

THE INTERNATIONAL LUTHERAN RENEWAL:

a mature or immature Corinthian congregation?

Senior Church History

American Lutheran Christianity

Professor Fredrich

5/10/85

THE SEMINARY LIBRARY  
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary  
Mequon, Wisconsin

Gregory Hermanson

There is a spirit of activism in the Lutheran churches of the 1980<sup>s</sup>. Every synod and congregation, to some degree, is moaning under the accusation that they are not relevant for "modern Americans." So Lutherans are on the move to make new alliances or create new organizations which will quiet the cries and brighten the lives of "upwardly mobile" Americans.

The problem, however, in discussing American Lutherans is that there are so many different breeds with each one climbing its own tree. It is no longer valid to speak of Lutherans as agreeing on any one doctrine because they range from ultra-conservatives to ultra-liberals.

Equally diverse is the scope of the charismatic movement, which is a supposed "divine answer" to the irrelevancy question. Charismatics range from the ultra-liberals within the Pentecostal camp to the ultra-conservatives within the Lutheran camp. Since the field is so broad the scope of this paper is necessarily limited. This paper will deal with the Lutheran, charismatic periodical entitled, International Lutheran Renewal (hereafter referred to as I.L.R.). We will try to determine where this periodical stands in regard to the proper understanding and use of charismatic gifts.

Of course, we are assuming that there is a standard by which we can measure this periodical. Our standard will be God's Word, in particular I Corinthians 12-14. By the

end of our study we should be able to determine whether the I.L.R. is an orthodox presentation of the mysteries of the Holy Spirit or whether it is only an orthodox facade on a Pentecostal frame.

It is interesting to notice how richly God blessed the Corinthians. "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way - in all your speaking and in all your knowledge - because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed." (I Cor. 1:4-7) They were given God's grace and enriched in every way so that they had every spiritual gift. Yet they were ripping themselves apart with cliques, drunken parties and sexual sins. So Paul wrote this letter to them to educate this gifted congregation on the proper, God-pleasing use of their blessings. Paul threw up the warning flag that the possession of gifts does not insure the maturity to use them. "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant." (I Cor. 12:1) They evidently had a little to learn about their gifts.

"You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to dumb idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same

Spirit." (I Cor. 12:2-4) Paul instructed the Corinthians about spiritual gifts and reminded them at one time they had been led astray, but now they knew better. What did they know? They knew that no one is able to confess that Jesus is their Lord except by the Holy Spirit living in their heart. So they were to stop forming factions and boasting over different spiritual gifts for all their gifts were from the same Spirit. The important point was not the gift, but rather their confession that Jesus was their Lord. Paul pointed them to the foundation of faith in Christ as the mark of a full-fledged Christian. "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." (I Cor. 12:13)

Larry Christenson, in his paper "The Strategy of the Spirit," distributed by I.L.R., confuses the coming of the Spirit to regenerate an unbeliever with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost to bestow extra spiritual gifts on believers.

The strategy of the Spirit is aimed at coming to indwell the believer. This was laid down in prophecy. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27). Jesus promised the fulfillment of the prophecy when He said, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 16:15-17). The coming of the Spirit must always be understood as a strategy for establishing or strengthening His indwelling. The whole redemptive plan

of God comes to reality only when the Holy Spirit brings the living, redeeming presence of Christ to indwell the life of a believer, and from that indwelling proceeds to work out God's purpose in and through the indwelt believer. (page 5)

The misprint of John 16 for John 14 is understandable, but Mr. Christenson misused Ezekiel 36:27. The context shows us that the Ezekiel passage is definitely talking about regeneration. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

John 14:15-17 is not the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36 but rather it is talking about the spiritual gifts given at Pentecost. The disciples were already believers. They had all they needed for salvation; their sins were washed away, the Holy Spirit was already dwelling within their hearts. But on Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave them another gift. What is the result of Mr. Christenson's blending of the Spirit's gifts? Mr. Christenson has the Spirit coming to bring "the living, redeeming presence of Christ to indwell the life of a believer." That is like trying to give a local policeman membership on the local police force. If he is already a policeman, he must have already been given membership. If someone is already a

believer then the Spirit already dwells in him as Paul says, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

