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# THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL TO LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

*Egil Grislis*

The "veritable deluge of works" on the charismatic renewal<sup>1</sup> has necessitated a selectivity of both subject matter and sources. Thus I have chosen to pay particular attention to the life-style advocated by this movement, the doctrines that thereby have come into the focus of attention, and the theological reactions of the three larger Lutheran church bodies in North America. Exegetical, historical, and biographical details have been referred to only marginally. While particular attention has been paid to Lutheran statements, Roman Catholic theological studies in this field have often been found to be instructive. At times authors of other denominations have also been consulted.

## I.

The primary focus of the charismatic renewal is religious experience<sup>2</sup> — a dimension of reality often held suspect by traditional Lutheranism. As charismatic Lutheran pastor Erwin Prange relates, "My Prussian ancestors had bred into me a deep distrust of the emotions. Man had to live by reason; living at the 'gut' level was undisciplined and self-indulgent. To a degree, these ancestors were right; when men live

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1. Robert H. Culpepper, *Evaluating the Charismatic Movement: A Theological and Biblical Appraisal* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1977), p. 9.

2. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C., *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, rev. ed., 1977), p. 241.

just on the level of feelings, a moral breakdown results. On the other hand, we cannot live by reason alone. We cannot truly relate to God and each other on the intellectual level."<sup>3</sup>

Just what is expected to occur by way of an "experience" is rather vividly conveyed by David du Plessis, an ecumenically well known Pentecostal churchman. He had been asked: "... are you telling us that you Pentecostals have the truth, and we other churches do not?" David du Plessis had replied, "We both have the truth . . . You know, when my wife and I moved to America we bought a marvellous device called a deep freeze, and there we kept some rather fine Texas beef. Now my wife can take one of those steaks out and lay it, frozen solid, on the table. It's steak, all right, no question of that. You and I can sit around and analyze it; we can discuss its lineage, its age, what part of the steer it comes from. We can weigh it and list its nutritive values. But if my wife puts that steak on the fire, something different begins to happen. My little boy smells it from way out in the yard and comes shouting, Gee Mom, that smells good! I want some!" David du Plessis then concludes his story with emphasis: "Gentlemen, . . . that is the difference between our ways of handling the same truth. You have yours on ice; we have ours on fire."<sup>4</sup>

Thus while experience does not offer a new theological set of insights, it supplies an authentic recognition and intensification of the insights already possessed in the church. Clearly, experience then cannot be a one-time event; it is a process of growth in faith and life. At the same time it must be assumed that the process will not be uniform but may display a wide spectrum from the thoroughly sound to the tragically self-righteous. The final verdict on the quality of each renewal experience will most likely depend on the Christian wisdom and maturity of the participants in the renewal movement and the theological resourcefulness and sensitivity of the church in which the movement is making inroads. It is not the intent of this paper either to defend or to accuse but to understand with appreciation the positive perimeters of the movement.

## II.

In some significant way the impact of the charismatic movement has depended on the timing of its arrival. Although insecurity invades every decade, there seems lately to be considerably less good news and depressingly more bad news: energy shortage, inflation, high interest rates, unemployment, threat of an atomic war, danger of street crime, drug problems, pollution, to mention but a few. Consequently, it is noted, "Recently the American mood has receded inwardly. Apathy, despair, loneliness, alienation, loss of identity have displaced a zest and a faith in 'progress' . . . the depersonalization, loneliness, and a sense of powerlessness among many people today has much to do with new trends in the life of the church. The church itself may at times seem formal, unfeeling, dull in its preaching and liturgy."<sup>5</sup>

The worst that can be said about our situation, however, does not refer to what

3. Erwin Prange, *The Gift is Already Yours* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1973), p. 27.

4. John L. Sherrill, *They Speak With Other Tongues: The Story of a Reporter on the Trail of a Miracle* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 61.

5. J. Elmo Agrimson, ed., *Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ: Perspectives on the Charismatic Movement* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), pp. 9-10.

is observed in the world, but what may be seen in the churches. The results are summed up by the now widely familiar quotation: "Heaven may belong to the born again, but the churches are filled with the bored again." Such a situation seems to have affected the growth and therefore the liveliness of the churches. Although the relatively smaller Lutheran population in Canada is still growing, the far larger Lutheran membership in the United States is in an acknowledged decline<sup>6</sup>; even Lutheran seminary enrollments are down. Without claiming that Robert Shuller, the California possibility thinker, must be correct, we ought to consider his observation, "If a church is not growing, then either no unchurched people are in the community or the church is a failure."<sup>7</sup> At least a question is in order: What if the overall Lutheran decline is the result of our faith having cooled down to the freezing level?

At the same time, we note, the charismatic renewal movement has been very successful and is rapidly spreading. From within the ranks of its followers there have emerged several rather serious criticisms of the establishment. These criticisms may not be always accurate, but it certainly could not harm us to hear them. Father Edward D. O'Connor, a Roman Catholic professor in the theology department at the University of Notre Dame and a charismatic, for example, has criticized the "melancholy . . . tones" with which "most theologians and ministers of religion bewail the disappearance of God from human life . . ."<sup>8</sup> "When anything lively comes along, they recoil from it instinctively. Of such people, it can only be said that their reactions are those of the dead."<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere O'Connor puts it even more pointedly, "Since no human being can pursue a joyless existence for long, this kind of Christianity tends to make people shrink from taking God wholeheartedly as the centre and meaning of their existence. Indeed, it almost compels them to look upon religion as a set of disagreeable requirements to be fulfilled while the real meaning and joy of life are sought elsewhere. Such desiccated religion has undoubtedly contributed to the hunger for religious experience in our young people today."<sup>10</sup>

The highlights of such ossification are the "mechanical way" of praying and leading the service, "uninspired preaching" and "spiritless singing."<sup>11</sup> Present day charismatics can recall with true anguish their own one-time contributions to such deadness. Thus Larry Christenson, a well-known Lutheran charismatic pastor, records the recollections of another Lutheran pastor in these words: "I'm just going through the motions. I can't even stand to hear myself preach any more."<sup>12</sup>

Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, the primate of Belgium and a charismatic, has wryly noted his conviction that "Jesus did not present aridity as the normal condition of the Christian life."<sup>13</sup>

Not surprisingly then charismatics have also diagnosed a "lack of genuine community in church life today".<sup>14</sup> They have asked: "Has the Holy Spirit withdrawn,

6. *Partners*, August 1980 issue.

7. *The Lutheran*, June 18, 1980, p. 27.

8. O'Connor, pp. 146-147.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 269.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

12. Larry Christenson, *The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans: A Pastoral and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services, 1976), p. 17.

13. Leon Joseph, Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 66.

14. O'Connor, p. 219.



of a purpose, from His more dynamic manifestations? Or have we, perhaps, quenched the free operation of the Spirit by our unbelief . . . ?"<sup>15</sup>

Without entering into a debate whether such a diagnosis applies to all, to many, or only to a few situations, we should not overlook the seriousness of the charges. Because wherever they are applicable, the church has no one else to blame for the current malaise but itself.

