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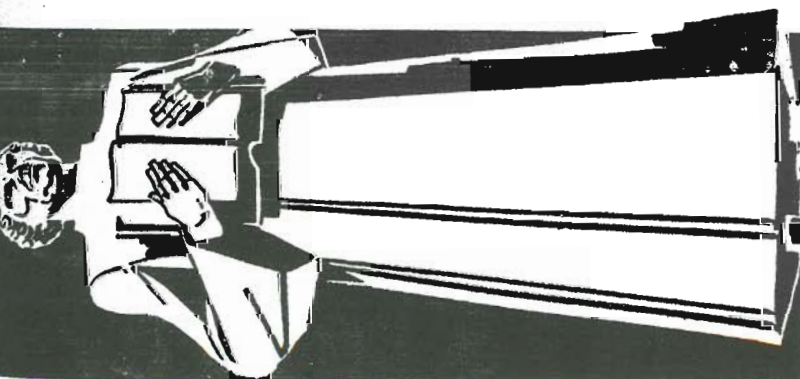
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THE RISE OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT in the main-line denominations in the last decade in the United States found most churches in a state of unpreparedness for a movement of this size. Pentecostalism dates back to 1920's and formation of the Assemblies of God. For roughly two hundred years the church has been involved in a struggle concerning the interpretation of the Bible. This struggle deals primarily with methods of the Biblical interpretation that offered explanations to various sections of the Bible that seemed at variance, often direct variance, with which the text actually seemed to say. Thus Luke 1 and 2 do not necessarily tell us that Jesus was born of a virgin, but rather it is a legend or story that glorifies the life of a great man. Many examples could be given, as this method in one or another form has been with the Western churches since the time of Reimarus and Lessing in the 18th century. It might be said that it formed the center of theological discussion. The famous Modernist-Fundamentalist debate in the 1920's was actually only the American manifestation of the movement. In recent years the controversy has been waged in the Lutheran denominations in America and has now become a prominent topic of concern in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

While the Missouri Synod has been directing its theological energies in the last decades to problems of Biblical interpretation, the Charismatic movement sprang up in an almost entirely different direction. The problems of Biblical interpretation were planted and harvested chiefly at the theological training schools and the entire issue still has to be laid completely out before the congregations and their pastors. Recent surveys still show a grass roots orthodoxy among the people. Because of the complexity of the problems of Biblical interpretations many, if not most, of the congregations have not become involved in it. Even the so-called theological experts are not omniscient in the field of Biblical interpretations, but for the most part concentrate on one or two "schools of thought." In this maze of confusion concerning Biblical interpretation, it is no wonder that pastors have, perhaps very wisely, not ventured far into the field. Some have used "the assured results" of the method(s) but few are really versed in the skills—if that's what they really are—of Biblical interpretation.

As the theological training schools have been concentrating their efforts on the problems of Biblical interpretation and some of problems produced by the various methods, many Lutheran pastors have had to face outbreaks of the Charismatic movement within their own congregations. At one time, hardly ten years ago, the manifestations of the charismatic movement were isolated phenomena, in the Lutheran churches. This is hardly the case any more. The presence of charismatics in Lutheran congregations is no longer a rare phenome-

non. The pastor who does not have to deal with the movement in his congregation will probably confront it in the pastoral conference (as many pastors are involved) or in circuit youth groups. In addition there are now synodwide and inter-synodical Charismatic organizations.

Unlike the problems of the higher critical methods which have a lengthy history in mainline Protestantism, the Charismatic movement does not have the same roots. It is emotional in nature, putting the heavy stress on the experience of the believer. The problems of the critical study of the Bible, on the other hand, stressed objective goals and methods that could be used, supposedly, on secular and sacred literature. The question of its objectivity is still a problem. One of its main shibboleths was that the Bible could be read and understood just like other forms of human literature. The humanity of the Bible is one of its rallying cries. Its appeal was to the intellect and was thus intellectual in its orientation. It called itself the "scientific method" giving the impression that by using certain methods one necessarily had to come to certain conclusions. Methods and conclusions were allegedly uniform, though this hardly ever proved to be the case.

