

## Chapter 1

Something big is happening in Christianity-something so appealing to so many that it may well alter the shape of the religious world.

The first inkling of it came to me during a visit from two young men to our Washington home as a follow-up of a previous interview on psychic phenomena.

It was the more vocal of the two visitors, the son of a former Southern Senator, who pointedly brought the issue to the surface within moments after their arrival. Super-confident, and attempting to create an impression of sophistication, he charged full-speed ahead into the hottest topic of the century - glossolalia.

“Speaking in tongues is the ultimate evidence that the Holy Spirit has come into a person’s life,” he asserted finally after an hour-long discussion. Slowly crossing his immaculately manicured fingers under his chin, he watched our faces for the effect of his carefully measured words. Then he continued, “Only when you can exhibit the ability to speak the language of the Holy Spirit can you be sure that His Spirit resides within you.”

Jim stopped and cast a knowing glance at his friend Ed. He had made his point, and now all he had to do was await our confirmation, or so he thought. Sliding halfway out of his chair, he relaxed, and swinging his shoeless feet up onto the coffee table, he waited, confidently.

I must admit, his words had impact. While he had been talking about the tongues, my wife and I both found ourselves groping for the right words with which to counter his statements and hurriedly tried to compile a barrage of Bible texts that would stop his unfamiliar advances. However, having never thoroughly studied the subject before, we were momentarily at a loss - more so since he continued his attack by fencing with 1 Corinthians 14, a chapter with which he was well acquainted. For us it presented some real problems in interpretation.

It was hours later when we finally reached a stalemate: Jim shaking his head in utter disbelief over our unprecedented stubbornness; we determined to further study the subject.

What our resistance did to him I will probably never know, but it had at least one noticeable effect; he never came back.

But his friend Ed did, having stayed away from us for a full two weeks. When he finally knocked on our door one night, it was with a troubled face and a desperate cry for help.

“Remember when I left with Jim?” Ed said softly, glancing about with fear-filled eyes. “I had barely got home with Jim when my eyeballs began to swell. It was a strange sensation at first, and when I looked into the bathroom mirror I could see the swelling increase. Within minutes while I was still watching, I could see the whites of my eyes coming up around the irises. My eyes began to protrude. Deep white ridges began to form around the blue. I looked grotesque.” And with his eyes nervously probing every corner of our family room, he continued his story - a nightmarish tale of horror and devil possession.

“After we talked with you that night, I knew I didn’t want the tongues; but I didn’t tell you that evening that all the pictures of Christ I saw in the books and magazines you showed me looked evil to me. I knew I wanted Christ, but the more that decision hardened within me, the more frightening my surroundings became. I began to see demons groping for me - laughing at me. But when my eyeballs began to protrude, I knew then the devil was really after me.” He paused and sighed deeply.

“By now Jim had become scared too,” Ed continued. “He rushed me to the Georgetown University Hospital where the doctors diagnosed a severe case of glaucoma without apparent cause. I remained there for almost two weeks; but it really wasn’t my eyes that bothered me - It was those devils that came at me all hours of the day and night. With threats and screams they tried to win me over to their side and keep me from believing in Christ.

” ‘You’re ours!’ they howled at me menacingly, prodding me with long pointed fingers. ‘You’re ours, and you’re going to stay ours. Don’t go back to them. They’re evil. They’ll confuse you!’

“Frantically I turned from side to side, clawing around, hoping to escape the hordes of devils that reached out for me; but everywhere I looked, they were waiting for me - waiting, watching, grimacing frighteningly. It was then that I realized they weren’t just after my eyes. They were after my mind!

“One devil in particular took an unwholesome delight in telling me that I was one of them. I listened, I fought; and when finally he left, I felt I could relax a little, for I knew I had won. But then -

suddenly - I was one of them! I was a devil. I was THE devil. However, as soon as I had joined them, I left them again, for I knew instinctively that I wasn't the devil after all - I was Christ! Hovering over my own godly body, I watched myself going from hill to hill, caressing, blessing people wherever I went. Oh, what a relief to be in the arms of God - to be one with God; to be God! But it was in the middle of one blessing that I broke out into uncontrollable laughter, for I knew I wasn't Christ after all. I was the devil!"

On and on went his terrifying story of devil possession, but even in the still moments of that evening, his eyes kept darting from wall to wall.

"You know, even now I have fleeting moments of being the devil," he said forlornly, eyeing us with a confused look in his soft blue eyes. "I know I shouldn't really be here talking to you. They're still around me - pulling at me. They want me to become one of them. They really do!"

It was in the wee hours of the morning when we said Good-bye, but not before Ed had agreed to meet with us again to enable us to examine his problems on Biblical grounds. The next two weeks he returned - on time and alone. He joined us for church, took part in the Lord's Supper, and spent the entire evenings with us embarking on a systematic Bible study.

He was intensely interested, and we were surprised when he didn't appear for our fourth meeting. For two weeks we tried to locate his last known Washington address, and when finally we traced his whereabouts, we discovered he had vacated his apartment and had moved in with relatives somewhere in a South Carolina town.