Another result of the muddled distinction between spiritual gifts and spiritual life through faith is the Calvinistic teaching that one must prove his faith by his pietism or by his miracles. In the I.L.R. paper from January, 1985, Mr. Christenson again writes:

What is given in baptism may become active or realized at other moments in the life of the believer. In baptism one is given all the things (e.g., gifts, ministries, workings, services etc.) that he will ever receive in Christ - potentially. But if that baptism is not actualized in the life of the baptized, God's purpose in baptism has failed of achievement. It would have been better if the person had not been baptized at all. The potential given in baptism must be appropriated in the personal experience of the individual.  
(pages 1 & 2)

What was given in baptism is immediately active. It immediately makes us children of God and produces growth and good works. If we don't fulfill all of God's earthly plans for us, that is the result of our Old Adam fighting our New Man. But as far as "actualizing" our baptism, it is actualized the moment we receive it. Pushing the Holy Spirit out of our lives is another matter. But the Holy Spirit isn't waiting for us to ask Him to go to work in us, He is already at work. "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Phil. 2:13)

The people of the I.L.R. are suffering from the problems which the Corinthians encountered. They don't realize that when anyone, by faith, confesses that Christ is Lord then he has the Spirit and is totally justified with a mansion in heaven. Whatever supernatural gifts the Spirit decides to give each individual after that point is the Spirit's business and is a part of their justification.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines. (I Cor. 12:7-11)

Paul emphasized here that there is but one Spirit, no matter what the gift, no matter how great or lowly. He even went on to compare it to a body. Every member needs every other member. No matter how many gifts God has given to one person, that person still needs everyone else. Why did Paul go into this long discourse? So that there would be no divisions between the highly gifted and lowly gifted brothers. "God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one

part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (I Cor. 12: 24b-26)

We are not brothers because we share the same spiritual gifts but rather because the Spirit has put the same faith in our hearts and the same confession in our mouths. If one ship glides smoothly out of dry-dock and into the water and another ship enters the water with a mighty crash, are they not both equally in the water? If one man is only given faith and no other spiritual gifts is he less in heaven when he dies? No! He may even be in the heights of heaven for he would have taught us how undeserving we are to receive any gift. Yet we hear Arnold Bittlinger saying:

Every Christian should encounter in his experience at least in some way the different aspects which are connected with baptism. He should have at least some kind of conversion experience in which he encounters Jesus Christ as his Savior. He should also have at least some kind of charismatic experience in which he encounters Jesus Christ as the head of his body which is the church. Finally, he should have at least some kind of union experience in which he encounters Jesus Christ as the center of his life. (I.L.R. Jan., 1985, page 2; from Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ, J. Elmo Agrimson, Ed., p. 93)

There is nothing wrong with helping Christians grow stronger in their New Man, recognizing with ever-increasing confidence that Jesus is their personal Savior, their head commander and their heart's center, but to use terms like, "conversion experience," "charismatic experience" and "union experience" is totally deceptive. The word "experience" here, for most people, would mean a particular



recordable, recountable event in their lives. Paul didn't focus our attention on experiences when he wrote to the Romans about faith, but rather he said, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Rom. 10:9) No where did Paul or anyone else point believers to their "conversion experience," "charismatic experience," or "union experience" as a sign of faith.

When there is too much emphasis placed on one's own subjective feelings and experiences, then it is easy to forget that it is through God's Word that we are saved and not through our feelings and experiences. When that is forgotten then our feelings and our experiences become the means by which we and others are saved. Sadly to say, some of the I.L.R. writers fall into this gorge. Rev. Harry Fullilove, after quoting Acts 2:38, writes:

Here is the key to evangelism and church growth - the mighty Gospel that calls for repentance and faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. And He is alive! Praise God for the Christmas-Easter proclamation!

Yet that is not enough. The continued growth of the church depended upon the Holy Spirit....

I am not calling for 'another Pentecost,' for there can never be one, but I do believe that Pentecost Day can be an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to come upon our churches in a new way - if we really want Him to. If we cry to the distant and seemingly irrelevant and unreal God to come upon us in salvation, peace and power, then we will be on our way to genuine church-growth. (I.L.R. May, 1984, page 4)

Rev. Fullilove portrays the coming of the Holy Spirit as separate from the preaching of the Gospel, when in fact

we are bound to seek Him only when and where the Word is proclaimed. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) "Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" (Gal. 3:2)

Rev. Fullilove places too much emphasis on the emotions of a Pentecostal experience and has forgotten that it is through God's Word that we are saved, strengthened and enlightened.

