

RECENT PARALLELS TO THE MIRACLE OF PENTECOST.

BY THE REV. A. KAMPMEIER.

AT times in the history of the Christian Church, the desire has sprung up, that the so-called "gifts of the Spirit," prophecy and "speaking with tongues," for which the primitive Church was noted, be renewed again. This desire was always coupled with the thought that it was only the fault of the Church if these gifts disappeared, and that this was brought about by the worldliness of the Church and the lack of spiritual fervor and life. Such views and desires have then brought about occurrences similar to those stated in the New Testament. As examples of such movements, to renew the "gifts of the Spirit," I mention the Montanism in the second century and the Irvingites or the Catholic Apostolic Church, as they called themselves, in the thirties of the last century.

Similar occurrences happened again last year in Germany in certain circles of the "*Gemeinschaftsbewegung*," a pietistic movement to awaken more religious fervor and belief in the German State Church again.

The occurrences are very interesting from the psychological standpoint and also because they furnish a better interpretation of all those New Testament passages treating of the "speaking with tongues" (for it is of this alone I will speak) than all commentaries combined. Take up any commentary to find out what the "speaking with tongues" was, and after reading through pages and pages of different views cited, you will be about as enlightened as you were at the start.

I base my report upon two numbers of the *Christliche Welt*, March 12 and 19, 1908, a German liberal religious paper, which gives extracts from the reports of eye-witnesses as they appeared in different pamphlets and daily papers, and also extracts from pam-

phlets and papers circulated among those communities in which the renewed gift of speaking with tongues occurred.

I shall not quote the accounts of different eye witnesses on the character of the religious meetings in which the "gift of tongues" reappeared. These reports tell about such meetings in Kassel and its vicinity and other places in Germany. The character of the meetings according to these reports was generally that of a genuine old-fashioned revival and camp-meeting such as all are acquainted with in this country. There was much fervent praying, emotional singing, admonitory addresses, followed by joyous clapping of hands, shoutings, groanings, stammerings, confessions of sins etc. People fell to the ground and struck themselves with wild gestures. Some had visions and believed they saw the blood of Christ flowing; women embraced each other and shouted: "I have found the Lord Jesus." Others cast off articles of luxury, laying them upon the platform, and having thus renounced the sin of vanity joined hands in a religious dance. Everywhere reigned religious frenzy and hypnotic influence. But the most peculiar part of all this exaltation was the reappearance of speaking with tongues. Accompanied by strong convulsions of the body and nervous excitations, falling down upon the floor, first one, then more, broke out into inarticulate and unintelligible sounds, which formed words, then short sentences. The first impetus to this speaking with tongues among those people was given by two Norwegian young women who were brought to Kassel by an evangelist by the name of H. Dallmeyer. One of them had the gift of speaking with tongues and the other of interpreting them. Wherever they went the same phenomena appeared. One witness believes that he heard a sentence like this: "*Shello mo dal bad bad nots hikrei.*" Another this sentence: "*Sangela singela sing sing, mangala mangala mang mang.*" A third describes the sounds he heard as reminding one of the Polish language, because of the many consonant combinations, *tsch*, *rz*, and *tz*. A philologist belonging to the society who is acquainted with fifteen languages, thinks that he heard a simple uneducated man speak Spanish and Provençal. Before the speaking with tongues starts, as reported, a peculiar hissing and gnashing of teeth is heard.

The words and sentences spoken of course need interpretation. This is done either by the speakers themselves or by others. Here are some examples: "You deceivers, you bow down with the knees but not with the heart!—Who does not depart from sin is damned.—All people of the earth live in whoredom, gluttony, drinking, pride and avarice; I am a holy God. They will cry: You mountains

cover us, but there will be no escape. The storm is coming, soon there will be a decision.—There are people here who have stolen apples, who have taken money when in military service; who have not paid their bills. The whole hall is full of thieves. I will reveal more yet, I will cut sharper yet, I will write your sins upon your foreheads.—You still love your gold and your cow and your house more than me. Do you not know that he searches hearts and reins and knows everything that you think this minute?—There are some here who are bound to the flesh.”

Any one of course will say that these revelations contain nothing very peculiar and important. About this later.

The speaking with tongues also occurs in singing. Some say that entirely unmusical voices suddenly sing all right, that even while singing a change of voice occurs, that one who sings soprano suddenly sings alto. Yes some have even been reported to have performed chorus-singing in four parts.