We phoned him there, and although somewhat reluctant, he did agree to talk to us.

"I had to leave Washington because you confused me," he admitted gruffly. "But it's been a good move, for the devils have left me. They don't bother me anymore. I know now that you were wrong. I shouldn't have gone on seeing you after that first meeting. Jim was right all along - "

For a moment I thought he had hung up. All was quiet on the line; only the soft long-distance hum could be heard.

Then I heard his voice again.

It sounded rather triumphant.

“Know those pictures of Christ I talked to you about? The ones I saw on the magazines in your home?” he questioned. “Well, they still look evil to me. Every time I see Christ’s face it looks evil to me. Guess my first impression was right -

“Just thought you’d like to know.”

And with a gentle click, Ed broke the connection and moved out of my life. We never heard from him again; yet I do hope that someday Ed will renew the connection - but this time directly with God.

If anything ever made a lasting impression on me, this experience surely did. In the course of my years as a journalist covering the world beat, I had witnessed many changes; but most of them had been deviations from the expected development of history and had always been in the political or the scientific area. Not every change was necessarily a welcome one, but it invariably led the way to new experiences.

In the short time that has elapsed since the 1960’s, mankind has taken two giant steps forward: one a surge in the field of technology; the other a leap into a new spiritual awakening, igniting the most explosive charge ever to rupture the Christian world. As a result Christ’s legacy of peace and love will never be the same again.

At least not if certain vigorous groups have their way.

A few weeks after that first encounter with Jim and Ed we were again faced with a charismatic enthusiast. A neighbor, a concerned lay member of the Episcopal Church had become involved in a drastically new experience. She mentioned it to us during one of her sporadic visits.

“What do you think of the charismatic movement?” she queried.

I wasn’t startled - just irritated. Why ask me? A few weeks ago it was tongues, and now the entire movement.

What really is happening within Christianity that this phenomenon of tongues has managed to gain such a firm footing?

Nothing can compare to a first-hand confrontation when it comes to gathering facts, and it was in late 1972 that I had my first real live meeting with the charismatics.

While I was sauntering down a Memphis street, a strange sound vibrated against my eardrums; unfamiliar and yet melodious.

## CHARISMA OF THE SPIRIT

“Medi alukan - ala - du aru - shamma shamma. Solama sulama sumala tamaku abada da da kumi sala sala mili amatala shamma shamma balu -

“Ama talla manga diekam oh sila sila aboda take shamma shamma-“

I stopped and stared at the stately thirty-odd-pew church that nestled in one of the staid old residential sections of Memphis, Tennessee. In search for hard facts concerning the manifestation of tongues that had begun to seep through the ever-widening cracks in the doctrinal walls of the country’s mainline churches, I had been directed to this solemn-looking fortress-like brick building which for years had effectively safeguarded a traditional Calvinistic heritage.

Yet, somehow this was now changing.

The unrelenting December wind howled threateningly about the church’s lone spire, and the wet whirly fingers of rain tugged at me with ever-increasing desperation as I climbed my way to the church’s main door.

I shivered.

Clutching the brim of my rain-soaked hat with one hand, and attempting with the other to keep my flapping trench coat tightly closed, I felt for footing on the crumbling concrete steps and leaned my wet weight against the aging door.

Within seconds the eerie squeaks of the rusty hinges mingled freely with a strange melodious mumbling, a mournful whimpering of which had eagerly called out to me while I had sloshed past the church’s dimly lit windows mere moments before.

Fingers of sound leaked through the darkened hallway. One moment pleading, the next instant macabre or jubilant, a solitary voice, crowned with a shimmering backdrop of subdued cries of unexplainable ecstasy implored, cried with a throbbing chain of sounds that became more insistent and more captivating in the dark as I continued to shuffle carefully across the foot-worn marble slabs that led to the doors of the sanctuary.

Hat under my arm, coat still dripping, I unobtrusively squeezed through the narrow door leading to the sanctuary and joined the stimulated congregation, taking an outside seat on one of the back pews.

Instantaneously I felt surrounded by a storm of ecstatic excitement that hungrily lapped at every believer.

Wide-eyed, and with raptured attention, all participants - young and old alike - listened entranced to the flood of mystifying sounds gushing forth from the mouth of a young man standing on one of the front pews. He had turned around to address the congregation at the same moment as I had stepped inside the door, and across the uneven sea of moving heads and uplifted hands I watched him critically from my vantage point of self-imposed impartiality.

He was a youngster - reckoned by middle-age standards - perhaps twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, but his supernatural performance more than replaced his pronounced immaturity. There he stood, in stark defiance in his inexperience, speaking, talking, uttering sounds that were definitely not from this part of the world. His wet stringy hair framed a face lost in nervous concentration, but the impression he emitted might have appeared noble or even serene if it had not been for an occasional twitch caused by uncontrollable restlessness. With his slender hands raised skyward as if reaching for God, he talked continuously, praying in sounds that seemed to have no resemblance to any known language.