Dr. Theodore Jungkuntz, speaking of Christians as "salt", writes:

Only pure salt is desirable for salting; impure salt is useless to the task... The separation that Jesus requires takes place within the salt itself; its essence, its heart, must be pure. Then it can be used as salt for the preservation of the earth. Then it can be used with the bread and the lamb to bring out the taste....

Evangelism that merely proclaims the gospel and administers the sacraments is an evangelism that denies people the full taste of what is being shared ...

Evangelism in the Spirit of Jesus is the sacrifice of Jesus offered to the people with salt (see Lev. 2:13; Mark 9:49-50) - the salt of our own lives laid down together with the offering of the lamb for the life of the world. This means that sharing the good news is not merely a matter of speaking it, essential as that is. It means that the speakers of the good news also have to be this good news, actualizing it in their own persons (see Gal. 2:20). It means we do not merely encourage people to believe what we say, but that people will find what we say confirmed by who we are and by what we do. (Oct., 1984, page 2)

Dr. Jungkuntz is making the wrong distinction when he talks of the salt being pure or impure. Jesus is talking about salt which is salty over against salt which has lost its saltiness. No believer is pure. Christ washes away our impurities, but we are not pure salt in this world. Jesus is not saying that He throws out impure salt, but rather dead salt, salt which has lost all of its saltiness.

It is very true that our sinful actions can totally underminē all our true confessions and that the New Man strives for a life which conforms to the truth, but Dr. Jungkuntz elevates our life of faithful actions, and our experiencing God to a level of actually aiding the conversion of the unbelieving world. The best we can do is simply not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. Our best deeds, our most righteous actions only stop from hindering the Spirit's work in the Gospel. We can in no way help or aid in the converting work of the Gospel. So a statement like, "Evangelism ... is ... the salt of our own lives laid down together with the offering of the lamb for the life of the world," is unacceptable to orthodox Lutherans.

Another theologian who mixes Justification and Sanctification is Rev. Larry Christenson. Under the subject of "obedience" in his paper, "The Strategy of the Spirit," he tried to make obedience a part of grace rather than a result of grace.

When Christ is preached and people are urged to "believe," what results all too often is an intellectual belief system followed by

moral striving, rather than a living faith. We aim merely at getting people to accept a theology, then dedicate their own energies to serving God. "Believe" is understood simply in human terms, something people must do in order to be saved. They may get a well packaged orthodox warning to avoid any attempt at "works righteousness," but they pitch headlong into "belief righteousness": agree with right teaching and you will be saved. Then they have a good old college try at living the Christian life in their own strength. Or, if that becomes too arduous, they fall back into the well memorized doctrine of forgiveness. And call it Christianity. It's a religion of the flesh, dependent upon human achievement from first to last.

It is precisely an emphasis on the Holy Spirit which helps keep faith and obedience from becoming an exercise in human achievement. The Holy Spirit is Scripture's counterpoise to an impossible gospel: impossible to believe, impossible to obey. I behold that gospel, impossibly beyond my grasp, and pray, "Come, Holy Spirit! Make Christ to be my wisdom, my righteousness and sanctification and redemption." (I Corinthians 1:30)

No believer can bypass the fundamental of obedience: the strategy of the Spirit makes no provision for cheap grace. Yet neither can one undertake obedience apart from the Spirit: His strategy just as rigorously rules out sanctification by self-effort. Any preaching of holy obedience without dependence on the Holy Spirit will miss the mark: it will veer left into anti-nomianism, or right into legalism. Obedience is not the product of my own belief and will power, but a loving and thankful confidence in the Holy Spirit who unites my life with the life of Christ, who obeys the Father in all things. (I.L.R., "The Strategy of the Spirit," pages 11 & 12)

Satan has two big lies. The first is, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere." The second is, "It doesn't matter how you live as long as you believe the truth." Rev. Christenson runs so vehemently away from the second lie that he falls headlong into the first lie. He says the Spirit makes no provision for cheap grace. Grace that costs is no grace at all. Grace

is God's undeserved love and we don't have to be obedient to receive it. In fact, it is because we are disobedient that we need total grace, undeserved love. It is true that this love will produce obedience in us, but that does not create or sustain a living faith, it only keeps our Old Adam from killing the faith which the Spirit has freely given us.