The Charismatic movement centered more in congregations than in seminaries, though recently seminaries with enrollment problems have been catering to the movement's adherents. Such an intellectualization of the Charismatic movement would eventually be self-destructive since its appeal is more to the heart than to the head. The speaking in tongues, the most prominent aspect of the movement, is a type of non-intellectual exercise. It is more emotive than rational. The practitioner of this "gift" has the confidence that he is saying something directly to God, though he is unaware of the content of his own phonetic sounds. The experience is self-satisfying and does not necessarily need interpretation for completeness, though interpretation of the unknown tongues is not discouraged.

The purpose in writing this essay is not to analyze at great length the Charismatic movement. Rather my purpose is to provide a few impressions that hopefully can be of immediate value to the pastor. Such an approach might promise too much, but it intends to speak to the present need. For a more extensive study and analysis, the reader is directed to *The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology*, a report of the Commission of Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod January 1972. Appended to that report is a bibliography that should suffice and does not need to be produced here.

Just for the sake of clarity, I will pose questions which might be typical in handling the Charismatic movement:

1. *Does the Lutheran Church have any official position on the Charismatic movement as such?*

The official position of the Lutheran Church is the Lutheran Confessions. As they were written in the 16th century, they do not of course speak directly to the current movement. Still the confessional principles can be applied almost directly to the current situation. Recognition of mere historical validity of the Confessions is a

non-Confessional stance. It might be difficult to trace the Charismatic movement directly back to the 16th century and impossible to make a one for one equation between it and the Anabaptists which Luther knew, nevertheless the 16th century Anabaptists and the Charismatics have many things in common. Sections of the Confessions dealing with non-Anabaptist problems contain principles applicable to the 20th century Charismatic movement.

Shortly after Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation in Germany, a movement known as the Anabaptist movement sprang up on the same soil. One of Luther's colleagues on the Wittenberg faculty, Andreas Carlstadt, was associated with the movement. One of Luther's major essays, *Against the Heavenly Prophets*, spoke not only against the excessive practices of the movement, but also against its basic premise that God worked directly without external means. The major obvious difference between the Anabaptists and the Charismatics is that the Anabaptists insisted on a second baptism of water, while the Charismatics hold that a second water baptism is not necessary for those already baptized. Those who have the water baptism are to supplement it with an experience called the "baptism of the Holy Spirit," involving no water. The Anabaptists were avowedly anti-Trinitarian. This hardly seems the case with Charismatics, though with their emphasis on the Holy Spirit they may seem to become, to some, defacto anti-Trinitarians. With their strong commitment to Jesus, this could be a debatable point.

The Anabaptist and Charismatic movements are parallel in that both claim some sort of direct "pipe line" to God—a favorite phrase among them—alongside the Bible. Visions and dreams were prominent ways in which the Anabaptists claimed direct communication from God. Speaking in tongues is a prominent way in which the devotees of the Charismatic movement speak directly to God. This speaking in tongues is motivated directly by the Holy Spirit without means, as understood in a Lutheran sense. This direct immediate "revelation" apart from Scripture or a word based on Scripture is a feature common in both groups. Luther called those claiming direct communications with God "fanatics," "enthusiasts," in German, "*Schwaermer*." This is not to say that either group has no use for the Bible. In fact, in comparison with other Christian groups, they seem to make more use of the Bible in their devotions, private and public. Meetings advertised as "Bible Study Groups" are in fact Charismatic meetings. A factor with both groups is that special revelation is directly available to the believer apart from the apostolic and prophetic Word.

Some strictures of the Augsburg Confession (CA) against the Anabaptists can be applied without too much adjustment. Such adjustment is always necessary for the change in circumstances. As already indicated in part, some strictures do not apply. Thus Charismatics do not generally hold that those who are justified cannot lose the Holy Spirit (CA XII); that Christians cannot participate in civil government (CA XVI); and that there will be an end to hell for unbelievers (CA XVII). In fact the very opposite could be said about the Charismatics.