Tuned into an unknown power, his moving hands gently caressed the air, begging, demanding something from on high; and with each passing moment, my initial impression that a supernatural force had gained complete control of him became stronger.

It was an aging woman who made me shift my attention to another pew. Up until that moment all the excitement had flowed around her, and either by will or by force she had stayed out of the mainstream of the electrifying ecstasy that had invaded the sanctuary.

Now she suddenly jumped up. Since she was seated in the front of the church, all eyes instantly turned to her.

Resolutely grasping hold of her long pleated skirt, she climbed up on the narrow seat of her pew and motioned agitatingly to the now aroused crowd of believers.

"Stop! Hear? Stop! He is praying!" she cried, completely lost in her words, tears running down her withered red cheeks. "He is thanking God for all His blessings." And waving her arms in the air to evoke even more attention, she continued, flushed with ecstasy, "I know his tongue! It is ancient Indian!"

Her task completed, she quickly slipped down and quietly shriveled up again in her pew, mingling once more with the ecstatic

believers. It was one of the most unusual meetings I had ever witnessed. In my career as a journalist I had covered a variety of assignments and been exposed to much babbling and many languages, ranging from Albanian to Zulu. But this was different-very different indeed.

Critically and with a clinical eye, I began to scan the exuberant congregation. There weren't many people in attendance that night, perhaps thirty-five or forty. Yet with eyes closed, one could have made only a wild guess at any approximation of its size. The accumulation of jubilant cries, shouts, and praises echoing from all directions at the same time made it like one tumultuous happening reminiscent of Calvin's view of hopeless souls burning in eternal torment.

By this time the supernatural power had turned the religious meeting into a climax of praise. All hands now eagerly reached, grabbing for a share of their kingdom.

With his hands pronouncing blessings left and right, a middle-aged man, evidently the minister, separated himself from a small group of praying individuals and walked to the pulpit.

"Listen my people - " he shouted, his face beaming with a deep-felt excitement. "This is the Lord you're listening to! He's here. This is the Holy Spirit. This is Pentecost all over again! Praise God! Praise the Lord!" He hurried down from the rostrum again to rejoin his praying people, nervously shaking the fingers of his outstretched hands.

A sudden jarring motion at my shoulder made me turn my head.

My neighbor showed me the reason.

Standing up in his full impressive height of five feet two inches, he, too, had felt the spirit and was joining the experience with his own ecstatic tongue.

"Oh si si kalini - idi ma talu uno - ta kala - " His voice faltered, then picked up speed and clarity. "Ini tola tola muni - taka ka takaka - "

I had occupied a seat at the end of one of the back pews, and as though lost in deep thought, I slowly stood up and walked out, head bowed. None noticed.

"I wonder - " I muttered more to myself than to anyone else. "Am I expected to believe that this is what happened at Pentecost?"

Sudden bursts of “hallelujah,” and a wild clapping of hands highlighted by exclamations of joy pierced the access doors to the church’s sanctuary. In answer to one of the rousing shouts, I turned in the hallway and cast one last curious peek through the dusty spy window in the door.

Somehow I felt that in leaving I had made the right decision.

By now the congregation was separating into several small prayer groups, and echoes of high-spirited prayers were bouncing freely from wall to wall. In every corner tongues speakers and their interpreters were attempting to gain priority for their unique message of the Holy Spirit. Even the cigar-chewing usher in the back row had joined in, shouting with an emotion-choked voice, “I too want the spirit - I too want the spirit - “

Suddenly I heard the frightened cry of a small child.

I turned and walked out.

I’d never welcomed the return of the wet fingers of rain with as much happiness as I did that night.

Things were moving back into the right perspective.

Because of my professionally motivated studies in the world of psychic phenomena and the supernatural, I had become confronted with questions associated with a manifestation called the “gift of tongues.” Its believers and practitioners maintain that through the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit they have received the same gift of tongues - the power to speak “other” tongues and languages - as was granted to the disciples at Pentecost, when tongues of fire descended upon them signifying that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was this promised baptism with God’s special power and the resulting ability to speak intelligent foreign languages that made it possible for them to carry out Christ’s command to preach the gospel into all the world, reaching non-believers in surrounding nations in their own tongues.

For many years known as a pivotal doctrine of the Pentecostal Church, the ability to speak “other tongues,” or as it is often called “unknown tongues,” has infiltrated the quiet sanctity and breached the self-imposed doctrinal walls of the mainline Christian churches since the early 1960’s under the melodious sounding name of the “charismatic (also known as neo-Pentecostal) movement.” It was Dennis J. Bennett, pastor of the sophisticated St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, who changed the historical



direction of the tongues movement. For several months he had fought a deep emotional struggle affecting his personal spiritual life, and on Sunday morning April 3, 1960, he faced his expectant congregation, looking tense and tired. Some of his parishioners who remember that day say that it gave them a foreboding of a dire announcement.

He did not disappoint them.

