



# THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

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GUIDELINES FOR  
CONGREGATIONS  
AND PASTORS

A REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THEOLOGY AND CHURCH RELATIONS OF  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD

APRIL 1977



## Preface

As the charismatic movement continues to grow, questions are arising regarding the validity of experiences being reported within the church today such as miracles of healing, speaking in tongues, exorcism, and prophecy. Members of the charismatic movement are convinced that the nine spiritual gifts referred to in I Corinthians 12 are present among Christians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century even as they were in apostolic times and that they are in fact being manifested among God's people in our times. Other Christians are equally certain that the extraordinary gifts such as tongues, divine healing, and prophecy were given by the Spirit to His church in apostolic times but that they have since disappeared from the church. They therefore doubt the validity of the experiences being claimed by charismatics today. Such differences of opinion have frequently caused tension to arise among Christians.

Charismatics hold that "baptism with the Holy Spirit" meets a need within the Christian church as well as in their own personal lives. Their primary objective is to produce a spiritual renewal within Christendom. Like many other Christians they are deeply concerned over conditions within the institutional church. They see a lack of commitment on the part of many who claim church membership. They sense that many Christians do not find in their faith the joy, peace, and certainty which members of the apostolic church evidently experienced, that many Christians do not demonstrate the love for one another that they should, that in many congregations there is a lack of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, and that church services are often too impersonal and formal.

While charismatics contend that "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is the cure for these ills within Christendom, it is apparent that some of the practices and theological tenets of this movement conflict with Biblical doctrine, thereby causing divisions within various congregations. Perhaps the most serious doctrinal problem of this movement is its tendency to claim direct spiritual illumination apart from the Word, a malady that may have its origin in a loss of confidence in the divine efficacy of the bare Word. To counteract such a flight from the Word itself, confessional Lutheranism emphasizes that *solo verbo* (by the Word alone) is as basic to Biblical and Lutheran theology as the great Reformation emphasizes on grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone. Anything that leads people away from the Word for the assurance of the Spirit's presence and power in their lives is a soul-destroying, satanic delusion.

We should not and cannot pass judgment on the Holy Spirit's presence, operations, and gifts merely on the basis of our feeling, how and when we perceive it in our hearts. On the contrary, because the Holy Spirit's activity often is hidden, and happens under cover of great weakness, we should be certain, because of and on the basis of his promise, that the Word which is heard and preached is an office and work of the Holy Spirit, whereby he assuredly is potent and active in our hearts (II Cor. 2:14ff.). (FC SD II, 56)

Christian love suggests that the church must endeavor to give counsel and guidance to congregations and individuals in this area. It was in this spirit that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations released a report in 1972 bearing the title "The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology." This document provided a detailed study of the relevant sections of the Scriptures. For the same reason and in the same spirit the Commission is now offering congregations a second document in which it will briefly restate the Synod's doctrinal stance

with respect to the charismatic movement and offer pastoral guidelines for ministering to the spiritual needs of those who are affected by the current tensions.

In this document we shall employ popular terminology and use it in the commonly accepted sense. Words such as “charismatic movement” or “charismatic renewal” will be used to refer to that religious movement which sprang up within many mainline churches in the 1960s and was characterized by the emphasis it placed on the experience called “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Because its basic beliefs resembled those of Pentecostalism, it became known in some circles as neo-Pentecostalism. The movement within The Lutheran Church? Missouri Synod gradually and increasingly came to assume the name “charismatic” rather than “neo-Pentecostal.”

In this document a person will be designated “a charismatic” provided he has chosen to identify himself with the charismatic movement, shares in the experiences and socialization which characterize it, reads its literature, goes to its meetings, and becomes engaged with elements of the theology and lifestyle emerging from the movement.<sup>1</sup>

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### Abbreviations

All citations of the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord*, ed. T. G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).

