TO ETERNAL DEATH. "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom.6:23).
"Therefore as by the offense of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (Rom.5:18).
"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor.6:9-10).
4. NO ONE CAN ESCAPE ETERNAL DEATH BY HIS OWN DOING. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified (declared innocent) in His sight" (Rom.3:20).
"It is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph.2:9).
"You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal.5:4 NASB).
"Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified (declared innocent)" (Ps.143:2).

RESULT: If left to ourselves, we would all perish.

II. God is our Savior

1. ALL ARE LOVED BY GOD. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16).
"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10).
"For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people." (Luke 2:30-32).
2. GOD THE SON TOOK THE PLACE OF ALL. "Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation (payment) for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2).
"Surely He (Jesus) hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and

with all scriptures we are healed, all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Is. 53:4-6. "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

3. ALL ARE JUSTIFIED (DECLARED FORGIVEN) BY GOD. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:23-24). "Therefore as by the offense of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. 5:18-19). "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them... For He (God the Father) hath made Him (God the Son) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. 5:19, 21).

RESULT: In God's sight everyone is forgiven. The door of heaven is open to all.

III. Faith is Needed

1. "BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED" (Acts 16:31). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

2. NO ONE IS ABLE TO MAKE HIMSELF BELIEVE IN JESUS.

We are by nature spiritually blind: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:9, 14).

We are by nature spiritually dead: "You were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

We are by nature enemies of God: "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7).

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him." (Luther's Small Catechism, meaning of 3rd Article of Creed).

RESULT: If left to ourselves, we would all perish. "He that believeth not is condemned" (John 3:18).

IV. God is the Author of Faith

1. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES FAITH IN PEOPLE. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12:3).

"But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. 2:10, 12).

"Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God" (Jer. 31:18).

2. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT USES THE MEANS OF GRACE (The Gospel in Word and Sacraments) TO CREATE FAITH. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?.. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:13ff).

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." (John 17:17, 20).

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. 1:23).

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).

Baptism is being "born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5).

"The washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). God's gracious Word, connected with water, makes Baptism what it is.

"Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who

3. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT CREATES FAITH IN THE ELECT (Those chosen by God before the foundation of the world).

"Blessed be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph.1:3-6).

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim.1:9).

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto He called you by our gospel." (2 Thess.2:13).
"And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

(Unbelievers are lost, not by God's fault, but by their own doing. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet.3:9).
"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, How often would I (Jesus) have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt.23:37).)

4. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT KEEPS A PERSON IN THE FAITH. "An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet.1:5)

"Briefly stated, then, the doctrine of predestination is this: Whatever God has done, is doing, and will still do for us during our life on earth to bring us to faith in Christ and to preserve us in this faith unto eternal salvation, is not a matter of chance; neither is it motivated by any personal merit and worthiness, or better conduct, which God foresaw in some people; but God has from eternity purposed and planned it, and by grace for Christ's sake He has chosen and predestinated us to salvation before the foundation of the world." (A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Koehler, p.182).

RESULT: Faith in Christ is the work of God, not of man.

CONCLUSION: Our salvation from beginning to end is entirely the gift of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph.2:8-9).

WORDS TO PONDER: "Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so."

Questions for Discussion

1. How can a person know for sure whether he has forgiveness of sins?
2. What should a person do if he begins to doubt whether he is forgiven?
3. How can a person know whether his faith is the genuine, saving faith?
4. What is wrong with this statement: "You can receive Christ right now through prayer."?
5. (Discuss the two questions in the Introduction).

NOT FOUND ANYMORE "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (Col.2:14). If you believe that Christ has suffered for you and redeemed you, you can say: "If Christ has my sins, I do not have them anymore. He has taken them away from my heart and my conscience. When Christ has taken my sins upon Himself they are written neither in Heaven nor on earth. They are laid on God's Son and only on Him".

- Intro: (Questions to answer): 1. Do you have the Holy Spirit in you right now? _____
2. If your answer is "yes", how do you know that you have the Holy Spirit in You?

Review: PAID IN FULL FOR YOU. The act whereby a sinner is "made right" with God the Bible calls "justification." God declared the whole world righteous when His Son died on the cross. He removed the debt which every sinner owed but could not pay. He credited to the account of every sinner the perfect righteousness of Christ, his Substitute.