I take great exception with his scenario of the intellectual believer in Lutheran pews. He sets the stage by saying, "When Christ is preached and people are urged to 'believe.'" Does this mean that the law is not preached? It is the lack of law which allows a person to recline into apathetic intellectualism. Then he goes on with the verdict; "what results all too often is an intellectual belief system followed by moral striving, rather than a living faith." Is Rev. Christenson able to read hearts? How can he tell whether a person is obeying out of gratitude or out of humanism? Jesus warns each believer against worshiping with his lips only and not with his entire life when he says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23) In their defense these hypocrites point

to their deeds, but Jesus dismisses their deeds by saying "I never knew you." Jesus is able to see into their hearts and reveal that their deed sprung from false motivations. On the other hand Paul writes, "What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:15-19)

Paul, one of the most sanctified Christians ever, describes graphically the daily battle between the Old Adam and the New Man. He says that he doesn't do the will of God which he knows he should. He doesn't pretend that he has one hundred percent obedience in his life and yet we could hardly say that Paul didn't have a "living faith" or that he was steeped in "intellectual belief." All God has allowed our eyes to see in other people are their actions and their confessions. We are not allowed to see where saving faith abides. So when we say that obedience is fundamental, and start labeling large groups of Lutherans as hypocrites, we best first ask ourselves if we aren't being pharisaical and heretical by making obedience a part of our justification rather than a necessary fruit of our justification.

Another tune which sounds impressive but rings less than true is the song that every gift which God gave the apostolic church is automatically at our disposal now. Indeed, God can do anything He wants, but are we able to say He always wants His church to possess the same gifts in each generation? I Corinthians 12:11 says, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each man, just as he determines." It is the Holy Spirit who determines what gifts are given out and which generations do miracles.

Trudy Minchak writes, "James 5:15 instructs elders in the church to anoint with oil and pray for the sick, promising that the prayer of faith would heal the sick person, the Lord would restore him to health and his sins would be forgiven. This is a powerful statement and promise of God! Do we believe it? ... Why has this practice been forsaken in the church? Have God's promises changed or become void? .. He is changeless, and since He healed before, He heals now. He still has the power and the desire to heal." (I.L.R. Feb., 1985)

The point of contention with the James passage is whether *σωσει* here means "will save" or "will heal." *σωσει* used elsewhere in Scripture almost always means "to save." While the apostles were allowed to heal by miracles it seems that the apostolic church was not given this ability nor could the apostles use it whenever they wanted.

Paul was stuck with his thorn in the flesh and Timothy was advised to take a little wine for his stomach problems. "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." (I Tim. 5:23) Hadn't Paul healed people and relieved them of evil spirits and yet he didn't relieve Timothy of his illness? If Paul had a universal command from God to heal everyone wouldn't it have been a lack of faith not to heal Timothy? James' letter encouraged the elders to come and pray with the sick person to lighten his spiritual burden and to comfort him. There was no blanket command to miraculously heal all the physically sick. The main part of a person which must be healed is his soul. Confession and absolution on the sick bed assures the person that spiritually he is well and saved by the Lord Jesus.

The question as to whether this article by Trudy Minchak is contradictory to Paul's command, "Women should remain silent in the churches," (I Cor. 14:34) is a bitterly debated topic. The question to be answered is whether the doctrinal articles in a periodical are part of the church. This paper is not going to launch into those uncharted seas.

One of the major goals Paul had in writing to the Corinthians was to eliminate the factions and restore harmony. When factions arise each side tries to lord their gifts over the others and both sides become very judgmental. Paul told them, "There should be no divisions in the



body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." (I Cor. 12:25 & 26) Jesus had the same message for his disciples. "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk. 10: 42-45)

Is the I.L.R. suffering from the same haughty judgments of factionalism which the Corinthians choked on? I'm afraid so. Father Terry Fullam, a Senior Rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church commented:

It's not only being apostolic in doctrine we talk about - it's being apostolic in experience.