Insofar as the charismatic critique of the church is accurate, it is not new; it offers echoes of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and many others. But insofar as it offers a prophetic critique the charismatic movement both judges and suggests an inspired and saving direction for future. Illustrative may be Cardinal Suenens' appreciation of the assertion which he quotes with relish: "God told us we were his *chosen*, not his *frozen* people."<sup>16</sup> Convinced that "the Church . . . always needs to be reformed",<sup>17</sup> the Cardinal has taken his clue from the Word of God. Unwilling to succumb to the worldly claim that the present condition cannot be improved, he writes, "Hope makes mockery of our weighty statistics, our probability charts, our prognostications about the future . . . Hope is the servant of God, the 'Master of the impossible' who draws straight with crooked lines."<sup>18</sup>

The larger spiritual concerns of the charismatic renewal deserve to be taken seriously. After all, we are not here dealing with insights of a handful of fanatics but with a large movement which has penetrated all the mainline churches. The beginnings of the charismatic renewal may be seen in the Pentecostal movement which began at the turn of this century.<sup>19</sup> As has been pointed out by Fr. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B.,<sup>20</sup> outside evaluations of Pentecostalism between 1910 and 1966 tended to be largely negative. The movement was viewed as sectarian, a lower class phenomenon, and caused by psychological, sociological, and economic deficiencies. As the Pentecostal movement gradually became middle class and shed its radical image, more appreciative analysis began to emerge. Even the speaking in tongues was no longer regarded as pathological, but was viewed as "socially passable, even where it won little positive approval. It was accorded something akin to benign toleration."<sup>21</sup> If in the earlier days Pentecostals "were for the most part driven out of the established churches by ridicule, persecution, or excommunication,"<sup>22</sup> now they remained within their respective denominations. Labelled "Neo-Pentecostalism", the charismatic renewal movement emerged first in 1958 among Episcopalians in Monterey

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15. Christenson, p. 27.

16. Suenens, p. 68.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

19. Cf. Nils Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development, and Distinctive Character* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1964); W.J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972).

20. Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 79-109.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

22. O'Connor, p. 23.

Park, California<sup>23</sup> and Wheaton, Illinois.<sup>24</sup> Inroads in other denominations soon followed, including the Lutherans.

Occasional encounters were at times still shocking. For example, "Some Pentecostals prayed over one nun so forcefully that the only prayer she could think was, 'Sacred Heart of Jesus, get me out of here!'"<sup>25</sup> Yet from within the charismatic perspective such overzealousness was an aberration, due to the insensitivity of particular people, and to be interpreted in terms of their inferior "cultural baggage".<sup>26</sup> Erwin Prange suggests, "Too often the cultural baggage of another tradition becomes the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence. This means that the mannerisms and worship forms of one church are imported into another denomination as an integral part of the Pentecostal experience. Sometimes these forms may seem strange and even offensive. People are divided and turned against the entire renewal movement. This can be avoided if the old forms are filled with the new life of the Spirit. Thus Lutherans become true Lutherans and Catholics are turned into real Catholics. Every religious body is renewed and quickened by the spirit."<sup>27</sup>

That the charismatic renewal is compatible with previously held doctrines has been particularly emphasized among those denominations which are concerned about theological articulation and historical continuity. "Pentecostal fire and Catholic orthodoxy do not conflict with, but complement, one another. The intense personal union with Christ which the Pentecostal preaches does not destroy dogma but brings out the life that is in it. The firm, accurate and balanced doctrine of Catholicism does not smother the fire of the Holy Spirit, but nourishes, guides and protects it."<sup>28</sup>

Cardinal Suenens has underscored the fact that the charismatic roots reach deep into the Catholic past. "In its beginnings, monasticism was, in fact, a charismatic movement."<sup>29</sup> Suenens concurs with the judgment that St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, was "a charismatic personality".<sup>30</sup> The most famous Roman Catholic theologian of our time, Karl Rahner, S.J., has even stated that "the charismatic belongs to the essence of the church just as necessarily and permanently as do hierarchical office and the sacraments".<sup>31</sup>

Numerous other theologians of varying denominational backgrounds have offered similar spirited defence of the movement. John A. Mackay, former president of Princeton Theological Seminary, once quoted as saying that the Pentecostals are

23. Dennis J. Bennett, "The Gifts of the Holy Spirit" [personal reminiscences], in Michael P. Hamilton, ed., *The Charismatic Movement* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) pp. 15-32; Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristan, eds., *Charisms in the Church. Concilium: Religion in the Seventies*, vol. 109 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978); Hans Kueng and Juergen Moltmann, *Conflicts about the Holy Spirit. Concilium: Religion in the Seventies*, vol. 128 (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).

24. O'Connor, p. 24.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 243; McDonnell, p. 44.

27. Prange, p. 143.

28. O'Connor, p. 250.

29. Suenens, p. 38.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

31. *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., 1958, 2:1027, quoted by O'Connor, p. 282.

"the fly in the ointment of Protestantism", was subsequently prepared to view it as "the ointment" itself.<sup>32</sup> He has asserted that "Neo-Pentecostalism is a rebirth of primitive, First-Century Christianity". Similarly, Henry P. Van Deusen, past president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City designated Pentecostalism as "The Third Force in Christendom".<sup>33</sup> Krister Stendahl of Harvard, famed New Testament professor and Lutheran pastor as well as former Dean of the Divinity School, stated, "... I believe that the charismatic movement represents 'high voltage' religious experience — and heaven knows we need it in the churches. Our flashlight battery voltage isn't strong enough to fight drugs the way the high-voltage, charismatic experience does."<sup>34</sup>

Generally speaking, however, Lutheran response has been less favorable. Well-known Lutheran charismatic pastor, Larry Christenson has observed, "Segments of the Lutheran Church still regard the charismatic renewal with suspicion, or with indifference. Its worship or theology or life-style do not strike them as harmonizing with the way Lutherans have traditionally done things. Many associate it with divisiveness. Lutheran church leaders and theologians have been wary of encouraging the movement or identifying with it in any official way. Official Lutheran statements, while noting some positive aspects of the renewal, have been thoroughly fenced around with questions, cautions and criticisms. The Pentecostal stereotype persists, that people who go in for this kind of thing are over-emotional, theologically suspect, and vaguely uncultured."<sup>35</sup>

Understandably, while Lutheran charismatics have attempted to defend themselves, they do not expect any immediate change in attitude. Christenson has stated that "Lutheran charismatics will have to live with this stereotype until they can live it down".<sup>36</sup> But he does not doubt that this can be done because "For the most part, the charismatic renewal has avoided the pitfalls of the enthusiasts, the 'super spirituals,' who vexed Luther."<sup>37</sup> A similar sentiment is also echoed by Erling Jorstad, a Lutheran professor of American history at St. Olaf's College, "the charismatics want to remain loyal to their denominational traditions and also want to celebrate 'something new', the spiritual gifts they received by the baptism with the Holy Spirit."<sup>38</sup>

### III.

Having already noted that in its essence the charismatic movement is an experience, we now describe the intensity of the manifestations of this experience. In

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32. David du Plessis, "A Pentecostal and the Ecumenical Movement", in Theodore Runyon, ed., *What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1975), pp. 94-95.

33. Culpepper, p. 20.

34. Krister Stendahl, "The Charismatic Movement and the New Testament" in Runyon, p. 25; cf. also Krister Stendahl, "The New Testament Evidence" in Hamilton, pp. 49-60.