Addressing his audience with the utmost sincerity, he confessed reluctantly that he had received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in October of the previous year and subsequently had received the ability to speak in tongues.

Reporting on this, *The Nation*, September 28, 1963, quoted him as saying, "The Holy Spirit did take my lips and tongue and form a powerful language and praise and power that I myself could not understand." In the resulting physical and spiritual chaos that engulfed the sanctuary, one of the associate priests removed his ecclesiastical robe, resigned amid great pandemonium, and angrily stamped out of the church.

The end result of Father Bennett's shocking announcement was the submission of his resignation to the 2,500-member church. Later on in the following year he transferred to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, where today he is regarded as one of the foremost spokesmen for the charismatic movement and a frequent main speaker at national and international charismatic meetings. In the years that have transpired since that dramatically staged confession, many of the world's leading theologians and ranking historians have begun to rate the influence of the tongues in present-day Christianity on equal par with the Protestant Reformation, for in these short years its impact on the Christian world has been of such magnitude that it can never again be forgotten.

The two leading components of the charismatic movement - speaking in tongues and faith healing - are responsible for its popularity; and even such major secular publications as *Time* and *Life* have recognized the relentless force of these two elements.

Said *Time*, "It is the fastest growing church in the Hemisphere." - *Time*, Nov. 2, 1962, p. 56. *Life* called it "the Third Force - a development as important as was the birth of Catholicism and Protestantism." - "The Third Force in Christendom," *Life*, June 9, 1958, p. 113. Still others have prophetically labeled it the "New

Revival Movement,” the “Wielding Ax of God,” the “New Penetration,” or simply “The Return of God’s Own Church.”

Statistics are often a poor way of proving a point, as their meaning tends to vary with each biased interpreter. Yet they are indicative when studying the growth of a movement.

Recent figures (1972/73) reveal that the charismatic movement has quietly invaded over 50 distinctly different Protestant denominations, and no less than 2,500 clergymen of churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches now practice the “gift of tongues” with or without the spiritual participation of their congregations. In fact, in many cases the parishioners or congregations have no knowledge of these activities of their spiritual shepherds. Once ultraconservative, the Methodist Church harbors within its fold tongues-speaking lay members and clergymen. The Episcopalians, too, have embraced its principles so strongly that their leaders and those of the Assemblies of God (one of the original Pentecostal groups) have seen the need to meet in conferences to discuss their mutual problems associated with the growing “ministry of the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptists speak in tongues. The Southern Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Convention, and the Baptist Bible Fellowship display within their ranks leading theologians who unashamedly practice their newfound spiritual gifts. The Presbyterian Church also is affected, while almost 10 percent of all Lutheran congregations in the United States boast of active glossolalia cells in their midst. Even the once so staunch and conservative Dutch Reformed and Christian Dutch Reformed Churches have been infiltrated with remarkable success.

Exact figures concerning this movement are always difficult to obtain, and most of those available are quite often short of complete accuracy, as all are based on “reliable estimates.”

Opinions as to the number of Catholics who practice the Pentecostal phenomena around the world vary greatly. Most recent figures dealing with the interest in the United States alone show that up to 300,000 Roman Catholics are convincingly involved. Worldwide Catholic involvement may approximate 20 million. The Directory of Charismatic Prayer Groups listed 350 active groups in the United States and abroad in 1971, a figure which soared sharply to 625 just a year later. In 1973 this number had grown to 1,250. A

similar growth was evident at the International Conference on Charismatic Revival. These meetings, held at Notre Dame University, had an attendance of 1,250 in 1970; 5,500 in 1971; 11,500 in 1972 and 20,000 in 1973, and in a recent interview with Auxilliary Bishop Joseph McKinney of Grand Rapids, Michigan, the leading figure in the Catholic charismatic movement, I was informed that there is no indication that this rate of growth is on the decline. "It is certainly one of the most significant developments in the church today, and most of my colleagues look approvingly on these Pentecostals," he told me unreservedly.

The question as to whether his "baptism of the Holy Spirit" as mentioned in various national publications really meant that he also has the ability to speak in tongues remained unanswered until our interview. His reaction was honest and straightforward when I asked him about it.

"I have always told people I haven't," he replied. "But recently a couple of times I think that I have had a kind of induced form that I really hesitated to do. But somehow or other, being with the people and noticing their freedom, I have suddenly become conscious of the fact that I have restricted myself in places where I shouldn't because of my background and orientation. So for this reason once in a while I do that when others are doing it just to permit myself to say - to utter syllables that are not words, this with the intention and the resolve and the attempt to open myself up and praise God in the best way I can, because this is what real tongues are." This statement, coming from the man who was recently appointed by the nation's bishops to oversee the movement, is significant.

Time magazine says this about "The Pentecostal Tide":

"Catholic Pentecostalism is notably less emotional than the classical Protestant form," says one observer. "There is less reliance on the literal interpretation of biblical prophecies, less emphasis on the imminence of a Second Coming. Catholic Pentecostals also insist that they are completely loyal to the church, but they consider a continuing renewal essential."