Perhaps this can be illustrated by means of a little story. It is said that at one time Henry Clay owed \$10,000 to a bank in Kentucky. A number of sympathetic friends, knowing Mr. Clay was troubled over his inability to pay, secretly raised the money and quietly paid off the debt. When Mr. Clay later came to the bank to discuss his large indebtedness, the cashier startled him with the unexpected announcement: "Mr. Clay, you don't owe this bank a cent. Your account has been paid in full." "Why, how am I to understand you?" Mr. Clay exclaimed. "Well," said the cashier, "a number of your friends have raised a sufficient sum and have paid off your debt for you. You don't owe this bank a thing." Tears rushed into Mr. Clay's eyes, and unable to speak, he walked away. His heart was overwhelmed by the joy of a great deliverance from a crushing debt. When he went to bed that night Mr. Clay knew that, at long last, he was "right" with his bank, not because of anything he had done, but because of something someone else had done for him.

So it is with our salvation, "And He (Jesus) is the propitiation (payment) for our sins, and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2).

I. The Problem

A person becomes dissatisfied with his spiritual life. He begins a quest for power to live a better Christian life. Where does such power come from?

II. The Solution

A. NO PERFECTION IN SANCTIFICATION

1. Justification is always perfect, but Sanctification remains imperfect here on earth.

Sanctification = holiness of life which follows conversion. The inward renewal of man, which follows faith in the forgiveness of sins, by which he turns his back on sin and serves God in doing good works.

Paul, the Christian, laments: "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. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me...O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." Rom. 7:18ff.

Formula of Concord (Lutheran Confessions): "There is a great difference perceptible among Christians not only in this, that one is weak and another strong in the spirit, but each Christian, moreover, experiences in himself that at one time he is joyful in spirit, and at another fearful and alarmed; at one time ardent in love, strong in faith and hope, and at another cold and weak." (Triglot p.907).

2. Scripture denounces perfectionism. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1 John 2:8,10. "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Ecc. 7:20.
3. We strive for perfection. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after (press on)." Phil. 3:12.

B. SOURCE OF POWER FOR HOLY LIVING

1. Christ in me. (Look up John 15:1-6; The Vine and the branches).
"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal.2:20.
"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil.4:13. 13.
"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Phil.2:
"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" 1 Cor.6:19.
"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal.5:22.
2. Battle between flesh and Spirit. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal.5:16,17.
"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom 8:13,14.

C. WHO HAS CHRIST & HIS HOLY SPIRIT IN HIM?

1. Received in Holy Baptism. "Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal.3:26,27.
"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38. (By His Word and through Baptism the Holy Ghost comes into our hearts with His gift of faith in the forgiveness of sins.)
"According to His mercy God saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly." Titus 3:5.
"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" Gal.3:2.
2. Remains in all who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.
"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Eph.3:17.
"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor.12:3.
"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor.3:16.

D. HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES POWER FOR HOLY LIVING

1. Reminds us of Christ's love for us. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." 2 Cor. 5:14.
"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Rom.12:1.
"We love him, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19.
2. Buffet the flesh - God's grace is sufficient. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." 2 Cor.12:7-10.
3. The Holy Spirit does this work through the word of God. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Eph.6:17.

"From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim.3:15-17.

(Note from Section D,1 how the Holy Spirit uses the Word to remind us of Christ's love.)

Luther says: "The real sword is this, that you are strong and firm in the faith. If with your heart you take hold of the Word of God and cling to it in faith, the devil cannot win, but must flee. If you can say: 'This my God hath said; on this I take my stand,' you will see that he slinks away, and with him will depart the sluggishness, the evil desires, anger, miserliness, melancholy, and doubt. But the devil is sly; he will not have you put your trust in the word and reaches out to wrest it out of your hand; if he can make you lazy, so that your body becomes unfit and filled with knavish desires, he will soon wrest the sword out of your hand. He thus had his way with Eve; she had God's word, and if she had clung to it, she would not have fallen. But when the devil saw that she held the word so loosely, he tore it out of her heart, so that she let go of it; and thus he had won. (2 Cor.11:3) Thus St. Peter has sufficiently instructed us how we are to fight the devil. Running to and fro will not do, nor any work that you might perform; what is needed is that you cling to the word by faith. When he comes and would drive you into despondency because of your sin, just take hold of the Word of God which promises forgiveness of sins and take that to heart, then he will soon have to leave off." (Quoted from Pieper III, p.17).

4. Summary a) Knowledge of Christian truth comes only from the word: "If ye continue in My word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth." John 8:31,32. b) Faith and regeneration is worked by the Holy Ghost through the Word: "Being born again..by the word of God." 1 Pet.1:23. c) The Spirit is received through the hearing of faith (Gal.3:2). d) Power of God comes from the word of God: "For the preaching (word) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." 1 Cor.1:18.