At this point, I have to be very frank. The churches that you have known and I have known (it matters not what denomination we come from; it's the same everywhere), generally speaking, have been functioning at a very sub-normal level when measured against the standard of the New Testament! Dr. John McKay, the past president of Princeton Seminary, used to say that people in our generation can become accustomed to a kind of church life that is so sub-standard that they have confused death with life. If you've been raised in the midst of the dead and that's all you've ever known, if someone alive comes into your presence, it will be shocking indeed. The church, as we have known it, has functioned so long sub-normally that, were it ever to become normal, it would seem abnormal! (I.L.R. June, 1984)

Father Fullam then goes on to explain the four marks of a charismatic church. It will always be a worshipping church; a teaching church; a caring, loving church; and a serving church.

If his ideas of what a charismatic church is, is what the apostolic church was, then the WELS churches are anything but sub-normal. I cannot speak for any Episcopal churches and only for the WELS branch of Lutheran churches, but my findings are that all those elements are in each one of our churches. I feel his comments are simple snobbery.

Rev. David Dorpat turns a subjective judgment back upon his critics but ends up making the same mistake.

One illustration that I have found helpful in putting the barrier of fear of emotionalism into proper perspective is the example of a sports contest. If you should go to the stadium and discover people jumping up and down and exercising their lungs with excited cheers and shouts, and then look at the field and find it empty, you would not only be justified in a charge of "emotionalism" but would have reason to question their sanity. On the other hand, if an exciting game is going on and you find a group in the stand that just sits there in stony silence, you might have reason to question whether they see what is going on, and, if they do, why they came at all.

In the same way, if you go to a church and see people enjoying themselves, singing loud praises to God, perhaps with shouts and clapping as the Psalmist suggests (Ps. 71:22-23; 47:1,5), you might make the charge of "emotionalism" or "neuroticism," unless with the eyes of faith you see the beauty and majesty of a gracious God who has become our Father through the atoning work of Jesus. He is far more exciting than any sport, and you might rather wonder about those who sit in stony, somber silence." (I.L.R. Aug., 1984, page 3)

Webster defines "emotionalism" as someone with an emotional character; the tendency to be emotional or to show emotion quickly and easily; a display of emotion or an appeal to emotion, especially to sway an audience to some belief. (Webster's New World Dictionary, © 1966, page 475)

Emotionalism, in the charismatic setting, is usually a label of condemnation, rather than commendation. Rev. Dorpat, in his attempt at "putting the barrier of fear of emotionalism into proper perspective" has only inflamed the term more, and uses it as a flag of pride to wave in the enemies' face. The illustration of the sporting event limps drastically from both perspectives. At one of my high school football games an unfamiliar girl was vehemently rooting for the opposite team, reassuring everyone in hearing distance that our side was dead meat. She turned to me and asked what was happening. I told her to watch the quarterback. She asked which one that was. She had great spirit, but little knowledge.

A man in my home congregation always closes his eyes during every sermon. Certain well-meaning ladies had to inquire from his wife why he couldn't be more attentive and she politely replied, "He isn't sleeping, he's concentrating. He could tell you every point of the sermon." Emotions are neither a thermostat for setting devotion, nor a thermometer for measuring devotions. They are merely Venetian blinds around our devotion, protecting and

exposing our devotion as we are able.

But even if we take the knife out of the word "emotion" that does not solve the original problem of haughty factionalism, of mud slinging and of proud humility. The only solution for that is love. That is why Paul went into such detail describing the most excellent way to use gifts. Paul first put gifts in the proper relationship to love. He calmly declared that if we don't use our gifts with love we are scum.

Paul then described love. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." (I Cor. 13:4-8a)

The problem with having the truth is, when you've got it, you're stuck with it. We are stuck with the truth of what true love is and it shows us just how unloving we are and have been. I can't think of a better position from which to discuss God's Word and will than on our knees.

Paul then tossed the Corinthians into the picture of eternity. How seldom most of us think about eternity. We know what is important for today and maybe tomorrow, but what will truly be important when we are in eternity? Paul stressed that when our time to count here on earth

has ended the greatest blessing we will have been given and will have been able to give is love. Love is what makes life worth the living; not some human affection, but God's love poured into our hearts.