The following abbreviations have been used:

AC - Augsburg Confession

Ap - Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Ep - Epitome of the Formula of Concord

FC - Formula of Concord

LC - Large Catechism

SA - Smalcald Articles

SD - Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

Scriptural quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

# THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

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## GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONS AND PASTORS

### I. The Theological Basis

In view of present world conditions Christians welcome the greater emphasis that has been placed on the work of the Holy Spirit in recent years. They yearn for a spiritual renewal in the church, for less apathy in carrying on the Lord's work, and for greater zeal and commitment in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations. Christians in general are agreed that there is great need for a deeper appreciation of the work of the Spirit in the church today.

However, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations reiterates some of the concerns which it set forth in its first document.

A. *Spiritual gifts are not to be considered means of grace.* The church will remember that the Holy Spirit and His gifts are offered only where God has promised them, in the Word and sacraments. The Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions frequently emphasize that the Holy Spirit builds the church solely through the means of grace. Only through the witness of the Gospel and the sacraments does the believer come to faith, receive the assurance of God's love and forgiveness, witness to others, live in accord with God's will, and remain steadfast in the faith. Through the means of grace the Holy Spirit bestows on the church *all* the blessings that are ours in Christ as well as every spiritual gift that is needed to carry out the mission of the church in a sinful world. (Cf. Matt. 28:19; Luke 16:29; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 11:26; AC V, 4; Ap XIII, 13; XXIV, 70; LC II, 52-59, 61-62)<sup>2</sup>

The church will accept with joy and gratitude any gift which 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. It will take care lest it quench the Spirit by failing to expect or pray for God's presence and power in building His church. But it will also take seriously the admonition of the apostle to "test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1; cf. also 1 Cor. 12:10). Above all, the church will not employ such gifts as though they were means of grace.<sup>3</sup>

In examining teachings and emphases of the various individuals and groups who expound the charismatic movement, we find reason to express anxious concern. Our concern is, first of all, that the doctrines of Holy Scripture be taught in their purity. We note that such vital doctrines as justification by grace through faith, Baptism, the means of grace, and other major articles of the Christian faith are involved. Second, we are concerned for the spiritual welfare of those who are engaged in charismatic teaching and activity and for those who are under their spiritual care. The "concerns" expressed below indicate the doctrines which are at issue in the charismatic

movement. They are directed toward a common concern for Scripture as the norm of Christian belief and practice. They do not intend to call into question the goodwill and sincerity of those who espouse one or more of the charismatic emphases. The issue is not personality or new kinds of worship forms but the teachings of God's Word.

Lutherans are deeply concerned, therefore, when "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is considered to be a second experience beyond the sacrament of Baptism and when it is said to grant powers and blessings that are not given through the Word and sacraments. Such a view denies the full benefits of Baptism. Only Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the use of God's Word are external means. By these alone the Holy Spirit has chosen to work among us in grace. Prayer, for example, is not a means of grace but a proper response to God's grace as offered in the sacrament of Baptism. Our Lutheran Confessions state that Baptism grants to the believer "the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new may come forth and grow strong." (LC IV, 76)<sup>4</sup>

Lutherans are also concerned when speaking in tongues is described as a spiritual gift which imparts to the one using it a keener realization of his sins, a deeper and more constant awareness of the Spirit's indwelling presence, a stronger faith, the ability to pray at a deeper level, an awakened interest and a deeper hunger to study the Bible, and a new freedom to witness to others what Jesus means to him. Such a view raises the experience of speaking in tongues to the level of a means of grace and attributes to it functions which can be performed only by the Gospel and the sacraments.

We are deeply concerned also when the experience of "baptism with the Holy Spirit" is treated as a means by which God equips the church for its mission in the world, particularly when the "baptism with the Spirit" is regarded (in practice, if not in theory) as a supplement to the means of grace. Beyond the Word and the sacraments nothing is needed to equip the church for its task, for through them the Spirit gives life, power, and growth to the church. Christians will therefore continue to seek power and renewal for the church in the Word and sacraments, not in special signs and miracles.<sup>5</sup>

B. *God has not promised to reveal His will to us directly and immediately (without means), as for example through visions and dreams.* God has revealed His will directly and immediately to the prophets, the apostles, and other holy men of God, and through them He has made His will known also to us. However, the Lutheran Confessions describe as "enthusiasm" the view that God reveals Himself and bestows His spiritual gifts to us apart from the objective and external Word and sacraments. Luther warns in the Smalcald Articles:

In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon, and it is the source, strength, and power of all heresy, including that of the papacy and Mohammedanism. Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through the external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil. (SA III, viii, 9-10)

*The Biblical teaching of the external Word as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, emphasized in our Lutheran heritage, rejects the subjectivism that seeks divine comfort and strength through "a personal experience" instead of in the objective word of the Gospel. To make*

the former rather than the latter the basis of Christian certainty leads either to pride or despair instead of humble trust in the Gospel promises.<sup>6</sup> (AC V; FC Ep II, 13)

Since Scripture nowhere promises that God reveals His will to us as He did to the apostles and prophets, directly and immediately or through visions and dreams, Christians are urged to learn and respond to God's will by means of a diligent study of the Holy Scriptures and a proper use of the sacraments.

C. *Special signs and wonders are not indispensable guarantees that the Spirit of God dwells within an individual.* To be sure, Scripture relates numerous examples of miraculous healings in both the Old and New Testaments. It is clear from the Gospels that healing the sick was an important and integral part of the ministry of Jesus; and when the Savior sent forth His 12 apostles into the cities of Galilee, He gave them specific instructions that they were "to preach the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:2). Soon thereafter when He appointed 70 others and sent them ahead of Him, He told them also to "heal the sick . . . and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:8-9). According to the Book of Acts the miracles of healing in the early church continued at least for a time after the Savior's ascension into heaven.<sup>7</sup>

God can choose to perform such mighty works in and through His church today. Lutherans affirm the supernatural and the possibility that God can and does intervene in the course of natural things. However, Scripture warns repeatedly against the type of miracle-mindedness which places undue emphasis on the performance of supernatural deeds rather than on the proclamation of the Gospel: "Jesus therefore said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe'" (John 4:48). Jesus warns the church against being deceived by signs and wonders which will appear in the last days to lead Christians astray: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). Scripture warns the world against demanding miracles from the church to prove its faith: "'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.' So he left them and departed" (Matt. 16:4). The Bible states that even such signs as casting out devils, prophesying, and other mighty works, though they be done in Jesus' name, do not in themselves guarantee that they are God-pleasing: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers'" (Matt. 7:21-23). Luke reports: "The seventy returned with joy saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!' And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'" (Luke 10:17-20)<sup>8</sup>

D. *Faith in Christ does not necessarily eliminate illness and affliction from the life of a Christian.* Lutherans believe that illness, pain, affliction, and death have come into the world as a result of man's fall into sin. We believe also that Christ has redeemed us from our sickness: "This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Matt. 8:17). However, this does not mean that God has removed sickness from the life of the child of God and that, if he has sufficient faith, he can be free of an illness by the power of the Spirit. Nor does it imply that sickness is an unmixed evil and a sign of a weak faith

(Heb. 12; 2 Cor. 12:7). Afflictions are often works of God which are intended for our good. Therefore, while Christians pray for healing in the full confidence that their prayers are heard and answered and while they earnestly hope for recovery, they nevertheless submit patiently to the will of God since they know that all things work together for good to them that love God. The Christian does not expect to manipulate or control God, even with his prayers. He would hesitate to have in his own hands the power of life and death. In both joy and sorrow the Christian knows that God does not abdicate. The child of God therefore prays confidently and persistently but with the provision “Lord, if it is Thy will.”<sup>9</sup>

E. *Christian certainty is not based on “feeling” but on the objective promises of the Gospel.* While Lutherans appreciate and fully value the importance of spiritual experience, the Lutheran Confessions always point us to the objective promise of the Gospel as the unfailing basis of hope and certainty both in this life and in the life to come. As Dr. Francis Pieper has written: “. . . saving faith is always faith in the Word of Christ, faith in the external Word of the Gospel, which Christ commanded His Church to preach and to teach (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:1-2). This external Word is both the object of faith (‘Believe the Gospel,’ Mark 1:15) and the means by which faith is created (‘Faith cometh by hearing,’ Rom. 10:17). A belief whose object is not the Word of Christ as we have it in the Word of His Apostles (John 17:20) . . . is according to the Scriptures a delusion, ignorance, and a human fabrication (1 Tim. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:1-5: ‘faith in the wisdom of men’).” Dr. Pieper continues: “The modern theologians . . . substitute . . . ‘the Person of Christ,’ ‘the living Christ,’ etc. . . . But he who by-passes Christ’s words also misses the ‘living Christ.’”<sup>10</sup>