The strictures that do apply are found in CA V, "The Office of the Ministry," and CA IX "Baptism," CAXIV, "Order in the Christian Church." Unlike the Anabaptists, the Charismatics do not hold that infant baptism is wrong in every instance, though some Charismatic pastors have been known to refuse to baptize infants. If "Spirit baptism" precedes water baptism in importance, the necessity of water baptism must be of a secondary nature, so far as salvation is concerned. Charismatics do in fact exist in all major paedobaptist denominations without raising violent objections to the practice of the baptism of infants. Some practice infant baptism without in any way letting up on their demand for a later "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

Charismatics resemble the Anabaptists in their assertion that infant baptism is not enough. It must be supplemented by the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." The article of CA on baptism, directed against the Roman Catholic teaching that baptism covers only original sin and any actual sins committed before baptism, but not the sins committed after, pertains to Charismatic phenomena, strange as that might seem. Penance, in Roman Catholic theology, was one of the common sacramental means of receiving actual forgiveness for actual sins committed after baptism. The Lutheran teaching (CA XII, "Repentance") is that baptism, at whatever age it is received, is complete and covers totally any sin of the penitent Christian. Baptism has daily and continued significance as Luther pointed out in both the Small and Large Catechisms (IV). Charismatics do not hold to any supplementary efficacy of penance, but they like the Roman Catholics hold that the baptism by water must or should be supplemented, in this case with the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" for a more nearly complete or fuller Christian life.

CA V, "The Office of the Ministry," applies most pointedly to the Charismatics. The final sentence in this article might equally apply to the charismatics, "Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts and works without the external word of the Gospel."

The Lutherans at Augsburg in 1530 did in no way want to be associated with the Anabaptists who taught that anyone who "had the Spirit" could be a leader in the church. Lutherans contended mightily for the office of the ministry consisting of persons publicly chosen. Not that Luther and his associates adopted Roman sacerdotalism but rather the leaders of the church should be well versed in the Holy Scriptures, something which could happen only through careful study of the Bible and not instantly through visions or the like. It was the Gospel as contained in the Bible which brought justification and therefore the clergy must be trained in Bible study. Those without such formal and extensive training could serve in an emergency, but never on a regular basis. The ability to perform the office of the pastor rested ultimately in the word that the pastor learned from the Bible and not from any visions or other type of direct revelations. As the Reformation progressed, Luther saw the ultimate dangers in the "fanatics" with their visions and not in the highly structured administration of the Church of Rome. In the end Luther

condemned the pope as a fanatic because his direct visions from God took precedence over the written Word of the Scriptures. The pope, like Anabaptists, was subsumed under the category of the "fanatics."

Closely connected in principle with CA V is CA XIV, "Order in the Church," "It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call." Among the Anabaptists, the office of the ministry could be exercised by anyone claiming to "have the Spirit." Under such situation, a regular office of the ministry could become superfluous and sometimes did. A similar procedure is afoot among the Charismatics. Charismatics do exist in churches which highly prize a regularly called clergy; however, they place equal or superior value on private worship services which are conducted on a more or less regular basis. These services do not necessarily have the benefit of a professionally trained clergy. Indeed professional training for the Charismatics can be a detriment in a fuller reception of the Holy Spirit. While they may not deny the right of the regular clergy to administer the water baptism, the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" can best be conveyed by one who has already received it, whether or not he be a clergyman at all. The "worth" of the religious leader in the Charismatic community is determined not by his formal call or training, but by the intensity of his own personal experience. The same criterion is applied in judging the value of the worship service itself. This is not unlike the Donatist heresy condemned by CA VIII. The Donatists claimed that unregenerate clergy could not effectively and validly perform priestly functions. In both cases, faith, its level or lack, is decisive in determining priestly validity. Schleiermacher in the last century leaned in the same direction.

The Lutheran Church treasures a called or professional clergy not because it values a highly "cultured" or "educated" clergy—as what is culture and education might differ according to the situation. The value of the called and professional clergy rests in the assurance that they have studied the Scripture sufficiently to know Jesus Christ in order to proclaim the Gospel to bring about justification in the individual (CA V). On the other hand, Charismatics concentrate on the emotional level of the experience ignited by the meeting, though the experience can be transferred to the personal devotion.

2. *Are the signs associated with the Charismatic movement signs of the church? Are they commanded by Christ and do they have His promise?*

These two questions are really one since Christ's church can be recognized by doing what her Lord has commanded. Until Christ returns, His church is under orders to do certain things. Matthew 28 obligates the church to baptize and to teach all things whatsoever Jesus taught the disciples. Anything more or less is forbidden. The sacrament of Christ's body and blood is to be celebrated until He returns. These are commands of Christ to His church, and in turn the church may be recognized as the church of *Christ* whenever it fulfills this command. Wherever preaching, baptism and holy communion are taking place, there the church of Jesus is present.