35. Christenson, pp. 10-11.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 111. Christenson's own attempts at *A Charismatic Approach to Social Action* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974) cannot be regarded as an insightful statement; such a statement, however, has appeared from within Catholic Charismatic circles: Sheila Macmanus Fahey, *Charismatic Social Action: Reflection/Resource Manual* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

38. Erling Jorstad, *Bold in the Spirit: Lutheran Charismatic Renewal in America Today*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), p. 11.



some instances the charismatic experience must have been truly overwhelming. A former Lutheran pastor and now an independent evangelist, A. Herbert Mjorud records, "Conviction filled my heart and I dropped on my knees in prayer. The windows of heaven were literally opened and the Spirit of God came upon me. Waves of love flowed over my being."<sup>39</sup> A Lutheran pastor explains the reception of the gift of tongues, "And as if that weren't enough, there came with it a charge of energy which felt like a million volts of electricity looking for motors to turn and dark streets to light up like day. I *felt* justified and righteous — never *felt* that before. I *knew* it, but I hadn't *felt* it."<sup>40</sup>

O'Connor reports of someone awakening the morning after a charismatic experience "with a light heart, full of joy," and an "exhilarating new freedom . . . received as a gift."<sup>41</sup> Such an experience also enables "to trust God fully and with great calm," even "to cope with" a difficult moral problem.<sup>42</sup> O'Connor continues: "Not infrequently, people who come to the meetings troubled and anxious about some problem find themselves pervaded with this spirit of peace and their hearts put at rest."<sup>43</sup>

Ordinarily the charismatic experiences are connected with prayer meetings. Although there are numerous detailed accounts of them,<sup>44</sup> we may find it instructive to listen to a Lutheran pastor's first prayer encounter. ". . . there was something completely different about these Lutherans. First, they were friendly; second they were joyful; but most amazing of all, they were talking about the Lord! They weren't in church, and it wasn't even Sunday. All of them were carrying Bibles, too. Lutheran Bible classes were dying, and it took the average Lutheran 112 years to lead someone to Christ, but these people were voluntarily witnessing and studying the Bible, and apparently newcomers were meeting the Lord almost every week."<sup>45</sup> While charismatic awareness often took time to develop, occasionally the experience occurred instantly. As one describes it, "a great peace suddenly descended upon him, like nothing he had ever experienced before."<sup>46</sup> At other times it could be said that the sense of being "filled with a deep new joy, peace and love . . . permeated his being gradually."<sup>47</sup> Similarly, as recorded in another confession, "I felt a strange sensation of warmth gradually begin to pervade my whole being. I had never felt anything like that before."<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, the above experiences were not seen as isolated and only occasional occurrences, but as ordinary characteristics of the charismatic movement. As underscored by O'Connor, "Newcomers to the prayer meetings are commonly impressed

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39. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 49; cf. Prange, p. 130. For a learned and lengthy study, cf. Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1970).

41. O'Connor, p. 40.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

44. Culpepper, pp. 35-38.

45. Prange, p. 32.

46. O'Connor, p. 53.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 65.



above all by the joyousness of the people they met there. This joy is radiant and contagious; it creates an atmosphere that envelops and pervades, and acts as a kindly invitation and encouragement."<sup>49</sup> Christenson provides a similar account of a Lutheran prayer meeting, "There were forty people present, the majority of them Lutherans. The atmosphere of warmth, love, and friendliness was something highly unusual, especially in a big city setting. I had never met Lutherans quite like this. People were embracing each other and praising God with every other word."<sup>50</sup>

The source of this joy according to Christenson is none other than an authentic encounter with God. As he puts it, "God came out of the shadows. 'He is real!' I thought. 'He is here! He loves me!' For the first time in my life I really *felt* loved by God."<sup>51</sup>

Of the several facets which constitute the total experience of the charismatic, *baptism with the Holy Spirit* has had a prominent theological role. Hence, the following definition has emerged, "A charismatic is simply a Christian who has received at the hands of Jesus Christ, the baptism in the Holy Spirit."<sup>52</sup> We note that baptism with the Holy Spirit has often been understood in at least two ways. On the one hand, according to traditional Pentecostal interpretation, "the gift of the Spirit is received through a second experience, following salvation."<sup>53</sup> In this way a clear distinction is made between "spiritual Christians" and "carnal Christians".<sup>54</sup> Obviously, from a Lutheran point of view such a "double standard" is not acceptable. Yet, as it is noted by Richard A. Jensen, a professor at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, such has been the traditional Pentecostal belief. "Carnal Christians may be justified, their sins are forgiven, but they are not sanctified. Spiritual Christians . . . possess both justification and sanctification. The sign of their sanctification is the conquest of sin in their lives".<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, in a charismatic or Neo-Pentecostal interpretation the experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is seen in continuity with one's Christian past and as a gradual unfolding of the same. The power of this experience is not denied; it is seen as an "emotional explosion".<sup>56</sup> But the definition of it is a careful exposition of the continuity as well as existential newness. This may be seen from the definition of the baptism with the Holy Spirit that is supplied by Cardinal Suenens: "A religious experience which initiates a decisively new awareness of the all powerful presence of God, working in one's life, which working usually involves one or more charismatic gifts."<sup>57</sup> Similarly, O'Connor describes the baptism with the Holy Spirit as " . . . a turning point in one's spiritual development; it is the begin-

49. *Ibid.*, p. 164.

50. Christenson, p. 14; cf. Prange, p. 32.

51. Christenson, p. 17.

52. Warren Thwing, *A Handbook for New Charismatics* (Fort Worth, Texas: Harvest Press Incorporated, 1978), p. iii. For a critical evaluation, see Anthony A. Hoekema, *Holy Spirit Baptism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973).

53. Christenson, p. 37.

54. Richard A. Jensen, *Touched by the Spirit: One Man's Struggle to Understand His Experience of the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975), p. 96.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

56. O'Connor, p. 68.

57. Suenens, p. 83.

ning of, the entry into, a new regime of life in which one is led and strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit much more effectively and manifestly than before.”<sup>58</sup> At the same time O'Connor recognizes the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a communicated event, “communicated from one person to another, or, more often, from the community to the individual”.<sup>59</sup>

In a Lutheran perspective Christenson has particularly underscored the authentic continuity with the reception of the Holy Spirit through baptism. “What has emerged in the charismatic renewal is not a reformulation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, charismatics tend to affirm with enthusiasm historic formulations of the doctrine. At a charismatic conference in Minneapolis, during a time of free worship, one of the participants broke into spontaneous chant of the well-known words from Luther's small catechism — ‘I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith . . .’”<sup>60</sup> Luther's serious concern with the Holy Spirit has also been noted by Jorstad, who has quoted from Regin Prenter's landmark study, “The concept of the Holy Spirit completely dominates Luther's theology. In every decisive matter, whether the study of Luther's doctrine of justification, his doctrine of the sacraments, his ethics or any other fundamental teaching, we are forced to take into consideration his concept of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>61</sup>

Thus, unlike traditional Pentecostalism, the reception of the Holy Spirit is not interpreted in the Lutheran perspective as a momentary experience. Instead, an “organic view”<sup>62</sup> is preferred. In this way “Baptism . . . is not understood as one-time bestowal of the Holy Spirit, but as an event which initiates an ongoing work of the Spirit.”<sup>63</sup> Christenson emphasizes, “While faith, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit form an organic whole, there can be a variety in the order in which they occur in personal experience. This is especially evident in regard to the relation between baptism and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the gift is manifested more-or-less *simultaneously* with baptism (Lk. 19:5-6); sometimes a period of time *after* baptism (8:14-17); sometimes *before* baptism (10:44-48). Thus, while the gift of the Holy Spirit is united with baptism, its manifestation may be distinct from baptism.”<sup>64</sup>

In other words, Christenson recognizes that “Baptism does not magically impart the Spirit”.<sup>65</sup> Rather, “the personal receiving of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from one's incorporation into the saved and serving community”.<sup>66</sup> Thus there is no “second baptism”<sup>67</sup> since the baptism with the Holy Spirit is recognized “as a re-

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58. O'Connor, p. 216.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

60. Christenson, p. 34, quoting from Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 345.

61. Jorstad, p. 13, quoting from *Spiritus Creator* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1953), p. ix.

62. Christenson, p. 37.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

leasing of the Spirit which has already been given, for power and ministry".<sup>68</sup>

In actual Lutheran charismatic practice, however, such sound insights do not always seem to have been followed. Jorstad describes one such occasion. "Finally, the call was made for those who wanted the baptism with the Holy Spirit. [A. Herbert] Mjorud explained: 'If you ask in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will come upon you with his joy, his love, his power, so you can be witnesses'." After hands had been raised by those who desired the experience, small prayer groups were formed and the laying on of hands took place. Then Mjorud "asked each seeker to take this free gift from God, and on Mjorud's request the seeker said, 'I take it, Lord' ".<sup>69</sup> It is from within such a context that one can appreciate the timeliness of the warning by William Lazareth who has "called on Lutherans to 'clearly repudiate all claims of any second baptism of the Spirit as an unbiblical denial of both our Christian birth, true baptism, and our Christian growth through charismatic renewal' ".<sup>70</sup>

In the unfolding process of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the presence of numerous gifts or charisms is experienced. The more sensitive leaders of the charismatic movement "point out repeatedly that spiritual gifts are not merit badges or rewards for good behaviour."<sup>71</sup> These are to be recognized as unmerited gifts of a wide range, including very specifically the speaking in tongues, prophecy, interpretation of the same, faith healing, deliverance from the demonic, discerning of charisms, and many others.