"The movement," the Time report continues, "won powerful new support at the Notre Dame conference [in 1973]. It came from Leo-Jozef Cardinal Suenens, the Primate of Belgium and one of the most progressive voices in the church's hierarchy. It was his personal intervention on the floor of Vatican II that helped sway council

opinion to the view that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not exclusively experiences of ancient Christianity but a continuing force in the modern church as well. Suenens was greatly impressed by the fervor of the Pentecostal phenomenon during a tour of the U.S. last year, and returned this spring for a visit to U.S. Charismatic centers. Though he is still a staunch champion of 'co-responsibility' of the bishops with the Pope, Suenens now emphasized that structural reforms must be accompanied by spiritual renewal. 'The gifts of the spirit are given especially to build up the Christian community,' he told the stadium crowd at Notre Dame. 'After Vatican II we had to make a series of reforms, and we must continue to do so. But it is not enough to change the body. We need to change the soul to renew the church and the face of the earth.'

"Is Suenens himself a Charismatic? He has said that he is 'personally involved' in the movement, but when Time asked him specifically whether he had received the Holy Spirit baptism at a charismatic prayer meeting, he declined to answer, saying that his private spiritual life was 'too delicate.'

"Still, the cardinal's support was unequivocal. He conceded that there could be excess among the Pentecostals, noting that 'when you light a lamp in the darkness, you will draw some mosquitoes.' But he praised the leaders for their 'sound theology, common sense and wisdom.' Indeed, he said, the Pentecostal renewal is 'not a movement. It is a current of grace... growing fast everywhere in the world. I feel it coming, and I see it coming.' And to the stadium crowd: 'You are in such a special way the people of God.' " - Time, June 18, 1973, p. 91.\*

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That the tongues speakers are not merely limited to the continental United States is attested to by theologians and researchers from both Latin America and Europe. Alan Walker, who discussed the explosive situation with many leaders on both of these continents, relates this in his book, Breakthrough - Rediscovery of the Holy Spirit (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964).

"The Pentecostal Church in South America has become the fastest growing church in the world," he relates on page 10. "In Chile since 1930, Pentecostalism has doubled itself every ten years. On the continent as a whole, there could be five or six million people

linked to the movement.” This was true in 1964, and if the rate of growth has continued on the aforementioned scale, which is a realistic possibility, then by 1973 the number might well have mushroomed to ten million.

In neighboring Brazil, a dramatic change in religious emphasis has also been experienced as a direct result of the work of the charismatics. Whereas in 1930, only 9.5 percent of the Protestant segment of the population admitted belief in Pentecostalism, by 1964, according to Waldo A. Cesar, they comprised 73.6 percent of all Protestants. These facts come from Waldo A. Cesar’s book, *Protestantismo e Imperialismo na America Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1968), page 105.

And Europe? It is no different there, as a recent fact-finding tour indicated. It has also become a spiritual boiling pot, and no single group will admit this as readily as the Europeans!

While traveling in Europe in late 1972, I spent several days in the Netherlands and had numerous encounters with the Navigators, members of the Youth for Christ movement and the Campus Crusade. With its 13 million inhabitants quite equally divided between the Catholic Church and a conglomeration of Protestant denominations (not to mention the large number of political parties closely aligned with these churches), this age-old bastion of liberty and free speech has for many years been overripe for a change. This change, it appears now, is in the making.

What is happening in this industrious little country behind the dikes is tremendous. Christ-centered coffee bars scattered throughout the country attract hundreds of youth every night. Dutch Reformed pastors beg Youth for Christ leaders to “take over” in their neighborhoods, admitting that their churches are dying if not already dead! One television commentator smilingly told me of the American ambassador and his wife and their widely reported conversion to Christ. The Bible study group, meeting in their private quarters, was recently featured on Dutch National television.

Voice, the organ of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International (FGBMFI), gives this report on progress in the Netherlands:

“At a summer Bible Conference camp in Holland, had we been able to remain another day we would have had the privilege of

teaching in a tent that seats 3,000. They invited us to return next year for an entire week.

“In two cities, Eindhoven and Almelo, the churches were so packed they set chairs in the aisles.... The leader, who was a physics professor at the university, said that the Spirit breathed afresh, and we continued to pray with the people for deliverance and healing until almost eleven o’clock.” - Voice, November, 1972, p. 22.

Everywhere I went I heard of the revolutionary change that is supposedly taking place. Old barges, abandoned windmills, World War II airplane hangars, and even out-of-the-way stables are used by the zealous converts in their attempts to organize new meeting places and form new groups. The Jesus People, many of whom share spiritual aims almost identical with those of the American charismatics, have vowed that they will introduce the Holy Spirit to every major population center in the Benelux countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg); and judging from their actions and reactions, they are well on their way. Are their leaders perhaps too young and too inexperienced to lead whole nations to Christ?

Christianity Today asked the same question on its European investigative mission. The answer it reported typifies the European charismatics. “Jesus is in a hurry to reach the world,” voiced one of their leaders; “therefore we must be in a hurry too.” - Christianity Today, Oct. 13, 1972, p. 24.