Are the phenomena commonly associated with the Charismatic

movement a necessary or even beneficial sign in the same or related sense?

The Charismatic movement does not remove baptism, holy communion and preaching as signs of the church, but they place along side of these as "sacramental" signs other phenomena, chiefly speaking in tongues, prophesy and healing. Still the Gospels contain no command of Jesus to His church to do them. Also important, they lack Christ's promise.

Mark 16:9-19 which mentions speaking in tongues, healing, casting out demons, etc. is missing in the best manuscripts and should not be given any serious consideration. Matthew 3:11, as well as Luke 3:16, in which John the Baptist promises that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire has nothing to do with the Charismatic phenomena, though this passage is very prominently used in the movement. Charismatics connect the Baptist's prediction of the baptism of the Spirit in Matthew 3:11 (Luke 3:16) with the baptism of the Holy Spirit promised the disciples in Acts 1:5. Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4f. are the bases for Pentecost. The baptism of the Holy Spirit and with fire in Matthew does not seem to have its focus on the day of Pentecost, which is the subject of Acts. Matthew's reference to the fire does not deal with the appearance of the tongues of fire, but rather with the fire of God's wrath and hell as these confronted John's hearers, especially the Pharisees. Jesus confronts people in such a way that a negative response will bring hell ". . . but the chaff He will burn with an unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12). Luke 3:17 parallels Matthew in seeing that fire is not something desirable. This type of baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire should be avoided, not prayed for!

Luke 10:17 has been given an interpretation favorable to the Charismatic movement. The seventy return from the mission assigned by Jesus enthusiastically reporting their success with the demon possessed. Exorcism, or the casting out of devils, can be commonly associated with the Charismatics. However, Jesus directs their enthusiasm away from their accomplishments to the fact that their names are written in heaven. Also there is no command of Jesus to continue such activities. There is only the promise that the disciples through their work will defeat Satan (v. 19). This includes much more than exorcism.

Outside of the Gospels, the Charismatics treasure highly Acts 2 where the followers of Jesus are empowered to speak in various languages. As noted above, finding in Acts 2 a direct fulfillment for Matthew 3 and Luke 3 is not without substantial problems. The application of this pericope to the current Charismatic phenomena of speaking in tongues seems to be without sufficient warrant. The overwhelming majority of contemporary tongue speakers do not speak any known or intelligible language, though occasionally there have been some alleged exceptions. At best it is some type of non-communicative and non-intelligible phonetic operation. In Acts 2 the disciples of Jesus actually spoke known languages which were immediately recognizable by various segments of their audience. ". . . we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God

(v. 11).” There is no indication anywhere in the NT that this miraculous gift that the disciples had on Pentecost continued in any way. The gift of language was not primarily for the hearers and not necessary for them. Presumably most, if not all, knew the liturgical Hebrew, necessary for the pious Jew to take part in the services of the Jerusalem temple and/or Greek the language of travel, government and commerce. The gift’s primary significance was to show first the disciples and, secondly, all who were there that God’s mission which mostly concentrated on one people, the Jews, would eventually attain its ultimate goal in the universal proclamation of the Gospel to all nations. The promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:3) was reaching its ultimate dimension. The Book of Acts does indeed show how this was partially accomplished in the ministries of Peter and Paul. The Gospel, preached by Jesus in Jerusalem, was now preached by Paul in Rome. There is no promise to any there on Pentecost that this miraculous speaking in tongues should or would continue. There is no command for the converts to speak in tongues. The “water” baptism of the apostles was itself a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter and Paul, the centers of attention in the Book of Acts, carried out their ministry in places where Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek were commonly accepted languages. They are not mentioned as tongue speakers in their subsequent ministry. They never preach another type of baptism.