The *speaking in tongues* or glossolalia has a special role. Often, "the centre of the storm"<sup>72</sup> the tongues seem indispensable. Christenson notes, "The charismatic movement cannot be reduced simply to speaking in tongues. Yet neither can it be understood or explained apart from tongues."<sup>73</sup> He defines the phenomenon as "a supernatural manifestation of the Holy Spirit, whereby the believer speaks forth in a language which he has never learned."<sup>74</sup> Often enough, the speaking in tongues has served as "a spiritual breakthrough"<sup>75</sup> or a "central confirming experience of one's existence"<sup>76</sup> of a distinctive positive value. "Without exception for those in the mainline Protestant Churches whose experience was studied, beginning to speak in tongues was the beginning of a dramatic experience which gave the individual a sense of great joy and uplift. Depression subsided, worthlessness diminished and

68. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

69. Jorstad, p. 89.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

71. Culpepper, p. 80.

72. Jorstad, p. 25; for a careful exegetical evaluation cf. Anthony A. Hoekema, *What About Tongue-Speaking?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966); for a brief, brilliant and readable statement, cf. George H. Williams and Edith Waldvogel, "A History of Speaking in Tongues and Related Gifts", in Hamilton, pp. 61-113; a popular and not always very reliable overview has been offered by Morton T. Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking: An Experiment in Spiritual Experience* (Garden City, N.W.: Doubleday, 1968).

73. Christenson, p. 78.

74. Larry Christenson, *The Gift of Tongues* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1963), p. 22.

75. Larry Christenson, *The Charismatic Renewal*, p. 79.

76. John P. Kildahl, "Six Behavioral Observations about Speaking in Tongues" in Agrimson, p. 75.



a state of near-euphoria developed."<sup>77</sup> At the same time, the element of novelty may also have had a part in the experience. Jensen indicates: "It was scary. It was fascinating. I realized the next day that I didn't believe any of it. What had I done? What had we done? Fools! I checked out my perceptions with two other men. My feelings were confirmed. They didn't believe it either."<sup>78</sup> Yet this person eventually became convinced of the authenticity of his experience. At the same time, non-charismatics often point out that the speaking in tongues is also encountered in other religions. Moreover, as Culpepper has noted, "Nowhere in the New Testament is there a secure support for the Pentecostal, Neo-Pentecostal view which interprets glossolalia as the sign of initial evidence of the entrance of the Spirit into one's life."<sup>79</sup>

Some charismatics are persuaded that under the Holy Spirit's guidance, a definite language has been spoken. Outsiders, however, at times note that there was only "so much chattering like squirrels".<sup>80</sup> O'Connor has asserted the definite identification of "Greek, Latin, French, and a hybrid of German and Italian, of the sort that is spoken in the Italian Alps".<sup>81</sup> McDonnell, however, thinks that "in the vast majority of cases the one who is speaking in tongues is not speaking a real language . . ." This view predominates.

What then is the speaking in tongues like? McDonnell suggests that "speaking or praying in tongues is to prayer what abstract painting is to art".<sup>82</sup> There is agreement that each individual speaks in a different way.<sup>83</sup> O'Connor has attempted to describe some common characteristics as well as notable differences. "Each one continues to use his own tongue, as well as his own melody, pitch, tempo, etc. — every one being different, sometimes utterly different, from all the others. Nevertheless, they all blend together in a harmony of unearthly beauty. Instead of a hideous cacophony which should be expected from such a situation (as occurs, for example, when the members of a band are practicing their parts individually in the same room) there is a symphony the like of which has never been produced by any human choir. And this does not happen only with small groups that have been meeting together for a long time; it occurs also with groups of hundreds who are with one another for the first time. Sometimes one can detect a great, pulsing rhythm like that of waves rolling in from the sea. At the end, the music usually tapers off sharply and comes to a definite halt, as if some hidden director had given a signal."<sup>84</sup>

In the most thorough and sympathetic study of speaking in tongues, McDonnell has defended the practice as not pathological. Yet he has noted that in the past speaking in tongues was "socially unacceptable", since "speaking tongues is not

77. John P. Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 83.

78. Jensen, p. 11.

79. Culpepper, p. 100.

80. Jorstad, p. 25.

81. Jorstad, p. 25.

82. McDonnell, p. 9.

83. O'Connor, p. 48.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 130.



what most persons expect from mature, well-balanced responsible adults."<sup>85</sup> While recent psychological evaluations of speaking in tongues are no longer negative,<sup>86</sup> the debate has continued on theological grounds. Admitting that speaking in tongues is "a bridge burning act . . . an act committing a person to the beliefs of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement and demanding a change of one's life,"<sup>87</sup> does not settle the prior question whether it is in accord with the Christian faith. Thus on the one hand non-charismatic interpreters have asserted that the gift of speaking in tongues and prophesying has ceased with the end of the apostolic era.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, charismatics have pointed out that the gift of tongues has been promised for the last days, and that now we indeed live in such times.<sup>89</sup>

Yet even the charismatic acceptance of the speaking in tongues does not preclude a further debate as to the times and places of such speaking. Jensen has argued, "Public piety is no piety at all. Piety by definition is secret . . . The admonition to secrecy is also violated by neo-Pentecostals when they talk about their gift(s) publicly in a manner that suggests they have something other Christians lack. If you have the gift of tongues keep it a secret, unless perhaps someone asks you about it."<sup>90</sup> A similar position has been outlined and defended by Oral Roberts. "The charismatic gift of tongues cannot be bought nor is it for exhibition. Little groups of Christians who understand this gift can sometimes gather and use it. When in public, however, they have to use their understanding. I'd rather say five words with my understanding than ten thousand in a tongue. Do you know why? Because in public, prophecy is to be preferred. Prophecy is horizontal, it is man to man. It is divinely inspired insight into God, into his Word, into what he wants us to know. But tongues are to God, not to man. They're for my private devotions."<sup>91</sup>

A cautious attempt to see both sides of the story has been offered by Baptist scholar Robert H. Culpepper. "When non-glossolalists suggest that glossolalists should be thrown out of the church, they should be asked to demonstrate the biblical basis for such an attitude. When those who do not speak in tongues indicate that those who do are really not loyal to their denomination, they should be asked if the criteria for evaluating denominational loyalty are biblical or nonbiblical. If the criteria are recognized as biblical, then the non-glossolalists should be asked to show where the glossolalists fall short as far as the biblical witness is concerned. Paul recognizes glossolalia as a genuine gift of the Spirit, though he places it at the bottom of the list. The biblical command is not 'Forbid speaking in tongues,' but 'Do not forbid speaking in tongues.' This, however, is not an open-ended license to practice glossolalia and force it on everyone else. It presupposes Paul's very clear teaching in I Corinthians 12-14."<sup>92</sup>

A similar situation may be discernible in regard to *faith healing*. Certainly faith

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85. McDonnell, p. 14.

86. e.g. Kildahl, p. 65.