Everywhere I traveled - Germany, England, Belgium, France, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland - I met with the same reaction.

“Jesus People, you say? Charismatics? Tongues? They’re all over! They’re completely upsetting our formal religious life,” one Swedish clergyman reacted. “We’d just as well pack up and go home. They’re beginning to take over our churches.” Nightclub dates for musical presentations telling about their supernatural experiences are common occurrences to Scandinavian charismatics. Jesus concerts, Jesus Day festivals, door-to-door witnessing campaigns, and organized attempts to reach the socially downtrodden as well as the upper strata of society are the order of the day.

Raymond W. Becker, editor of Voice, reported the following about a recent Full Gospel effort in Finland:

“In Turku, the last Finnish city we were in, over 35 young people received the baptism. The Lord spoke forth in prophecy, saying He

was going to use them... that He was melting and molding Finland and its people... that now the fullness of the harvest is coming and that He will thrust them out into all parts of the world... that what God has hereunto done in that country is only a whisper... and that these young people will be a mighty shout to the European countries and even their enemies will kneel and praise the Lord with them.”- Voice, October, 1972, p. 14.

Christianity Today points out how far the Scandinavian youth have already progressed in their endeavor to capture souls for Christ. “YWAM [Youth With a Mission] also sponsors a center at Christiana, a run-down former army base in Copenhagen that is one of the worst hell holes on earth,” it says, relating to the activities of one of the groups. “More than 1,000 hippies, junkies, pushers, sex freaks, witches, Satan worshippers, and mental cases from all over the world live there in assorted communal arrangements - amid disease and absence of the law. There are overdose deaths nearly every month.... Despite the depravity some have come to Christ. ‘God is scooping up the scum of the earth and making something beautiful out of it,’ reflected a repentant alumnus of Christiana.” - Christianity Today, op. cit.

As on the Continent, the same thing is happening in the British Isles and also in Communist Eastern Europe. Even the traditional Gypsies in Southern Europe are now engaged in the movement, for it has been estimated that at least 25,000 of them are presently evangelizing all over the Riviera and the Costa Brava with their strange new tongues, thereby transforming not only their traditional image but their *modus operandi* as well.

All these groups may be operating under different names, but their goals are the same. They want to reach people for Christ before it is too late. It’s only love they’re after - to receive and to spread, they say. “We need the Spirit’s manifestations now!” one young crusader pointed out to me. “Once that happens, everything else will fall into place!”

Although there are undeniable similarities between the Pentecostals and the charismatics, the latter have seemingly divorced themselves from any official connection with their founding fathers. No study of the charismatic movement, however, can be considered complete without examining the modern foundation supporting the tongues-speaking movements.

## CHARISMA OF THE SPIRIT

It all began around the turn of the century when Charles F. Parham, a young Methodist minister, dissatisfied with his personal spiritual condition, became determined to do something about it. Reasoning that only a true rebirth and a rediscovery of the “gifts of the spirit” would bring him into absolute harmony with God, he set out to establish a Bible school in an abandoned mansion in Topeka, Kansas, to be utilized as a “spiritual discovery center.”

The building chosen for the school was sarcastically known as Stone’s Folly, so named because the builder ran out of money halfway through its construction. This stigma, however, did not in any way hamper Parham’s zeal. With forty students he initiated a study into the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, hoping to discover whether there was possibly one specific element common to all of those who in Biblical times had received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

It was not until December of that year (1900) that a substantial consolidated effort emerged. Parham was scheduled to embark on a three-day trip and decided that in the interim his students should undertake an intense study of the book of Acts.

“Study every account in Acts where the baptism of the Spirit was received,” he charged them, “and find out whether there was a common denominator.”

Returning three days later, he found his school buzzing with excitement, for “on five occasions where the Holy Ghost was received,” he was told, “it was followed by the phenomena of speaking in tongues. Could this perhaps be what we’re looking for?”

A methodical comparison of the texts showed that in certain instances there had indeed been a connection between the Holy Spirit and tongues, and in order to test its validity in modern times, a marathon prayer session was decided upon. Beginning at daybreak the following morning, prayers for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were sent up in vain repetition. The morning passed, and so did the afternoon - yet the Spirit did not come. It was not until early that evening at approximately seven o’clock that one of the students, Agnes N. Ozman, remembered something important.

John L. Sherril describes what developed. Here is his account:

“Wasn’t it true that many of the baptisms described in Acts were accompanied by an action, as well as prayer? Didn’t the person offering the prayer often put his hands on the one who wished to



receive the baptism? In the Bible she found the reference she remembered. There it was: at Samaria, at Damascus, at Ephesus, always the word ‘hands.’ ‘Putting his hands on him - ‘ ‘Then laid they their hands on them - ‘

“Miss Ozman went to find Charles Parham. She told him about her new thought.

” ‘Would you pray for me this way?’ she asked.