E. DANGER OF SEPARATING THE SPIRIT FROM THE WORD

1. In the realm of nature, Christ is present and rules everywhere, also apart from the word. "By Him all things consist." Col.1:17.
2. But the remission of sins for Christ's sake and faith in this remission, regeneration unto spiritual life and all the spiritual gifts connected with it, God will give only through the means of grace He has ordained, through the Word of the Gospel and the Sacraments. Hence actually everything that is regarded as brought about by the Holy Ghost without the word is fictitious, "illusory," "self-produced." The experience one has, or imagines, without the means of grace is not the product of the Holy Ghost, but is "man-made." (Pieper III, p. 136).

"Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken word and Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the word and the Sacrament." (Luther: Triglot p.495).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 & 2. (See questions in introduction)
3. What advice would you give this person: "I feel frustrated because, in my life, I have a lack of spiritual power and ability to serve the Lord effectively."
4. What dangers do you see in this request: "I have asked the Lord over and over for a miracle in my life, but so far it has not happened. What does one do to see a miracle beside pray?"

The Corinthian Problem

For light on the tongues movement, we must turn to the most detailed statement in the Bible on the subject: I Corinthians 12, 13 and 14. This section is much quoted by the Pentecostals in support of the movement; yet, oddly enough, it was not written in support of the gift of tongues but, rather, to put the gift of tongues, as then employed, in the proper place and perspective. Paul was writing to a troubled congregation, answering a letter in which questions had been asked about some of their problems, among which was this on the gift of tongues. Quite apparently, then as today, the gift of tongues had become a very divisive element in the Corinthian church. Those who had it not only felt, but also gave indication that they thought themselves superior to those who did not have the gift. Then, as today, there was strife, dissension and apparent lovelessness in dealing with the problem--lovelessness on both sides, but especially disturbing as it was revealed by those who supposedly had received the Holy Spirit into their hearts and lives. It is in introducing this answer to a specific question on the subject that Paul writes, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed." and now let us just touch the highlights of the section.

Who has received the Holy Spirit? Paul says, "...no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (12:3). In other words, everyone who believes on Jesus as Lord and Saviour can be sure that he has been baptized with the Spirit. He does not need some special manifestation of the Spirit's presence in his life. This is one of the sad things of the Pentecostal movement. It not only promotes a Christian community divided into two classes (those who have the gift and those who do not), but it also raises doubts in the minds of many of those who do not have the gift as to whether they are truly Christian.

Paul then points out that there is a variety of the gifts of the Spirit, all given by the same Spirit (12:4-11) and given for the common good (12:7). He enumerates these gifts of the Spirit as (1) the utterance of wisdom, (2) the utterance of knowledge, (3) faith, (4) gifts of healing, (5) the working of miracles, (6) prophecy, (7) the ability to distinguish between spirits, (8) tongues and (9) the interpretation of tongues. Note that of the nine gifts, tongues and related interpretation are listed last and least of all. I cannot believe that this is an accidental listing on Paul's part, for later in the chapter (12:28-30) Paul gives the list in another way: "...God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret. In short, I sense that Paul tactfully tries to minimize the gift of tongues among all the gifts that the Spirit gives. He condemns, as it were, by the use of faint praise.

In the next section of I Corinthians 12, Paul uses his illustration of the church as the body of Christ, in which each member, with the particular gifts given by the Spirit, contributes to the well-being of the whole body. Usually treated out of context merely as a description of the members of the church working together in Christ, in context this reveals something of the problem that the Corinthians were experiencing and the problem experienced in modern congregations when the tongues movement has entered in. In summary of the section, Paul says, in effect, that it is the purpose of the eye to see, the ear to hear, the tongue to speak, etc. If all members of the body were to have the same function, then the body itself could not function. The eye cannot therefore despise the foot because it cannot see, nor dare the tongue lord it over the nose because it cannot speak. God wisely made the body, Paul says, "that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (12:25). Yet we find in the tongues movement a tendency on the part of

Christians, to think themselves superior to all others and their gift the most important gift in the body of Christ. This attitude, perhaps more than anything else in the tongues movement, accounts for the emotional opposition to, and rejection of, the movement by those who do not have the gift. Paul does not have that high regard for the gift of tongues. After enumerating the gifts of the Spirit for the second time, with the gift of tongues at the end of the list, he concludes the chapter: "But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way." (12:31)

With that, Paul embarks on his wonderful chapter on love--love so apparently lacking in the situation in Corinth--one of the three greatest of God's gifts (faith, hope and love), and the greatest of the three. Here we must comment that we cannot but pray that all Christians might be disturbed about their spiritual condition and seek improvement of the same. Here we cannot help but comment that the cure can be known--and it is not the gift of tongues, but it is love. Here we cannot help but comment: let not the spiritually disturbed prescribe to God the gift of tongues as the cure, but seek from God the increase of love for God and for fellow man by the indwelling power of the Spirit of God.