F. *“Baptism with the Spirit” is not a basis for church fellowship.* Lutherans believe that Christians should pray earnestly for and work diligently toward a God-pleasing harmony among Christian churches. The Confessions frequently demonstrate this attitude (Ap Preface, 19, 16; FC Ep XI, 22; AC Preface, 10; FC SD XI, 96). However, the Lutheran Confessions do not countenance a view which would find a basis for church fellowship in a common experience of “baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Before practicing altar and pulpit fellowship The Lutheran Church? Missouri Synod seeks agreement in the doctrine of the Gospel, in all its articles, and in the right use of the sacraments. Unionistic worship with those who deny doctrines of the Holy Scriptures dishonors the Holy Spirit and fails to give proper witness to the erring brother.<sup>11</sup>

G. *The gift of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily include extraordinary spiritual gifts.* While Lutherans rejoice in the gracious promise that the gift of the Holy Spirit will be given to all generations of believers (Acts 2:39), neither the Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions support the view that this gift of the Spirit necessarily includes such extraordinary spiritual gifts as tongues, miracles, miraculous healings, and prophecy (1 Cor. 12). According to the pattern revealed in the Bible, God does not necessarily give His church in all ages the same special gifts. He bestows His blessings according to His good pleasure. (1 Cor. 12:11)

## Summary and Conclusion

When someone who is troubled because of his sins is told that he can find certainty and rest for his troubled conscience in some inner experience such as “baptism with the Spirit,” he is directed away from Christ to his own inner spiritual estate. Such teaching directs the troubled sinner to his own experience as the basis for his certainty and the joy of his salvation and places him once again under the bondage of the Law. This leads either to a self-righteous confidence in one’s own inner experience or to spiritual despair for the person who has had no such experience. Confidence in human experience is carnal security, not the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, who always directs us to Jesus Christ and God’s promise in the preaching (teaching) of the Gospel, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and Holy Communion.

The Gospel is the gracious promise of the remission of sins for the sake of Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins is apprehended by faith in the promise, and only by faith. The teaching that an inner experience such as “baptism with the Spirit” is a part of the Gospel promise and that without the promise of such an experience we do not have the “full Gospel” adds human works to the Gospel and stands under the apostolic curse: “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.” (Gal. 1:8)

It is important that Christian people be warned against doctrine or teaching which is presented as the Word and will of God, when in fact the Sacred Scriptures do not clearly teach such doctrine. The Holy Scriptures forbid the teaching of pious personal opinions and private interpretation of Scripture as God’s Word and will: “Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say, ‘Says the Lord.’” (Jer. 23:31; cf. also 2 Peter 1:20)

In order to provide guidance in determining whether or not doctrine and teaching in this matter is in accordance with the Sacred Scriptures, we offer the following summary of the Biblical doctrine.

### *The Holy Scriptures Teach:*

1. That we are justified alone by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.
2. That the forgiveness of our sins on account of Christ, promised and offered in the Gospel, is our righteousness before God.
3. That it is by faith alone that we accept God’s promised offer of forgiveness and are justified.
4. That the faith by which we accept God’s forgiveness on account of Christ is the work of God’s Spirit through the external means of grace, namely, the preaching (teaching) of the Gospel, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. Through these external means the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart when and where it pleases God. Through these external means of grace the Holy Spirit, together with all that is necessary for life and salvation, is given to those who believe.
5. That faith, which is the work of God’s Spirit, is the confident assurance that for Christ’s sake we are forgiven and accepted by God as righteous. Through this confident faith in the promise of God the accusing voice of conscience is quieted and the troubled heart finds rest.