There are three other possible cases of tongue speaking recorded in Acts, Cornelius and some people in Samaria and at Ephesus. The baptism of the Samaritans did cause the same theological problems connected with Gentiles who had no Jewish connection. Philip’s ministry is endorsed by an apostolic visit of Peter and John who by the laying on of hands confirm Philip’s ministry. Tongue speaking is not explicitly mentioned, but may be safely assumed because Simon, the magician, noticed a change. The audible gift of the Holy Spirit was “proof” that Christ’s command and promise about Samaria (Acts 1:8) was being fulfilled. The case of Cornelius, Acts 10, is theologically paralleled to the Pentecost. Peter is confronted with the problem of whether the Jewish food regulations are still applicable. This is more than a dietary matter. Peter did not fully realize (v. 14) that the old Israel had served its purpose as being the cradle for the Christ and that with the coming of Christ its regulations had been made antiquated and thus non-enforceable, maybe even undesirable. God’s new Israel would receive new members without subjecting them to the regulations of the old Israel. The coming of the Holy Spirit accompanied with miraculous signs on the household of the Gentile Cornelius (vv. 44-46) showed to Peter and his associates, who still labored under the regulations of the old Israel, that a Gentile, e.g., Cornelius, could be totally acceptable to God without ever subjecting himself to the older regulations. Peter’s comment in v. 47 sums up this position. “Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have?*” (Emphasis added.) The Gentiles were being received on an equal level with the Jewish Christians into God’s kingdom. The speaking in tongues was an immediately recognizable sign to Peter and his col-

leagues that the Gentiles were acceptable. There is no indication that this procedure of speaking in tongues was carried out in the regular worship services or that it continued in any way, even by Cornelius.

The case of those at Ephesus (Acts 19: 1-5) is slightly different. They had received the baptism instituted by John and had believed in Jesus through the preaching of Apollos. Their religious comprehension was accurate, but incomplete. They knew Jesus as the Messiah but did not fully know the Holy Spirit, either His person or work (vv. 2f). The gifts of tongue speaking and prophesying (v. 6) were a sign to them that John's baptism had been superseded by Jesus' baptism. John's baptism was one of promise. Jesus' baptism was based on an accomplished fact. In all cases, Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch and Ephesus, there is no indication that tongue speaking was carried out in the regular church services. Nor is there any apostolic command to speak in tongues. Three cases recorded in Acts show the geographical fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8, Jerusalem in Acts 2, Samaria in Acts 8, Antioch in Acts 10. These pericopes indicate the three geographical concentric circles in Jesus' promise. Acts 19 shows those baptized by John can be welcomed as full members of the community. The baptism of John needed fulfillment now that Christ had come. In all four cases, the miraculous appearance of the Spirit is spontaneous and momentary. None of those who spoke in tongues would be Charismatics, as it is understood today.

Of the remainder of the New Testament writings from Romans to Revelation, *only one letter*, I Corinthians, mentions tongue speaking, and not very favorably at that. In this letter is no command to exercise this gift or even to pray for it! Of all the churches of the first century, the Corinthians are generally remembered as having the worst reputation. The church today follows Paul's admonitions to them, and *not the Corinthians as examples*.

They are examples only in a negative sense. Tongue speaking is mentioned only in light of being a negative example. In chapter 12 it is mentioned as last in a list of gifts (v. 30). In chapter 13, the great chapter on love, it is listed as the first of the abuses that stand in the way of love. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am noisy gong or a clanging cymbol." None of Paul's words concerning this gift are really positive. Rather than praying for this gift or any other, the Christian is to pray for the "higher gifts" (12:31), which are available to all. Paul directs them away from their "gifts" to "a still more excellent way" (12:31). The "excellent way" outlined in chapter 13 demands faith, hope and love," the latter being the highest. These gifts are essential for the Christian life and are not functions as the Corinthian "gifts" were.

After Paul outlines various theological principles for the use of the various "gifts" (chapter 12 and 14), he lays down some principles for the use of the "gifts," especially the speaking in tongues phenomenon. These principles are outlined here for the sake of convenience.