Edifying the Church

It is in 1 Corinthians 14 that Paul makes his most telling statements on the subject of the gift of tongues. "Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy" (v.1)--not that you may have the gift of tongues but that you may prophesy--that you may have the ability to teach, exhort, admonish, comfort and build up one another in your Christian faith and love. "For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless some one interprets, so that the church may be edified" (vs. 2-5). The Pentecostals here find encouragement for speaking in tongues but ignore the fact that Paul calls the gift of prophecy greater. I here find the apostle Paul speaking, as we say, with tongue in cheek, minimizing a practice in the Corinthian congregation that is not common to the Christian church but which has been taken over in Corinth from the mystery religions of the Hellenists.

What does the gift of tongues contribute to the kingdom of Christ? Those who have the gift will tell you how wonderful it makes them feel, how it has increased the dimensions of their spiritual life. It does give them evangelistic zeal--to propagate their Pentecostal form of religion. It does lead them to search the Scriptures--to filter the Scriptures through their bias to find what they can interpret to support their pursuit of the gift of tongues. Evangelistic zeal and love for Bible study, properly directed and employed, is something we could wish to see more of among all Christians. Then they would be less prone to be swept up by every passing error and religious fad such as the tongues movement.

What does speaking in tongues contribute to the church? Paul says: "Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? So with yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning; but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the

of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church" (vs.6-12). Further comment is hardly necessary except to note that Paul states that our goal in all that we do in the body of Christ, the church, should be directed toward building up the church--to win those who have not yet received the gospel, to build up the faith, knowledge, love and life of those who have been brought into the fellowship of the church through the power of the Spirit in the preaching of the gospel.

Grow Up!

The next section of 1 Corinthians 14 contains words much quoted by the Pentecostals. Paul says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all..." (v.18) See, Paul speaks in tongues! But Paul does not say that he speaks in ecstatic utterances as do the Pentecostals. As an educated and well-traveled man, I have no doubt that Paul could say this literally, referring to known languages of the world in which he was conversant. But let us concede that he might have spoken in tongues in the Pentecostal sense. Then hear the words in the context in which they have been written: "Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may give thanks well enough; but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (vs. 13-19).

The Pentecostals feel that they have attained spiritual maturity when they have attained the gift of tongues. This makes them superior to the spiritual babes who have not yet received the gift. How does Paul rate the gift with regard to spiritual maturity? He continues, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature" (v. 20). That is a reprimand! He is telling the Corinthian tongues-speakers: You are being childish! Grow up! He had implied the same thing in 1 Corinthians 13:11: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways."

Paul continues in explaining why the gift of tongues was given in the early church as on the first Christian Pentecost: "In the law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.' Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" (14:21-25). The tongues-speakers use the prophecy of Isaiah 28:11 as a prophecy of tongues-speaking, but Paul does not quote the prophecy as a prophecy of speaking in tongues--which it is not. His emphasis is on the thought that all the speaking in unintelligible words will convert no one: "... even then they will not listen to me..." As originally recorded, the words are nothing but a pronouncement of judgment upon Israel. Israel would not listen to the prophets sent by God. He would bring foreign invaders and oppressors upon her. But not even these speakers of foreign languages would persuade Israel to listen to the precepts of God.

On the first Christian Pentecost, speaking in tongues unknown to the speakers did convert 3,000 to faith in the Lord Jesus. But the tongues spoken were known to the foreigners gathered in Jerusalem, and the converting power was not in the fact that

the disciples spoke in tongues unknown to themselves, but in the fact that they proclaimed the wonderful work of God through the Lord Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world from sin and eternal damnation. Speaking in unintelligible gibberish can only antagonize the unbelieving and contributes nothing to the spiritual growth of the believer. Believers are benefited by, and unbelievers are converted by, the gift of prophecy, which proclaims Jesus Christ as the world's only hope for salvation.

GOD'S HELPING HANDS

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do his work today.

He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side.

What if our hands are busy
With other work than His?
What if our feet are walking
Where sin's allurements is?
What if our tongues are speaking
Of things His lips would spurn?
How can we hope to help Him
Unless from Him we learn?