87. McDonnell, p. 118.

88. Jorstad, pp. 103-104.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 80, 82.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

91. Oral Roberts, "Gifts of the Spirit", in Runyon, ed., p. 49.

92. Culpepper, p. 105.

healing has had a celebrated role in charismatic circles — and has aroused a great deal of criticism elsewhere. To begin with, we should note that faith healing is inclusive; it refers to psychological restoration, for example, release from “scrupulosity, anxiety, and inhibitions”,<sup>93</sup> release from previously overpowering habits such as smoking,<sup>94</sup> as well as physical healings.<sup>95</sup> While it has been observed that “Catholic prayer groups for the most part do not seem to be preoccupied with the subject of healing to the same extent as many groups of other denominations,”<sup>96</sup> one of the most levelheaded studies in this field has been written by Father Francis McNutt.<sup>97</sup> In Lutheran charismatic circles healing does not appear to be neglected. One of the most eloquent testimonials in favor of faith healing has been written by Erwin Prange.<sup>98</sup> At the same time some caution has been urged, particularly by people who are outside the movement and yet sympathetic to it. Omar Stuenkel writes, “My wife, Elaine, died of cancer not long ago . . . In her living and dying I saw the gentle effects of the Spirit’s whispers to comfort and to guide . . . Weak as she was physically she reflected the Spirit’s power . . . Our prayers to God for healing seemed to be receiving an answer different from the one for which we longed.”<sup>99</sup>

Similarly, a distinction has often been made between “healing and cure”. The former has to do with restoration of “priorities” and turning the individual toward Jesus.<sup>100</sup> The latter deals with physical ailments. When the emphasis is placed on “healing” rather than on a necessarily following “cure”, a sound theological perspective seems to be brought to light. Culpepper underscores this. “We distort the biblical witness when we judge spiritual health by body temperature.”<sup>101</sup> Thus within the charismatic movement a great deal of attention has been paid to what has been called “the healing of memories.” A very helpful little study in this field has been written by Matthew Linn, S.J. and Dennis Linn, S.J.<sup>102</sup> The healing of memories has also been widely popularized by Ruth Carter Stapleton,<sup>103</sup> the sister of former U.S. president Jimmy Carter. At the same time it should be noted that even where there is an emphasis on “cure”, sobering and responsible statements have been made. Thus Oral Roberts has acknowledged, “Of course I’ve made mistakes. I made enough mistakes in the healing ministry to cover all of you who ever may pray for the sick.”<sup>104</sup> Oral Roberts also insists that the healer is always God Himself and notes, “I know that the gifts of healing move in and out of me, but never per-

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93. O’Connor, p. 106.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

95. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

97. Francis McNutt, *Healing* (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1980), 6th printing.

98. Prange., pp. 64-72, 82-87, 120-123, 133-136.

99. Omar Stuenkel, *We are One in the Spirit: How to Receive and Use the Holy Spirit’s Gifts*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979), pp. 9, 93.

100. Thwing, p. 66.

101. Culpepper, p. 103.

102. Matthew Linn, S.J., and Dennis Linn, S.J., *Healing of Memories: Prayer and Confession — Steps to Inner Healing* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1974); cf. also Mary Jane Linn, C.S.J., Dennis Linn, S.J., Matthew Linn, S.J., *Healing the Dying* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1979).

103. Ruth Carter Stapleton, *The Gift of Inner Healing* (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1979).

104. Runyon, p. 46.

manently reside. I know that much. I think that the gifts are the Holy Spirit's property and that he does with them as he wills."<sup>105</sup>

Not surprisingly, among Lutheran charismatics, Christenson has regretted the absence of the concern with healing in the preaching ministry of the non-charismatics. It is his persuasion that such preaching ("faultless in form and even thoroughly orthodox in doctrine") fails to manifest the power of God. "Do we *fear* this kind of preaching, as Paul did? We don't. We admire it! Laymen stand in awe, and preachers in envy. But let the *power* of God so much as be mentioned — prayers for healing, anointing with oil, exorcism, the demonstration of the Spirit — just mention this, and people draw back in fear and doubt."<sup>106</sup> According to Christenson preaching and healing are but two sides of the same coin: "preaching is the gospel in *word*, healing is the gospel in *action*." When taking place, this action is not brought about by human power but always "proceeds from the indwelling Christ".<sup>107</sup> Although aware that on occasion there are "dangers" and "abuses" in healing, Christenson believes that "the *neglect* of the ministry of healing has a danger that outweighs them all: *the danger of disobeying the Lord*."<sup>108</sup>

Without attempting to enumerate all the other remaining major gifts or charisms,<sup>109</sup> we should mention "the gift of eternal life" (Rom. 6:23), "the gift of celibacy" (I Cor. 7:7), "miracles and speaking in tongues" (I Cor. 12:9-10) as well as to note "the seemingly more ordinary gifts of administration, helping, giving, and teaching" (I Cor. 12:28, Rom. 12:7-8).<sup>110</sup> A mere distinction between extraordinary and ordinary gifts, however, does not explain the nature of the gift itself and to this we must now turn.

According to a careful Roman Catholic definition (based on Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 111, a. 1), the charisms are recognized "as graces given primarily and directly, not to sanctify the recipient himself, but in order to help him bring others into union with God."<sup>111</sup> By such a graceful definition, Catholic charismatics are helped to avoid undue self-esteem on the grounds of the possession of charisms, and to voice a constructive criticism. "... many Pentecostals attach excessive importance to the charisms. Whether they admit it or not, they look upon the charisms as the highest gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are more interested in prophecy, healing and tongues than they are in brotherly love and heartfelt prayer."<sup>112</sup> Must Lutheran charismatics be included in this censure? Christenson merely records that "Spiritual gifts (*charismata*) are concrete manifestations of the Holy Spirit whom the believers have received."<sup>113</sup> Apparently concerned to preclude the possibility of a misunderstanding, Duane A. Priebe advises, "... the possession of particular gifts does not mean that one participates more fully in the

105. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

106. Christenson., p. 94.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

109. cf. Duane A. Priebe, "Charismatic Gifts and Christian Experience" in Agrimson, pp. 21-22.

110. Christenson, p. 75.

111. O'Connor, p. 208.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 210.

113. Christenson, p. 75.



Spirit, nor does a lack of these gifts mean one participates less fully in the Spirit." And, positively, Priebe counsels: "The Spirit gives these gifts for the common good, i.e., for the benefit of the community as a whole . . ." <sup>114</sup>

In a way this may be illustrative of a larger phenomenon; a Lutheran charismatic theology has not yet been developed! While the Neo-Pentecostal emphasis on experience and their sincere assurance that only the intensification of already present doctrines is intended no doubt reflects their intent, the fact remains that at the very least a new arrangement of doctrinal priorities has taken place, and hence a thoughtful theological assessment of the movement is in order. Such a task cannot be limited to a theoretical level. As the Lutheran church vigorously demands theological clarity from Lutheran charismatics, it also owes to the charismatics constructive suggestions and authentic readiness to converse and live in love.