A preacher by the name Paul, who publishes a paper, *Sanctification*, tells how he received the gift of singing in tongues. (No. 110, Nov. 1907 of his paper. Bramstedt Bros., Elmshorn.) He says: “A great number of hymns and melodies were given to me. Heaven must be over rich in songs. But what I spoke and sang, I could not understand, since I had not yet received the gift of interpretation. But instead I had received another remarkable gift. I could state that I sang in tongues well-known church-hymns. I sang the song “*Lasst mich gehen*,” thus:

“*Shua ea, shua ea*
o tschi biro ti ra pea
akki lungu tari fungo
u li bara ti ra tungo
latshi bungo ti tu ta.”

“Any one can see,” says Paul, “how remarkably these words rhyme. And what is more remarkable, there is more rhyme in this song in tongues than in the German words(!) When I made this discovery, I could not but praise God.”

In regard to the interpreters of tongues we are told that some see before them the letters or writing which contain the interpretation; others hear the interpretation; again others understand the dark sayings directly. It sometimes happens though that a saying can not be solved.

How do the speakers with tongues come to this peculiar ability?

We are told that a speaker with tongues tells a fifteen year-old

girl she will also receive this gift. And sure enough, in the next meeting her tongue suddenly breaks out in the wonderful language. Even at home the girl can not refrain from speaking in tongues. But not all get this gift so suddenly. Some must pray and wait for it long. We are told in their pamphlets that an American, Barratt, had to wait not less than 39 days for the supernatural gift, and that he wrestled in prayer for it uninterruptedly one day for 12 hours. And what did he experience in those 39 days? One day "something remarkable took place" in his jaws, but the real speaking did not yet set in. Another time he had "a wonderful sensation throughout the whole body." He then begged "a spirit-endowed Mrs. D. to lay her hands on him," but "the power" did not come. "Soon after this," he relates, "I experienced the previously noted convulsive motions in the muscles of the throat and my jaws took a firm hold, only stronger than formerly." Then after another meeting he once more prayed till late at night. Again he besought, and this time one of the brethren, for intercession and laying on of hands. He says, "Exactly in that moment the power of God began to work in my spirit. I fell into a swoon like Daniel (Dan. x. 8) in the face of this divine revelation. About half past twelve o'clock I sat directly upon the floor. Now my jaws and tongue were loosened, but no sounds came." Finally, after he had asked a Norwegian brother and the above-mentioned Mrs. D. for further intercession, "he succeeded" in speaking with another tongue.

A tilemaker in Gross-Almerode (a town in the vicinity of Kassel, where religious meetings were also held) first experienced a spasmodic feeling in his neck which pulled his head backwards. He had to lie down on a bench; then finally the speaking with tongues broke out in him. A shoemaker of the same place received the gift after a deep fervent prayer during the night; five times he spoke loudly with tongues; and then with a blissful feeling he went to rest.

But the most interesting are the observations which preacher Paul in Steglitz near Berlin made about his own case before he could speak with tongues. Paul was so impressed by the news that in America and Norway the power to speak with tongues had again arisen, that he went to Norway. What he saw there moved him to make a special study of the first letter to the Corinthians which speaks of the gift of tongues. From this he gained the conviction that he also should receive this gift. But when he read an article in an American missionary paper (Methodist), which said that nobody could know in truth whether he really had experienced "Pentecost"

till he had spoken with tongues, he was certain that he himself who had been baptized with spirit and fire, must also speak with tongues. From now on "he strove with his whole heart" towards that which God had in store for him. He patiently waited till God would give him the gift. He writes:

"I could not expect any help in this matter from any man, nor did I wish to. I did not therefore ask that any one should lay his hands upon me, as the apostles did. No, there was God's promise in his word, and he himself was there to fulfil his promise in me; and thus it came that I hungered and thirsted for the gift. I can not describe how strong this desire became."

In this frame of mind he held "nights of prayer" with other brethren. Meanwhile his lower jaw was now and then "touched so that it moved."