After the long explanation about love and its indispensability, Paul then confronted one specific gift which was causing more grief than good; the gift of speaking in tongues.

Rev. Larry Christenson makes a near necessity of the gift of tongues. "Those who pray for the filling of the Spirit in the context of the charismatic renewal, usually speak in tongues, either at once, or sometime afterward. For some, another gift such as healing or prophecy may accompany the initial experience, but this is less common." (I.L.R. Jan. 1985, page 1)

Paul encouraged the Corinthians to seek the other gifts, rather than tongues.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.... I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue." (I Cor. 14:1-5, 18-19)

The Corinthians were blessed by God with many spiritual gifts but nowhere is the impression given that they all spoke in tongues. In fact Paul stressed how they all didn't have the same gifts and yet Rev. Christenson portrays a spirit-filled Christian as one who speaks in tongues. But Rev. Dorpat does

If a spiritual gift is not in use, as those mentioned by Paul in I Cor. 12 are not in most denominational churches today, the logical and Christian course would be to understand and emphasize their value and to encourage their use. Then, if abuses should arise as they did in Corinth we should tactfully and lovingly admonish about abuses. (I.L.R. Aug., 1984)

Paul didn't outlaw tongues, but he didn't praise or encourage them either as Rev. Dorpat would like. The gift he did push hard was prophecy, the proclaiming and expounding of God's written Word. Could Paul have been keeping the Corinthian's eyes on the greater gift, God's Word, rather than being carried away with their tongues into unionistic practices? For if they were to prize prophecy above tongues then the purity of God's Word would be a higher priority than ecumenical, charismatic, prayer meetings.

Rev. Harry Fullilove places a small price on the purity of God's Word. "I see a need for us all to put aside our doctrinal differences and pet ideas and fully believe in our Creed when it says: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit.'" (I.L.R. May, 1984, page 1)

Dick Denny has little use for sound doctrine.

Dissension is caused by those who become very judgmental, desiring to proclaim the truth (as they understand it,) and using this truth as a sentence of judgment. Standing steadfast (or stubborn?), they insist that this is the way God works - there is no other possibility to consider...Paul asked, "Is Christ divided?" (I Cor. 1:10-13). No, Christ is not divided, but we separate ourselves from the body of Christ when we insist that our way is the only way - the rightway! Separation comes when flesh refuses to yield to the work of the Holy Spirit. (I.L.R. Oct. 1984, pages 3&4)

When such stress is given to the supernatural gifts and not to the Word, then Paul's command to control their gift, to speak only in turn and then only with an interpreter has little value for a modern charismatic. Paul told them, "The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace." (I Cor. 14:32-33a)

Mrs. Lempi Sample was hardly in control when she was "refreshed in the Spirit."

I asked her (Lois Walfrid Johnson) to pray that I would be refreshed in the Spirit...As she prayed I experienced His presence.

"I fell at his feet as dead," wrote John of his experience with Jesus (Rev. 1:17). I also fell at His feet, as He revealed Himself to me in this gift of grace. My body was stiff and immovable. The cold floor beneath me gave no comfort nor warmth. With my lips and my outstretched hands I praised Him. I studied the vastness and the height of the ceiling of Central Lutheran Church. It was symbolic of the Kingdom of God." (I.L.R. June, 1984, page 3)

I wish there could have been space to present all the doctrinally sound statements throughout this periodical. Unfortunately they are loosing their focus on who is the

true enemy. No one wants to be steeped in dead orthodoxy any more than they want to be a heretic and yet those extremes happen. Why do they happen? Because people take their eyes off of God's Word and focus on themselves. God's Word not only gives us life, but also dicipline.. It challenges us, but also controls us.

Is the International Lutheran Renewal a mature or immature Corinthian congregation? I believe the voices coming through this periodical are immature and becoming heretical.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Christenson, Larry. International Lutheran Renewal, Jan. 1984-April 1985.

Christenson, Larry. International Lutheran Renewal,  
The Strategy of the Spirit, Feb. 1985.

LCMS . The Charismatic Movement And Lutheran Theology,  
A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church  
Relations of the LCMS, Jan. 1972