#### IV.

As Cardinal Suenens has so realistically pointed out, the church is to assume that "counterfeits of the supernatural abound."<sup>115</sup> Aware of this fact, the church is "justifiably on guard against a subjectivism which periodically appears as a threat to the faith."<sup>116</sup> Perhaps no one else has described this phenomenon with more poignancy than Monsignor Ronald A. Knox. "You have a clique, an *elite*, of Christian men and (more importantly) women, who are trying to live a less worldly life than their neighbours; to be more attentive to the guidance (directly felt, they would tell you) of the Holy Spirit. More and more, by a kind of fatality, you see them draw apart from their co-religionists, a hive ready to swarm. There is provocation on both sides; on the one part, cheap jokes at the expense of over-godliness, acts of stupid repression by unsympathetic authorities; on the other, contempt of the half-Christian, ominous references to old wine and new bottles, to the kernel and the husk. Then, while you hold your breath and turn away your eyes in fear, the break comes; condemnation or secession, what difference does it make? A fresh name has been added to the list of Christianities."<sup>117</sup>

As already noted, the charismatic movement has generally remained denominationally loyal; there have been only occasional expulsions of a few individuals for disobedience. Nevertheless, the danger is potentially present and a tragic scenario can again be very readily re-enacted. Because we have an obligation to preserve our Lutheran heritage alive and intact, we must be aware of both sides of the danger: charismatic enthusiasm and traditionalist ossification. The danger must be faced with courage as well as with a Christian hope to overcome it and it is not useful to suggest, directly or by innuendo, that one side rather than the other is more likely to overreact.

Several constructive practical steps have been taken. From the Roman Catholic perspective a charismatic priest asserts, ". . . the bishops have to determine what is the authentic message of the Spirit, and to settle matters on which there is dis-

114. Agrimson, pp. 23-24.

115. Suenens, p. 22.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

117. Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1950), p. 1.



agreement. When they do this, they are not imposing their private opinion on others, but are exercising the responsibility which Christ gave them. Hence, their decisions are regarded as binding, not just by a human force but in the name of Christ . . ."<sup>118</sup>

In the Lutheran churches the situation is somewhat more difficult. Our traditional affirmation of the *sola Scriptura* has in effect served to elicit charismatic proofs that their efforts at church renewal are in full accord with revealed truth. Erwin Prange has argued, in good Lutheran fashion, "The authority to heal in our day is scriptural . . . I don't know of any place where this has been rescinded."<sup>119</sup> We must note that here the Lutheran emphasis coincides with the Neo-Pentecostal thrust, namely the claim regarding the Bible. "That book is your Operator's Manual for your life from here on in."<sup>120</sup> Although fundamentalistic, the Neo-Pentecostal perspective also knows the acknowledged need for Christocentricity, which the Lutheran can hear with appreciation. "But don't make even the Bible your idol. I know I seem to be harping on it, but I cannot say it too often — keep your eyes on Jesus. Let the Bible teach you about Him. Let Him speak to you through it. But never let the Bible take His place."<sup>121</sup>

Since there can be no desire on our part to change the mind of the charismatic Lutheran in his commitment to the Bible, understood Christocentrically, only two basic strategies remain open.

In the *first* place we may observe with appreciation Christenson's diplomatic suggestion that both the charismatic and the non-charismatic interpretations of the Scripture are in some way perhaps incomplete and therefore in need of each other: "Differences may be mutually enriching, or they may be items for discussion and exploration; they need not be divisive."<sup>122</sup> At the same time Christenson rightly acknowledges that "To divide Christians into those who 'only have salvation' and those who 'have the Spirit' is unbiblical." Therefore, to avoid such an unacceptable cleavage, Christenson has suggested that the same authentic gift of salvation may be obtained in two divergent modes of experience which are "not contradictory to one another, but complementary."<sup>123</sup> He outlines the suggestion by offering four characteristic contrasts,

"1. *Crisis*' as contrasted with '*growth*'." Here the emphasis on the "specific event" among the charismatics is differentiated from "a process of gradual unfolding", familiar in the Lutheran tradition.<sup>124</sup>

"2. '*Personal*' as contrasted with '*corporate*'." Here, too, the distinctive marks are

118. O'Connor, p. 248.

119. Quoted by Jorstad, p. 8. Traditional Lutheran emphases often echo from the statements of Lutheran charismatics, e.g., Larry Jensen, comp., *Lutherans and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Los Angeles: Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, 1966); Rodney Lensch, *My Personal Pentecost: A Missouri Synod Lutheran Pastor Encounters the Power of the Holy Spirit Today* (Kirkwood, Mo, 1972); A. Herbert Mjorud, *Glossolalia: The Gift of Speaking in Tongues* (Minneapolis: Mjorud Evangelistic Association, n.d.).

120. Thwing, p. 2.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

122. Christenson, p. 10.

123. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

not viewed as absolute differences but seem as being "more at home" with either "corporate and formal expressions" or "spontaneous, personal idiom."<sup>125</sup>

"3. *Emotion as contrasted with intellect.*" In Christenson's view both traditional "stability" and charismatic "wholesome emotional response"<sup>126</sup> can be enriching.

"4. *Fellowship as contrasted with individualism.*" As is certainly admitted by Christenson, the charismatic type of fellowship can be "uncomfortable" for those who are outside the movement: "People often embrace when they meet one another. They speak freely and eagerly about spiritual things."<sup>127</sup>

Erling Jorstad has expressed a similar desire for a peaceful coexistence. "There is room in the body of Christ for a wide diversity of religions needs and experiences. Not all of us feel the same need for religious experience, and God does not answer our needs in the same way."<sup>128</sup> Even critics of the charismatic movement can find a measure of soundness in this argument. Thus Duane A. Priebe has noted that "Paul emphasizes that different people receive different gifts."<sup>129</sup> Yet this is not to overlook the potential difficulties with the approach that argues for complementarity. Traditional Lutheranism has celebrated the value of both the richness and the clarity of doctrinal formulation. While the charismatic approach may nurture an in-depth exploration and therefore an enrichment of Lutheran doctrine, it can also introduce confusion or even chaos. Perhaps it is only fair to suggest that the Lutheran charismatic must be willing and able to show that the proposed complementarity is not plain contradiction. At the same time, it is also in place to underscore that the non-charismatic Lutheran must recognize his opportunity for theological assistance and brotherly concern. In any case, we must note that in the Neo-Pentecostal circles complementarity is sometimes mistaken for an ecumenicity ready to relativize one's own denominational position. "Through the centuries, treasures have been deposited in various denominations, and they are now being called together so that we can all share them . . . Like a potluck dinner, each brings one dish and feasts on a lush banquet. The entire Body is enriched and Jesus is glorified."<sup>130</sup>

Although the understanding and appreciation of ecumenism among Lutherans has varied, all of us most likely agree that the slurping from uninspected dishes is not in accord with our heritage and present faith. This is not because we are necessarily self-righteous, censorious, and suspicious of the faith of other Christians, but simply because (to borrow for a moment from charismatic vocabulary) the discernment of true doctrine is at least as vital as the discernment of prophecy, interpretation of tongues and recognition of the presence of evil spirits. Therefore, while Christenson's proposal of the value of complementarity of life-styles and insights offers a constructive avenue for further dialogue, it does not provide a concrete solution to the problem at hand. At best, it only spells out the dimensions of the problem.

In the second place, it is useful to come to terms with the fact that for a variety of

125. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

126. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

128. Jorstad, p. 111.

129. Agrimson, p. 21.

130. Thwing, pp. 7-8.

reasons the majority of Lutherans are not in favour of the charismatic movement. While it cannot be assumed that all objections to the charismatic movement are justified and rest on a good grasp of what the movement is all about, it is likewise an unproven claim that only the charismatics know the joy and the warmth of the Holy Spirit's work. In such a situation the presence of some tensions cannot be surprising. Nor should it shock anyone that the duly elected leaders of the church have at times taken steps to bring the situation under control. To underscore, it is not a mere allegation but a definite fact "that the integration of tongues into a Lutheran congregation had been disruptive."<sup>131</sup> Admittedly, in some cases peace has been subsequently restored, as was the case in Christenson's parish.<sup>132</sup> The painful experience of the Way of the Cross Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota, however, remains an unfortunate episode. Jorstad's account of the sequence of events at that church<sup>133</sup> may be seen as a warning against optimism, that the integration of charismatics into an ordinary Lutheran congregation will be relatively easy. One can only read with deep sadness that "rumors and strife quickly replaced the joy and enthusiasm of the first outbreak of the gifts."<sup>134</sup> Hence the question remains: When complementarity has turned into conflict, what is the realistic and responsible course of action?