“Parham hesitated just long enough to utter a short prayer about the Tightness of what they were doing. Then, gently he placed his two hands on Miss Ozman’s head. Immediately, quietly, there came from her lips a flow of syllables which neither of them could understand.

“The Pentecostals look back on this hour - 7:00 p.m., New Year’s Eve, 1900, as one of the key dates in their history. They point to it as the first time since the days of the early church that the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been sought, where speaking in tongues was expected as the initial evidence.” - *They Speak With Other Tongues (A Spire Book)*, page 38.

Once the discovery of the common denominator had been established, the news spread rapidly throughout America. Fighting fierce opposition from both clergy and lay members, Parham took to the street corners to propagate his teachings. When subsequently informed that Stone’s Folly would be sold from under him, he moved his operations to Houston, Texas, and continued his work from there.

By this time his efforts had begun to receive serious recognition, for his preaching was dynamic. He proclaimed that only the “full gospel” could save; that is, the gospel in its entirety, complete with tongues, faith healing, and other gifts as promised to accompany the reception of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, faith healing was soon added to the list of Pentecostal manifestations.

One of Parham’s Houston students, W. J. Seymour, exported the full gospel to the West Coast, fertile ground for many a religious sect, linking his name permanently to 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles - an address that was to become a Pentecostal mecca for years to come.

An ordained Negro minister, Seymour had arrived in Los Angeles to take over the congregation of a small segregated church, but as soon as he opened his series of sermons and announced his

intention to preach on the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, the church elders, having previously heard of the religious aberration, as they regarded it, protested vehemently. When Seymour returned for his second sermon, he found the church doors barred. His congregation had formally rejected him.

Accepting the invitation of a dissenting church member, Seymour soon found himself presenting the remainder of the series in her home. For three days he preached there, expounding on the teachings of the Holy Spirit. On the evening of the third day it happened. As he was talking, his listeners suddenly broke out in a rash of tongues, speaking, laughing, and singing, using syllables they never knew existed. It caused such wild enthusiasm that when the spontaneous shouts of Hallelujah and ceaseless clapping had reached a deafening crescendo, the roof caved in, and the rafters crashed down. This signaled the end of the meeting.

Having now proved the validity of his claims in the eyes of his followers, Seymour had no trouble at all finding a suitable meeting place. This time it was an old abandoned livery stable on Azusa Street, wedged in between a stable and a tombstone factory.

Some who witnessed the scenes that took place there for the next 1,000 days called it a true spiritual revival. With often more praying than preaching, Seymour led out but allowed others to take over whenever possible. His believers came from everywhere - New England, Canada, Great Britain - and no one was sent away. There is little doubt in the minds of the oldtime Pentecostals when asked to identify the place where their full-gospel movement received its greatest single thrust.

“It was in Stone’s Folly that the movement was born,” they rightly claim. “But it would have died a quiet and painless death if it had not been for the Azusa Street Mission.”

Much has changed since the early days of Pentecostalism. The early movement was marked by the low educational level of its converts. It generally consisted of those who did not feel at home in mainline churches, partly because of the class distinction found there.

Carroll Stegal, a conscientious student of Pentecostalism, wrote:

“The appeal of Pentecostalism is limited quite clearly to the naive and gullible mind which will accept things without investigation. The great majority of the followers of the healers are

old people, shallow people-people cast aside by society and forgotten by the proud 'established churches,' to our eternal discredit." - Carroll Stegal, Jr., *The Modern Tongues and Healing Movement*.

Not only were class barriers absent in the Pentecostal circles; racial barriers were also missing. Today the social and organizational structure of the early pioneer Pentecostal churches has changed. The semi-educated and unskilled are still welcome and, in fact, still comprise a high percentage of the oldtime Pentecostal church. But a new breed, the intellectuals, have taken control of its once loosely knit congregations. Their full gospel emphasis, however, has remained intact.

While there is no basic difference between the oldtime Pentecostals and the charismatics or neo-Pentecostals, the latter prefer to be classified under one of those new names as it distinguishes them from a movement which was once considered to consist of only the ignorant and emotionally unstable. As a rule, the charismatics try to involve themselves in the phenomena of speaking in tongues and spiritual healing practices without entering into ecstatic behavior so characteristic of some of the Pentecostal churches. Another difference is in the social makeup of most of their groups. In marked contrast to their heritage-builders, the charismatic groups appeal predominately to the educated, and this thrust, together with their rather sophisticated use of tongues, has gained them thousands of converts in the upper strata of society. Today doctors, lawyers, educators, and businessmen find that they can combine their basic desire for a "new birth" with a tongues experience - without becoming the topic of ridicule from their friends and neighbors.

Mrs. Jeane Stone, board member of the Blessed Trinity Society, a group formed by Harold Bredesen, a Dutch Reformed minister and avid tongue enthusiast, says of these tongues:

"Their private use is more important than public, more oriented to clergy and professional classes, more Bible-centered as against experience, not separatist, more orderly meetings with strict adherence to Pauline directives, less emphasis on tongues." - As quoted by Frank Farrell, "Outburst of Tongues: The New Penetration," in *Christianity Today*, September 13, 1963, p. 6.