Finally the long desired thing happened: "On the 15th of September, in the forenoon meeting the power of the Lord came upon me and continued its work on my body throughout the whole day, as often as I was in the meeting. . . . In the evening we (seven brethren together) had another prayer meeting. Between 10 and 11 o'clock the effect on my mouth was so strong that my lower jaw, tongue and lips moved as if to speak, without any effort on my part. I was fully conscious at the time, entirely at rest in the Lord, deeply happy, and I let all this happen without being able to speak. Even if I attempted to pray aloud I could not, for *none of my German words fitted into the position of the mouth. Likewise no words of any other language I knew fitted the positions which my mouth now assumed.* I thus saw that my mouth was speaking silently in a strange tongue; and I perceived that it would yet be given to me to utter words correspondingly. About 11 o'clock most of the gathering returned to their homes, especially such as had to go to work early in the morning; and thus there only remained with me two brethren, one of whom was Rev. H. When we prayed my mouth again began to move, and I noticed that all I lacked was the ability to give sounds to the movements of my lips. I looked up to the Lord that he might vouchsafe it and soon I was moved to speak. But now something wonderful happened. It seemed as if a new organ was forming in my lungs which brought about sounds that would fit into the position of my mouth. Since the movements of the mouth were very rapid, this had to happen very quickly. In this way a wonderful language arose in sounds that I had never spoken before. I had the impression according to the tones, that it might be Chinese. Then came an entirely different language with an entirely different

position of the mouth and wonderful sounds. Because we had just had missionary meetings that day on behalf of China and the South-Sea Islands I naturally thought it might be a South-Sea language. I do not know how long I spoke thus—surely some minutes. Then I had to break out in German in praise and worship of my God. I was sitting during all this, nevertheless my body was shaken by a great power, though in nowise unpleasant or painful.”

The writer of the articles in the *Christliche Welt*, P. Drews, says very pertinently: “We need no better description of the gradual origin of speaking with tongues than this one. Every psychiatrist sees phenomena in this which are known to him as hysterics. Hysterical persons likewise fall into this peculiar speaking with tongues. They also form words which have no sense, repeat them, change them and thus utter single sentences, just as here described. A psychiatrist to whom the matter touched upon was given for examination, especially designated the words above mentioned, “*sangala, singala* etc.” as typical. He has a whole collection of such peculiar formations of words and sentences which he has collected from hysterical persons.—Neither is the origin of the phenomenon any riddle to the psychologist. It is the phenomenon of auto-suggestion and suggestion by others. Because the whole mind of Paul and Barratt (and surely also of many others) was fixed upon this one point, “speaking with tongues,” more and more other ideas were barred out of the mind, and finally—apparently with entire spontaneity, they began to speak with tongues. It is well known that such nervous excitations are contagious. If a girl begins to cry convulsively in some class in school, soon the whole class of girls will break out into tears. Very interesting in this respect is the communication of a disinterested observer of a meeting in Kassel. He says that his equally disinterested companion had felt that by remaining longer under the influence of this suggestion he himself would have been obliged to yield to the contagion.

The psychologist likewise understands very well how the “interpretation” comes about. In states of great excitement thoughts which occupy the interpreter’s mind at other times and are familiar to him, enter into his consciousness and find expression in the form of speech. The “interpretations” given above show in fact no great wisdom; but reflect the daily thoughts of these pious and devout people.

That “foreign” languages are heard even by a philological ear, is not surprising. Sounds reminding one of actual languages are likely to be expected. And if the hearer is convinced of the divine

nature of the phenomenon he will be the more inclined to accept it as genuine linguistic matter.

To be just, I will say that in some localities where these things occurred they did not meet with general approval and were criticized as surpassing the bounds of Christian sobriety. Some even criticized the phenomena as caused by the Devil. But as the communities among which these things happened are made up of believers in the divine revelation of the Bible who are opposed to any scientific study of religion, Bible and Christianity and the *Lehrfreiheit* in the theological department of German universities, such criticism has no force. Accepting the "gift of tongues" in the New Testament as some supernatural gift, they concede that such gifts can reappear, but they feel instinctively that something is wrong with those phenomena; they are ashamed of them and wish that they had not happened. Guided by the thought: "What will outsiders say?" they take about the standpoint of Paul who, according to 1 Cor. xii-xiv, also looked upon speaking with tongues as something supernatural (which was very natural considering the time in which he lived!) and spoke with tongues himself, but criticized the extravagant growth of the practice in Corinth as not tending to edification and from the standpoint of the unbeliever, who would consider it as madness. (Compare also Acts ii. 13: "They are full of wine.") Does this not throw an interesting light on the mixture of the irrational and rational in the origins of Christianity?

Those other critics who considered the speaking with tongues as coming from the Devil, used this argument. They said: "Daniel, Paul, John in the Apocalypse, when receiving the divine revelations fell on their *faces*, but the speakers with tongues in Kassel etc. fell on their *backs*, ergo it was another spirit that moved them, i. e., the Devil."

It is sad to see to what extent the slavish holding to the Bible as an infallible direct divine revelation, and the rejection of a scientific handling of religion, can lead.