Here it may be helpful to distinguish between long-range goals and the immediate application of the art of the possible (otherwise known as political realism). In regard to the former, Krister Stendahl has summed it up. "What is at stake in these gifts of the Spirit, these *charismata*, therefore, is not a theological but a pastoral issue. It is the question: How can we coexist when different gifts are given to different people? And love is the key to coexistence. Actually, love can be measured by how much tension you can take in the church. A church that is permeated by love can take masses of tension — even tensions between charismatics and flat-footed Christians."<sup>135</sup>

Indeed, our discussion is not about acquired skills or self chosen life-styles. We are turning our attention to the gifts that have been granted to us by God and for which serious gratitude and not advice for discarding is in order. Or do we not believe that the Holy Spirit can inspire a few new thoughts even after the completion of the *Book of Concord*? Are we not convinced that love can succeed in bridging real differences? As Lutherans we believe that the *ultimate* concern of the Christian is not to isolate the church from the world, but to bring the church's message into the world so as to convert it. Put it another way, the final goal of a Lutheran parish pastor cannot be to weed out from his congregation the theologically inept and the morally weak but to seek their authentic growth in grace! The goals of Lutheranism cannot be less creative.

At the same time, while long-range goals are pursued, the current situation must also somehow be dealt with. This appears to have been done in the following manner.

The American Lutheran Church, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and The

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131. Jorstad, p. 27.

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-61.

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-76.

134. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

135. Stendahl, "The Charismatic Movement and the New Testament", in Runyon, p. 22.



Lutheran Church in America have issued several position papers. Without reviewing all of these, attention can be paid to selected key insights.

In 1964 the General Convention of the American Lutheran Church, of which the present Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada was then a part, stated, "The American Lutheran Church does not forbid speaking in tongues. But it believes that glossolalia receives only a muted recognition in the Scriptures. And it knows from its own experience that the presence of this phenomenon has not been an unmitigated blessing. It has caused confusion and has produced results not in harmony with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, The American Lutheran Church asks of its pastors and congregations: 1) That there be neither promotion nor practice of speaking in tongues at meetings in the congregations or at meetings where congregations are acting together. 2) That there be no instruction in the technique or the practice of speaking in tongues. 3) That those who profess to have the gift reserve it for their devotional life."<sup>136</sup> The positive insights of this statement ought not to be overlooked. Particularly significant is the willingness of the church not to prohibit the speaking in tongues while at the same time delegating it to the sphere of private devotions — an approach already favored in charismatic circles. In this way the charismatic movement is allowed to develop, yet its progress is not bought at the irresponsible cost of church disintegration.

Almost a decade later, in 1973, the ALC's Division for Theological Education and Ministry issued a statement *The American Lutheran Church and Neo-Pentecostalism: An Interpretative Resource for Pastors*. In section one the statement lists those Neo-Pentecostal emphases which it regards as "important for the American Lutheran Church: Charismata, i.e. the gifts of the Spirit . . . Freedom in Worship . . . The reality of God and the reality of the faith relationship . . . Insistence on prayer . . . An emphasis on the ministry of healing." In section two it addresses the Neo-Pentecostals and reminds them of "the historical context" by way of noting such aberrations as Montanism, Thomas Muenzer, and Protestant liberalism that arose due to Friedrich Schleiermacher's influence. It also acknowledges the need for a balanced trinitarian theology which does not overemphasize either Christ or the Holy Spirit, recognizes only "one baptism", the unity of the church, and views church authority rather democratically. "Our pastors, district presidents, and congregations are a support system. That doesn't mean giving approbation to everything; it does mean treatment as peers and allies, not inferiors and enemies." Finally, it suggests a "working relationship" by emphasizing: "Allowance for diversity . . . The New Testament preeminence of love . . . Perspective on essentials. (Peripheral matters, e.g., speaking in tongues, should not be made essential by neo-Pentecostals as a sign of superior spirituality nor should traditionalists make glossolalia the chief target of their reaction). . . . Subtle temptations to pride. The necessity of honoring canonical and non-canonical documents [which include] . . . The Holy Scriptures, The Lutheran Confessions, The Constitution of The American Lutheran Church . . . The avoidance of scandal to Christ by unwarranted division and/or divorce within

136. Jorstad, pp. 30-31. For full documentation on this and subsequent references to the position of the Lutheran churches see Kilian McDonnell, O.S.B., *Presence, Power, Praise: Documents on the Charismatic Renewal*, 3 vols. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1980 ff.).



congregations and homes. Commonality of faith in the same Lord under whom all spirits are tested. . . . Awareness that growth comes through challenge . . .

An intensive and constructive theological consideration of the movement may also be seen in the thirty-eight page document entitled *The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology: A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, January 1972*. The document assumes that the "Lutherans involved in the charismatic movement do not share all the views of neo-Pentecostalism in general," and therefore is able to dialogue with "the views of representative Lutheran charismatics." Likewise, it accepts the claim of Lutheran charismatics that " . . . their goal is not to separate from the organized church but to assist in revitalizing the church by bearing testimony to the remarkable work the Lord is doing in their own lives through the power of the Spirit."

Having summarized the basic views of Lutheran charismatics, the document devotes most of its attention to "Biblical analysis." In order to avoid doing injustice to the careful exegetical efforts presented in this analysis, no attempt is made to summarize the detailed findings. According to the Report "God grants His Spirit to all who believe." Moreover, it notes that the biblical expression "filled with the Holy Spirit . . . very frequently has no apparent relationship to charismatic gifts." Having outlined the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, it observes the intensification of the Holy Spirit's work in the New Testament in such a way that following the Pentecost, "the Holy Spirit took a very active part in directing the early church into an intensive program of carrying the Gospel into all the world." While in Corinth "some individuals" were indeed supplied with "miraculous gifts of the Spirit", in Gal. 5:22-23 St. Paul also lists "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" as "fruits of the Spirit." The document is prepared to spell out the inference that "the Spirit imparts His gifts in response to the needs of His kingdom". All of these varying gifts then contribute to the central task, which is to lead "men to honour Christ by confessing faith in Him as Lord . . ."

In evaluating the individual contribution of each gift of the Spirit in honouring Christ, the document downplays the significance of speaking in tongues and notes: "St. Paul prefers prophecy to tongue-speaking . . ." Tongue speaking is useful only when accompanied "with the gift of interpretation". Moreover, it warns: "Accenting the gift of tongues out of proportion to other gifts is a sign of immaturity." A similarly serious word of caution is expressed by the subsequent observation that the charismatic gifts were limited to the apostolic age. The intent of this caution appears to be directed to the distinction between "must" and "may". "The church must not conclude that because the Christian community in apostolic times had members who could speak in tongues, therefore the church today *must* possess similar gifts or it is somehow incomplete. . . . To be sure, the Lord *may* choose to give such gifts; but He gives to his Church according to His good and gracious will and in keeping with His promises."

Such caution is not to be misunderstood as an unwillingness to see anything positive in the gifts of the Spirit. In fact, the document shows a real eagerness to seek after such gifts. "The Christian church today will accept with joy and gratitude any gift that the Spirit in His grace may choose to bestow on us for the purpose of edifying the body of Christ. It will recognize that the Lord does not forsake His

church but promises the abiding presence of His Spirit. The church, therefore, will not reject out of hand the possibility that God may in His grace and wisdom endow some in Christendom with the same abilities and powers He gave His church in past centuries." Although authentic, such eagerness is not of course to be mistaken for a unilateral advocacy of the charismatic movement. Instead it is an implicit warning against forsaking the traditional Lutheran position. "The church should seek the Holy Spirit and His gifts where God has promised them, in the Word and sacraments."