The question as to whether the charismatic movement is strictly a spontaneous outlet for emotional ecstasy, leading to a sense of spiritual fulfillment, can be answered in the negative. There are undoubtedly those who feel themselves attracted to the movement and join on their own initiative, but the majority of converts are sought out through a conscientious missionary endeavor - often by individual converts but more often by organizations such as the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, a California-based religious enterprise led by its founder Demos Shakarian. A wealthy businessman, he formed his organization after having been encouraged in the idea by the spiritual activist Oral Roberts.

In typical newspaper style, the New York Times carried the following report on the organization in a dispatch dated July 16, 1972.

"A businessmen's group closely associated with the Pentecostal movement, which gives special attention to the phenomenon of 'speaking in tongues,' reported this week that its membership had doubled in the last two years.

"The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, whose headquarters are here [Los Angeles], made the membership report after its 19th world convention in San Francisco. Leaders of the 21-year-old fellowship attributed the growth in large part to increased interest in the Pentecostal movement among Roman Catholics.

"The gift of tongues, or glossolalia, is the power of speaking in a polyglot congregation so that everyone hears his own tongue. The phenomenon was experienced by some in the early days of the Christian church, but the Pentecostal movement in the United States is generally traced to the first decade of the century.

"Until the last 10 years, the controversial phenomenon of speaking in languages never learned by the speaker, nor understood by the hearer, has usually been associated with holiness or Pentecostal church groups, the largest of which is the Assemblies of God.

"However, the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship is part of a recent fluid movement that includes both 'oldtime' Pentecostals and 'mainline' church members who join outpourings of prayer and praise.

“Demos Shakarian, 58 years old, founder and president of the fellowship, told more than 6,000 delegates to the San Francisco convention that by the beginning of next year, the fellowship would reach as many people as it did during its first 20 years.

” ‘God is using the fellowship to bring the Holy Spirit movement and His gifts back to the people,’ said Mr. Shakarian, a dairy farmer and shopping center developer of Armenian descent who lives here.

“The fellowship now has an estimated total of 300,000 adherents in 900 chapters throughout the world. Some 700 are in the United States and Canada.”

The Shakarian family is no newcomer to the Pentecostal experience. They proudly point out that one of the first Pentecostal churches in North America was established in their California home as a direct result of their interest in the Azusa Street Mission. Their experience, however, with the supernatural was evident long before this, for *The Shakarian Story*, by Thomas Nickel, (FGBMFI, 1964), reveals that the family has been involved in direct revelation, vision, speaking in tongues, and miraculous healings for over 100 years, predating their arrival in America by many years.

Dissatisfied with the spiritual condition of humanity in general, the FGBMFI has taken it upon itself to implant within the narrow boundaries of the traditional churches the manifestations of Pentecostalism; and in order to accomplish this, the organization sponsors banquets, conventions, breakfasts and informal gatherings throughout the world on a local, national, and international level. Being astute businessmen and full-gospel Pentecostalists, the Shakarians do not leave a stone unturned to attain their goal.

Says Russel T. Hitt: “The most polished of public relations techniques have been enrolled to advance the movement. While there is certainly nothing wrong with using modern techniques, the Neo-Pentecostalists cannot claim complete spontaneity.” - “The New Pentecostalism: An Appraisal,” in *Eternity*, July, 1963, p. 16.

Because members of the FGBMFI are firm believers in miracles, supernatural phenomena, and faith-healing, much of what the organization does is based on the feeling that all their efforts are backed by godly power. Nothing stands in their way because of revelations they attribute to God.

One of these “revelations” occurred at the opening service of a series of meetings held in early July, 1972, when Rex Humbard

addressed 4,000 FGBMFI believers. Speaking “in prophecy,” one of the members addressed the group in the following words:

“These days are anointed of God, saith the Holy Ghost. You shall treat them as holy days and as days of reverence, for before these meetings are finished I will reveal Myself to you in My Word. I shall reveal Myself to you in a greater and more immeasurable way. I will show you not only things to come, but the great things of the here and now. In these days you shall understand Me more as your Saviour, and as your Baptizer in the Spirit. In these days you shall understand Me in a greater way as the Miracle Worker. You shall know more of Me as your Healer, and in these days you shall come to know Me in a supernatural and a new way as the great Resurrection.”

With unmatched zeal they spread their full-gospel message, using among other things, their monthly publication, Voice, which enthusiastically publicizes such happenings and testimonies as “baptisms in the spirit” and other related topics.

Carefully they select new targets for their full-gospel emphasis. In January, 1973, a new thrust was added to those already in progress. Regarding the Seventh-day Adventist Church as spiritually impoverished because it does not endorse their “gift of tongues,” they decided to “enrich” it. They began mailing a copy of their monthly Voice to influential Adventist leaders around the country hoping to repeat the impact a similar effort had earlier on another major denomination in the United States.