*It Is Contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and Therefore Dangerous to the Salvation of Men, to Teach:*

1. That God desires every Christian, following Baptism, to have a “second experience” such as the “baptism with the Spirit.”
2. That the so-called “gifts of the Spirit” are external signs by which we can assure ourselves that we have faith, are living in God’s grace, or have the Spirit of God.
3. That God promises every Christian such gifts as speaking in tongues, healing, discerning of spirits, and prophesy and that God has given such a promise as a part of the “full” or “complete Gospel.”
4. That a “conversion experience,” “baptism with the Spirit,” or other inner religious experience is necessary for, or should be urged upon, Christians in order that they may be certain either of having faith and salvation or of the indwelling of God’s Spirit.
5. That a Christian who has not had such an experience either has an incomplete faith, is unconverted and is still living under the rule of sin, or has only accepted Christ as his Savior but not as his Lord.
6. That the sanctification of a Christian is incomplete unless he possesses the gift of speaking in tongues.
7. That God promises healing and health to every Christian in this life and that, if such healing does not occur, it is due to a lack of faith.
8. That God gives guidance and leadership to the church today through visions and dreams or direct prophecy.

## **II. Guidelines for Congregations and Pastors**

*A. Some Suggestions for Pastors Who Are Concerned About the Charismatic Movement in the Lutheran Church*

1. Study the spiritual needs of your congregation. Emphasize that it is the Holy Spirit who both brings us to faith and also gives us the joy, the assurance, the peace, and the love for one another which are marks of the believer. In addition, the Holy Spirit often strengthens God’s children by leading them through great struggle and anguish, as He did with Jacob, Job, and Paul. The Spirit bestows these blessings upon us only through the means of grace. Neither tongues, nor miracles of healing, nor any of the other charismatic gifts referred to in 1 Corinthians 12 were given for the purpose of making God more real to man, to assure him of God’s love, to give power for witnessing, or to bring about a renewal in the church. These were all *signs* that Christ had sent His Spirit.

2. Place more emphasis on the benefits of Baptism. Pastors should constantly remind their congregations that Baptism as Gospel is a means of grace which, as a covenant between God and His children, conveys great blessings not only in our childhood but throughout our life.

The sacrament of Baptism not only grants us the forgiveness of sins throughout our life, but it also assures us of God's presence and His love. It produces in us the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Paul calls these the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12:6-8. Baptism gives Christians the desire and the strength to live as children of God.

In short, Baptism grants to us the Holy Spirit with His gifts. Therefore, we Lutherans believe that we have no need of praying for a special "baptism with the Spirit."

3. Emphasize the Lord's Supper and its blessings. Pastors should repeatedly emphasize in their congregations that Holy Communion as Gospel grants to the Christian the spiritual blessings which not only charismatics but all Christians are seeking: the guarantee of God's presence, the assurance of His grace and love, the power to live as children of God, love and appreciation for His Word, and power to witness to Christ.

4. In order to bring these important facts to the attention of the people committed to their care, pastors should study with their congregations the work of the Holy Spirit as described in such books of the Bible as the Gospel of John, the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Galatians, and the Epistle to the Ephesians. Pentecostal literature operates with Pentecostal presuppositions. It appeals to the spectacular. It often gives the impression that growth in the church is produced by the signs of the Spirit, such as divine healing and speaking in tongues.

5. Encourage members of the congregation to exercise more fully their right and responsibility to participate in the spiritual work of the church. Emphasize evangelism. In this connection it may be helpful to recall that God-pleasing opportunities for ministry include not only such activities as mutual exhortation and instruction but also service to one's neighbor by way of sick-visitations, calling on senior citizens, and helping out in homes where there may be illness. All of these are included in the list of charismatic gifts found in Romans 12:6-8. Encourage the laity to take a more meaningful part in the program of the church. They are asking for increased opportunities to serve their Savior with the gifts God has given them.

6. Look again at the orders of worship. Within the rich liturgical tradition of Lutheranism there are ways to insure warmth and fellowship in worship.

However, changes should not be thrust upon a church. Changes that occur too rapidly often offend. Moreover, other opportunities for fellowship may be provided.