1. prophesying is superior to tongue speaking
 - a. desire the ability to prophesy, no mention of doing the

- same for tongues is included, though Paul had the opportunity, v. 1
- b. prophesying benefits the assembled congregation, tongues benefit only the one performing it and thus is egocentric, hardly in keeping with the mission of the church of helping others, vv. 3f.
 - c. speaking in tongues benefits the congregation when another gift is present, interpreting; basically it is a gift that is never complete in itself, but demands a complementary gift, v. 5.
2. tongues can be a useless gift
 - a. Paul does not use it in the Christian congregation, v. 6
 - b. it is compared to lifeless instruments playing unrecognizable music, vv. 7f.
 - c. it is unintelligible, v. 8
 - d. languages unknown to the hearers are not beneficial, vv. 10f.
 3. tongues can even be a harmful gift
 - a. with tongues the congregation loses any sense of participation, which can be destructive of its worship life, v. 16
 - b. the mind is not used and thus does not engage in worship, v. 14; true worship involves the whole being, v. 15
 - c. non-members could conclude that the congregation is mad; and thus an unnecessary obstacle is placed in the path of the one who has not come to Christ, v. 23

Paul does not seem totally negative in the matter of tongues, but when his words are examined more carefully they can hardly be considered a command to exercise the gift. What seems superficially positive may be basically negative.

1. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers. This however is a sign of condemnation and not salvation! Paul quotes Isaiah 28: 11-12 to show that even miraculous signs will not convert the unbeliever. "By men of strange tongues and by lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, *and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.*" (Emphasis added) The church's function is to be an instrument of salvation to the world and not condemnation. The latter is the church's *opus alienum*, not its prime function.
2. Paul's claim to the gift is hedged in by the condition that five intelligible words are more valuable than ten thousand unknown words. The apostle could also be referring to his acquired language ability that could have included Greek (koine and classical), Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin, and the native languages of his native Asia Minor. He never paraded this acquired talent to the congregation as he shied away from personal glorification. Paul is frequently facetious especially with the Corinthians, cf. II Corinthians. Could his claim be just a caustic remark? (v. 19)
3. Where the gift is still used in the church—there is no command to do so however,—it must be limited to two or three

tongue speakers and it must be accompanied by interpretations, vv. 27f.

4. Paul's command, "do not forbid speaking in tongues" is not a positive admonition to carry on the practice! It is prefaced by the admonition to "earnestly desire to prophesy." Paul's command to prophesy and his lack of command to do the same for speaking in tongues is significant.

When all the evidence in I Corinthians 12-14 is examined, there can be found no command to speak in tongues. In fact the evidence all points in the other direction. We can only speculate on why Paul did not include a firmer prohibition of its use. What other issue takes as much space in his writings? In itself it does not seem to be a moral evil, like stealing or drunkenness, but the evil attached to those claiming personal holiness or perfection. Like other "gifts," its effects in public worship are more detrimental than beneficial. Indeed Paul lists not one benefit for tongue speaking when used by itself in the worship service! Paul might have thought that an explicit prohibition against its use might have exactly the opposite effect. Since all who possessed the "gift" apparently liked to use it in every worship service, the limitation to two or three tongue speakers might have had the effect of completely killing its use altogether. Rather than choosing two or three, they might have agreed that if all could not use it, then none could use it. By isolating and limiting the phenomenon, Paul in effect was eradicating it. Apparently it is a gift that needs an audience to flourish. It lives off the emotional climate of an excited audience. Noteworthy also is that Paul does not encourage or even command the private exercise of the gift.

Charismatics as a rule do not mention Paul's restrictions on the use of the gift. How many Charismatics meetings have only two tongue speakers? On the contrary they turn the prohibitions into commands to exercise the gift. Much time is spent praying for it. Charismatics can not demonstrate any apostolic command for such prayers. The first letter to Corinth did not mean the end of pastoral admonition for this congregation; but if the absence of any mention of tongue speaking in the second letter means anything, it means that it was at least under control by the time Paul wrote his second letter to them.