In its "Conclusions and Recommendations" the document brings both emphases together by distinguishing between "the gift of the Holy Spirit" which has been promised to all generations of Christians (Acts 2:39) and "extraordinary spiritual gifts." While the former is universal among all Christians, the latter are bestowed only selectively. "Even in the apostolic church, where the gifts of tongues and healing were very evident, it is not clear that all Christians possessed these charismatic gifts."

Thus, while the document warns to "be extremely careful not to place too much emphasis on any one of these gifts", it clearly appreciates "the emphasis" on the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the belief is expressed that to "have Christ by faith" is also to "have the Holy Spirit." The traditional understanding of Christology is affirmed in a way that does not conflict with the overarching understanding of the doctrine of Trinity. Moreover, the validity of the traditional Lutheran understanding of the Holy Spirit is underscored as received through and not apart of "the objective and external Word and sacraments". In such a perspective a warning is recorded against the distinction, "between Spirit-baptized Christians and other Christians" which would regard the former as "a spiritually elite class". Also it is stated that partial doctrinal agreement in regard to the Holy Spirit and the baptism by the Holy Spirit does not provide "a sufficient basis for the exercise of Christian fellowship." Rather, agreement must be present in regard to "all articles of faith." "All Biblical doctrine is taught by the Holy Spirit. Unionistic worship with those who deny doctrines of Holy Spirit dishonors the Holy Spirit and fails to give a proper Christian witness to the erring brother."

A further word of caution is recorded in regard to a situation in which charismatic Lutherans would "depend more on charismatic speech than on the Biblical word." Such caution, again, is not to be misunderstood for a total rejection, but rather is intended as a means to restore a proper Lutheran perspective. Thus, for example, the possibility of healing is acknowledged. "Miracles of healing are not inherently impossible or absurd. The church must not deny the supernatural nor reject the possibility that God can intervene in the course of natural things as He did in apostolic times." Yet, the document insists, "the church's primary responsibility is to seek the salvation of sinners through the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Speaking with compassion in face of human suffering which it nevertheless recognizes to be in accord with "the good and gracious will of God," the document underscores, "We do not assume that it is the will of God that even in this life we must be free of all anguish and physical distress, for pain and suffering can also be a blessing from God. (Cf. Rom. 8:28)" or, "The Christian does not expect to manipulate or control God, even with his prayers." Consequently, the document advises that "pastors and laymen should

diligently and prayerfully study God's Word and its exposition in the Lutheran Confessions." At the same time while "we should admonish and encourage one another with love and patience" there is also a real need to "test the Spirits". It is not to be overlooked that the goal of all Christian activity is to "edify the Church". "Recognizing that spiritual gifts may be abused, the child of God will employ the gifts that God has given him with tact and Christian love, always endeavouring to edify the body of Christ and to exalt the Lord."

As the charismatic Lutherans are cautioned, all other Lutherans are challenged "to devote much greater attention to the work of the Holy Spirit". The document concludes with the following key observation: "The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod should be alert to the fact that the charismatic movement within our own as well as other church bodies did not arise out of a vacuum. In the opinion of many Christians, it has arisen to meet a pressing need within Christendom to use every resource available in the service of Christ and His church and to claim the power that God promises us through the Holy Spirit in Word and sacraments. As we face the questions raised by the charismatic movement, we must earnestly endeavor to intensify and increase our use of Word and sacraments at every level of our existence so that the church may have a renewed sense of joy, peace, and power God has promised."

A shorter statement, entitled *The Charismatic Movement in the Lutheran Church in America: A Pastoral Perspective, with Suggestions for Study*, 1974, records a rather similar approach. Distinguishing between Pentecostals on the one hand and Neo-Pentecostals or charismatics on the other hand, the Perspective views the latter as capable of accommodation to Lutheran theology. Original to it is a willingness to correlate the charismatic movement with traditional Lutheran pietism and to note that the charismatic movement "... has points of contact with earlier evangelistic forms of pietism and, perhaps, with an even earlier type of mysticism." Prepared to "recognize the validity of charismatic piety", the Perspective views it as "one of several within the Christian community". It appreciates the purpose of the charismatic movement "to revitalize Christian community and thus to revitalize the mission of the church." Insofar as the movement is prepared to interpret the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a further "release" of the presence of the Holy Spirit received in baptism and not to separate between "water and spirit" baptisms, it can offer a balanced emphasis on both justification and sanctification. "The charismatic emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit in the whole Christian life can challenge what has often become a severely minimalistic view of baptism among Lutherans."

Similarly, the speaking in tongues "should not be overemphasized" even as it is appreciated "in the framework of prayer". The fact that speaking in tongues is found among other religions as well does not automatically disqualify it. After all, "the fact that most of the liturgical acts which shape Christian worship can be found in other religions as well does not make them inauthentic for Christians." Admitting that occasionally the speaking in tongues "has polarized congregations," the Perspective is prepared to criticize both the charismatics and the non-charismatics, but also to plead for love and "a climate of mutuality." In addition, prophecy is recognized as "obviously hazardous" and therefore "always" to be tested "against the clear testimony of the Scriptures." Healing, however, is discussed with the least



measure of sympathy. On account of "the 'psychomatic' dimensions of illness" it is possible to be "at least more tolerant" in regard to faith healing while the main concern of the Perspective remains directed at the negative side of this issue: "What happens, however, when healing does not follow?" Such a situation appears to be expected under ordinary circumstances. "Jesus did not promise his followers a life free from suffering — quite the contrary! Good pastoral care requires that people be shielded from the cruelty which can result when, having been led to think that a miracle will surely occur, nothing happens."

In turning attention to worship, the Perspective resumes a balanced evaluation: "The prayer meeting can be divisive or it can enrich a congregation's life". The difference, the Perspective suggests, often depends on "the involvement and guidance of the pastor who may or may not be a charismatic".

Finally, social concern is recognized as theoretically compatible with a charismatic outlook.

While commenting on various aspects of the charismatic movement, the Perspective also supplies an evaluative point of view. In the concluding "Guidelines" the following major principles emerge. The first seems to be utilitarian in a Christian sense. "Where it is authentic — that is, where it bears good fruit — the charismatic experience must be understood *within* the scope of the church's life. There is no cause for Lutheran pastors or people to suggest either explicitly or implicitly that one cannot be charismatic and remain Lutheran in good standing."

The second main guideline requires that "every effort" be made to bring charismatic understanding in accord with traditional Lutheran doctrine. The assumption is implied that this can be done without any essential injustice.

The third guideline underscores the utilitarian dimension: the charismatic movement ". . . should be welcomed as a judgment against mechanical worship, non-biblical preaching, preoccupation with church structure and congregational success, lukewarm faith which expects nothing, compromise with the life-style of the world, etc., wherever these exist."

Yet, at the same time, it is again emphasized that "the charismatic movement does not have the only answer." The recognition of this relative value of the charismatic movement leads the Perspective in guideline six to caution the charismatics that they should not "regard fellow church members as proper objects of evangelization." And in guideline eight it is recognized as the pastor's duty to be neither uncritical nor intolerant of the charismatics. According to guideline nine, the pastor should not "pressure" parishioners into the charismatic movement and no "preferential pastoral care" should be given to charismatics."

In short, the three Lutheran churches have assumed a balanced middle-of-the-road position. While appreciating the authentically positive values of the charismatic movement, they have not overlooked the several problems which have arisen. It appears that such a position does not make it easy for the individual Lutheran pastor either to accept or to reject the charismatic movement. But this is how it should be, since the mature exercise of our Christian freedom is never a facile act. Although clear guidelines have been offered, each pastor is ultimately challenged, in good Reformation fashion, to turn to *sola Scriptura* in a thorough and responsible encounter and experience.