7. In offering guidance proceed in a positive, evangelical manner. Christian admonition and discipline are to be administered in such a way as not to give the impression that the church is persecuting the charismatics. Statistics indicate that such an attitude frequently tends to drive charismatics into the Pentecostal churches.

## *B. Some Suggestions for Ministering to Pastors Who Are Charismatics*

Pastors are key figures either in leading a congregation into the charismatic movement or in teaching the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as believed in our church on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. How then shall we minister evangelically to pastors involved in the charismatic movement?

1. Do not make the mistake of classifying all charismatics in the same category. There are many differences among them.
2. In conversations with charismatics discuss the basic issues. (See Section I of this document.)
3. Do not treat charismatics as emotionally unstable or religious fanatics. If one reads the testimonials of many charismatics, it becomes apparent that some become interested in the movement because of concerns over such things as indifference in the church, lack of assurance regarding their own salvation, inability to sense the nearness of God in times of crisis, a sense of personal failure, illness, and drugs. Frequently they are deeply troubled by problems in their personal lives, problems in Synod, and problems in their family.
4. Therefore, in dealing with a charismatic, whether pastor or layman, try to discover his needs.
5. Apply Law and Gospel properly. If one needs assurance of his acceptance by God or of his value in the eyes of his Savior, he needs to be reminded that looking to such extraordinary gifts as speaking in tongues and healing as signs of assurance tends to erode the only saving faith there is, namely, that all people have already been fully accepted in God's grace by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These special signs were not given for purposes of validating faith but in the interest of serving others in their need. The Gospel also gives us the power we need to live a life of commitment to the Savior. We need no other power either to build the church or to give purpose to our lives.
6. Advise strongly that the charismatic pastor read Lutheran commentaries as he studies the Scriptures and that he examine the Lutheran Confessions. A steady diet of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal literature frequently turns Lutherans into Pentecostals.
7. Lutheran pastors who are involved in the charismatic movement should be allowed time to wrestle with their consciences and think the matter through with prayer and the study of Holy Scripture. They should be encouraged to bring their concerns to their brethren at pastoral conferences. Such discussions can be mutually beneficial.
8. Pastors who propagate neo-Pentecostal doctrine in Lutheran congregations often divide the church and thereby give offense to their flocks. Therefore, they must take seriously the possibility of coming under church discipline.
9. Pastors should be shown the danger in practicing fellowship with other charismatics who do not share their views especially regarding the Gospel and the sacraments.

C. *Suggestions to Pastors Who are Sympathetic Toward the Charismatic Movement*

1. Discuss with Lutheran brethren your views concerning the charismatic movement.
2. Take seriously the concerns expressed by your brethren. Keep an open mind. It is not without significance that leading theologians in all three major Lutheran bodies have expressed deep concern over the non-Lutheran direction in which the charismatic movement is going.
3. Consider carefully and seriously how the Pentecostal doctrine of “baptism with the Spirit” reduces the significance of the sacrament of Holy Baptism within the charismatic movement. Look carefully at the meaning which Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have in Pentecostal churches.
4. Remember that the Lutheran Confessions warn against all forms of subjectivism which imply that the Holy Spirit deals directly with a person apart from Word and sacraments.
5. Read prayerfully and with an open mind what Lutheran commentaries have to say regarding passages such as Mark 16:17-20; Acts 2:1-14, 37-39; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:1-18; Acts 19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12-14. Pentecostal literature approaches these passages with Pentecostal presuppositions. Also read carefully the Lutheran Confessions and note how they stress the centrality of the Gospel.
6. Give serious consideration to the fact that spectacular signs such as tongues, divine healing, and prophecy (in the neo-Pentecostal sense) may actually tend to draw attention away from the Gospel of forgiveness and center it instead on physical healings, on unintelligible language, or on foretelling future events in one’s life.
7. Consider seriously the error of placing too much emphasis on signs and miracles. Jesus warns against asking for signs and relying on them for one’s faith. (Cf. Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 10:17-20; John 4:48)
8. Consider the seriousness of disturbing a congregation with doctrine contrary to that which the church confesses on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions or by unduly appealing to personal experience and pious opinion.
9. Try to realize the formative influence which Pentecostals and other non-Lutheran leaders (e.g., Dennis Bennett, Edward O’Connor, David DuPlessis) are having on Lutherans in the charismatic movement.
10. Avoid an attitude of spiritual superiority which makes the members of your congregation who are not charismatic feel they are inferior Christians.
11. Keep the Lutheran emphasis on the centrality of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. This not only implies preaching that Jesus died for the sins of the world, but it also includes the emphasis that the Holy Spirit builds the church through the means of grace rather than through signs and miracles.