3. *Is speaking in tongues a uniquely Christian experience?*

Speaking in tongues, like the many other expressions of Christian piety, is not exclusively a possession of the Christian congregations. I Corinthians 12:28 lists valid expressions of Christian service: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various tongues. These offices and functions performed by these offices have their counterparts in other religions. The uniqueness of the Christian religion is not the presence of these gifts or functions, but the message entrusted to it that God has redeemed the world in Jesus Christ, i.e., the Gospel. All functions are gifts to serve only this purpose. Where they do not, it would be better if they fell into disuse. Here we get back to the topic of the marks of the church. The chief mark of the church, e.g., where the

church is to be found, is the proclamation of the content of the Gospel in order to create faith. Certain gifts, e.g., speaking in tongues, healing, etc. or types of offices, bishop, elder, etc. are not marks guaranteeing the presence of the church. There are false prophets, apostles and teachers. Many things which Christians do to express their faith can be found in other religions. Thus engaging in religious services, giving money, missionary activity, speaking in tongues and even praying can be found in other religions. Some gifts are more directly related to the essence of the spiritual life than others. Faith, hope and love are the higher gifts, (I Corinthians 12:31 and I Corinthians 13) without which the Christian is not a Christian. Christianity without these gifts is dead.

None of the gifts listed in I Corinthians 12:28 are essential as personal possessions for the faith life of the individual Christian. The greatness of faith is not measured or determined by the functions performed.

Even where the great gifts are present, there is no assurance that faith is present. Those who cast out demons, prophesied and did mighty works in Jesus' name are consigned to hell because they did not do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21-23). The preaching of the Gospel, which is the real will of the Father is an unfailing sign that the church is present. The same cannot be said for the unique works done by Charismatics, no matter how great they appear. Even Satan can be the instigator of great signs (Matthew 24:24). This is hardly a passing a judgment of Satanic on the Charismatic movement, but it is to alert the reader that fantastic signs in and of themselves are not conclusive evidence in determining their origin. The preaching of the Gospel is always the sure sign that Christ's church is present. Such a lofty statement can never be made of the characteristic Charismatic gifts.

4. *Is there any one major theological fallacy in the thinking of most charismatics that can be pinpointed?*

As already indicated, the Charismatic movement presents many different theological problems. The doctrine of Word and revelation, baptism, and the call are all involved. The pastor confronting the problem might like St. Paul treat it by isolating the phenomenon and cutting it off from its source of nurture, public attention. When the abuses of the movement cannot be stopped in its early stages, the church is under obligation to explain theologically the errors of the movement. Paul's threat of excommunication does apply to the "tongue speakers" (I Cor 14:37-40). These errors are more than of just a practical nature, they are theological.

Among the errors already mentioned, one seems to stand out over the rest. The basic error is that the Charismatic movement tends to equate the level of sanctification in a believer with the presence of one or more of the gifts or offices. This rudiment of Gnostic theology is a recognized factor in the Corinthian congregation. To put it more succinctly, for the Charismatics the possession of the gift indicates a higher level of spiritual maturity or advancement. This is not unlike Roman Catholic theology where the priest possesses the *character indelibilis* by virtue of his ordination. He has a sacramental "grace"

not available to the laity. The "Spirit movement" in Corinth were so "Spiritually" advanced, that an eschatology without a resurrection became unnecessary for the members.

Charismatics urge the believer to pray for one or more of their gifts. They acknowledge that God will not answer this request in every case, still it is beneficial to ask for it and to continue to ask for it. When the gift is received by the petitioner, it is acknowledged with great joy by the Charismatic community, something like the angelic joy over repentant sinners.

Is it right to pray for God's gifts? On the surface, only a positive answer seems possible to this question. After all in the Lord's Prayer, the Christian prays for gifts, spiritual and temporal, and these gifts are to be received with thanksgiving. However, the gifts listed by Paul in I Corinthians 12:28 are different types of gifts, as even the Charismatics would openly acknowledge. In examining the New Testament evidence there is no command all Christians must pray for these "gifts." There is no promise that God will affirmatively answer these requests in every or any case. To aspire to the office of pastor or bishop (I Timothy 3:1) is to desire a noble task. *But* there are prohibitions concerning the office which automatically eliminates some aspirants (vv. 2-7). James (3:1) seems to discourage some aspirants for the office. The refusal of God to grant the "gift" or the office is for the sake of the congregation first and the man second. Divine refusal in no way reflects on the personal life of faith!