## A Concluding Word

The Lutheran Church has a rich heritage of Spirit theology in its confessional writings, in its exegetical studies, and in its hymns and prayers. As the church seeks to fulfill its mission in the world, we are grateful to God for the renewed interest which many Christians in all generations take in the work of the Holy Spirit. May this same Spirit lead us into all truth as He has promised.

May we continue to implore our gracious Lord for an ever-increasing measure of His Holy Spirit. May we confidently trust that He will breathe new life into His church everywhere, calling sinners to repentance, creating in them through the Word a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, working in them the desire and the strength to serve their Savior in newness of life, and sustaining them in this faith as we and all Christians everywhere wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have spiritual life and strength, assurance and hope, for the Savior has promised: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever." (John 14:16)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Larry Christenson, "A Theological and Pastoral Perspective on the Charismatic Renewal in the Lutheran Church," unpublished essay presented to the LCUSA Conference on the Holy Spirit at Dubuque, Iowa, 1976, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>"The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology," A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church? Missouri Synod, 1972, p. 29. In 1969 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was so deeply concerned about the tension and division that had arisen in certain areas of the church over such neo-Pentecostal practices as speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, prophecy, and the claimed possession of a special "baptism with the Holy Spirit" that it directed its Commission on Theology and Church Relations "to make a comprehensive study of the charismatic movement with special emphasis on its exegetical aspects and theological implications." After much study and consultation the Commission on Theology and Church Relations published its report in 1972 under the title "The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology." Specific references to this report have been noted in this document, and readers will continue to find a study of this earlier report helpful. Since this booklet was not intended to provide detailed guidelines for dealing with pastors and laymen sympathetic to the charismatic movement, a supplementary report is now being offered to the members of Synod.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>10</sup>Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I, trans. W. F. Albrecht and others (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), p. 84.

<sup>11</sup>"The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology," p. 30.

## Books for Further Reading

Bruner, Frederick Dale. *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1970.

This is a scholarly study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as it is set forth in the Scriptures. In a very accurate and thorough manner the author interprets the key passages of the New Testament which deal with the person and work of the Spirit. On the basis of sound Biblical interpretation this volume gives answers to many questions that are being asked regarding the charismatic movement. This book will appeal especially to pastors and laymen who wish to engage in a serious and thorough study of this important doctrine.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Holy Spirit Baptism*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972.

In this relatively small volume the author treats one of the central teachings of neo-Pentecostalism. His purpose is to discover whether or not “baptism with the Holy Spirit” is supported by the Scriptures. In seeking an answer he discusses such related subjects as speaking in tongues, the gifts and fruits of the Spirit, and the fullness of the Spirit. Although this book was written primarily for laymen, it can be read with profit also by pastors and theologians.

Jorstad, Erling. *Bold in the Spirit*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974.

Here is an easy-to-read, historical account of the charismatic movement in American Lutheranism. It is both accurate and comprehensive, tracing the movement back to its very beginning and relating how it has spread into many parts of the Lutheran Church. After allowing “Lutheran charismatics to tell their story of spiritual renewal,” Jorstad notes that “this new ‘boldness in the Spirit’ has not always been welcomed in the Lutheran Church.” He then lists some of the criticisms that have been directed against the charismatics. Both pastors and laymen will find this book helpful in gaining information about the movement.

Wunderlich, Lorenz. *The Half-Known God*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963.

While this book does not concern itself directly with charismatic movement, it brings the reader valuable information regarding the Holy Spirit and His relation to the Christian church. It can be read with profit by both pastors and laymen.



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