Not only are some Christians discouraged from asking for certain gifts, but in some cases it might even be wrong to make a constant practice of asking for these gifts. Thus if one can pray for the gift of tongues today fervently and continually, would it also be possible for someone to pray to attain to the office of the apostle? After all, they are both found in the list of gifts to the church. Where the qualifications for the office are not present in the person, or where the need in the church is not present, it is wrong for that person to pray for the office or the gift, especially when this lack of qualifications and these needs have been brought to his attention. Brief spontaneous prayers must be distinguished from continued and systematic requests. Thus no 20th-century man can pray to be an apostle, as he cannot possibly fulfill the requirements outlined in Acts 1. The same can also be said of women aspiring to the office of pastor. Some in Paul's day aspired to the office of apostle without God's call to that office. They are called false apostles (II Corinthians 11:13). Just as there could be, were and can be false apostles, so there can be false tongue speakers, healers and miracle workers. The pope who claims that his word is of equal interpretative authority with that of the apostles of Christ is a classical example of a false apostle. He from his office speaks authoritatively in the church even though Christ has not given him this function. The same could be said of the apostles of Mormonism and other religions who assign the title of apostle or their office to living persons. These remarks are not to label as false any or all who possess such gifts in the Charismatic movement, still the church of Jesus is under obligation from Him and

His apostles to take a critical stance against all religious phenomena, especially those without a specific command like tongue speakers.

The Charismatic confuses the level of sanctification with the presence of the "gifts," e.g., speaking in tongues, when the giving of the gift is identified with the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." There is no guarantee in the Scriptures that a person with a "gift" is any more or less favored by the Holy Spirit in regard to salvation. If anything, those with the "gifts" in Corinth have fallen out of divine favor because of these gifts. Faith is the only quality that God finds favorable in His sight. A gift, pastor, apostle, tongue speaker, is to benefit the Christian community, it does not benefit God. Neither does its personal possession by the believer benefit the believer qua believer. The worth of a gift is measured solely by its benefit to the Christian community. Speaking in tongues is the least of the gifts because it does not benefit the community but the individual. Even to suggest otherwise is to fall back into the work righteousness against which the Reformation protested and to deny the *sola fide*. Insofar as the Charismatics exalt certain works as being marks of God's favor on certain individuals in regard to their level of faith or sanctification, it falls under the same condemnation that applies to work-righteousness.

It is the terrible confusion of justification and sanctification, to use the more traditional dogmatic terminology. The possessor of the gift is no more or less justified than the non-possessor. The same enjoyment of salvation is equally available to both possessor and non-possessor. The alleged Charismatic "gift of the Holy Spirit" replaces faith as the only way in which a man is found acceptable and pleasing to God. Thus certain features of the Charismatic movement are an attack on the very heart of the Gospel. A gift or office can be destructive of faith when the Christian begins to treasure these more than he does Jesus Christ, who is the object of his faith. No one questions that God can and does give gifts to His church. No one questions that the Christian can pray for certain acceptable gifts and aspire to their use. But it is very questionable to pursue these gifts as if the possession of gifts indicates a person who is more pleasing to God. The Scriptures point out many people who possessed gifts but whose faith was weak or went out on occasion. Moses, David, the other kings of the Jews, the disciples were given offices by God and were endowed by certain gifts, but all fell from God, some permanently. Matthew 10 lists Judas as a true apostle. Those of great faith were a centurion and a Caananite woman who had no other known gifts beside their faith. The church preaches to build up faith not to give more gifts.

In closing, the lack of balance in the Charismatic movement can be noted. Like the Corinthian congregation, they prized the gift of the speaking of tongues in direct opposite proportion to which they should have. Faith, hope and love should have received their attention. These gifts all Christians should and must have. They endure. Among the gifts benefiting the congregation, apostles, prophets and teachers are the most important services in the church because their task was to proclaim Christ. The speaking in tongues was the most useless

simply because of its unintelligibility to others and because it served the speaker and not the congregation. Charismatics take what is the least important and make it the most important, elevating this gift to a position that because of its very nature it does not deserve. Among those listed, the one gift which the church could do best without is the speaking in tongues. The church can never do without preaching. For this reason Paul urges submission to His Word, i.e., the apostolic word, and prophesying. Teaching is important since it is the explanation, *didache*, of the Gospel.

There are many that hold that the Charismatic phenomenon as it has broken out in the church will disappear as suddenly as it appeared. Giving it too much theological attention might be providing for it that very abusive situation which it so readily thrives on and enjoys. Still there might be some pastors who can benefit from these observations.