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"As Dr. Speicher Sees It" - Zion City News (June 25, 1907)

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AS DR. SPEICHER SEES IT

Letter to the News From Well Known Zion Man Regarding Gift of Tongues.

HISTORY IS REPEATED

Innovations, Like Reforms in Religious Circles, Need not Expect to Escape Criticism and Opposition.

For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.—Galat. ii.

The recent rapid growth of the Apostolic Faith Movement in Zion City, which now claims the attention and sympathy of many of our best people, makes the following letter from Dr. J. G. Speicher of much interest at this time:

2512 Elisha Avenue,
Zion City, Illinois, June 24, 1907.
MR. O. W. DAVIS,
Editor ZION CITY NEWS,
Zion City, Illinois.

My dear Brother in the Christ: Recognizing the value of your excellent paper as a means of communication, and in view of the many things that are transpiring in Zion City constantly, the many misunderstandings and the many prejudices, I beg of you the privilege of speaking through your paper to my many friends in this City and in many parts of this and other lands, hoping hereby to give a fair representation of facts as they appear to me.

In the first place, allow me to say that I am personally standing aloof from all the controversies as to the claims of either of the General Overseers. And I have taken no part in any way in any of the legal controversies entered into by any parties whatsoever. I have a deep conviction that there is another and better way for the solution of the difficult problems that are disturbing the peace of Zion. But I want also to declare that I have not given up my belief in the beautiful ideas of the Kingdom of God as set forth in the original plan of the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion. The only question is as to the feasibility of carrying into operation at this time these high ideals. There is no doubt in the world but that the real Kingdom of God upon the earth under the personal rule of Jesus Christ will be a highly organized government, but until then experience has proven that there is no man so strong, so pure, so full of divine love and unselfishness, as to make it desirable or wise to place all our earthly interests into his absolute control. Neither do I admit that the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion in either of its branches represents the whole and only definite work of

positions taken by many of my friends who are among the adherents of both or all the various divisions of Zion. I have no right to criticise them for their views, and I only claim the same privilege with them to hold to my views on these and all other matters; for, "are we not all brethren and have we not all one Father," and are we not all seeking the same "Heavenly City"? And have we not all trials and burdens enough that we can look upon each other with compassion and mercy, and seek to lighten each other's cares and sorrows, no matter how much we may differ theoretically?

This is what I want to say to all the dear ones of Zion everywhere. It seems to me, in view of the apparent imminent coming of our Blessed Redeemer that, as we see the day approaching, we should be exceedingly lenient in all our judging; casting away all prejudice, and with the spirit of forbearance seek to help those who differ from us by loving admonition and instruction. "Come, let us reason together." Let us reason concerning the things that pertain to our salvation and the salvation of the world and let us keep aloof from all controversies that will hinder us in the work of the Master.

It seems to me that what should concern us more than all other things is, first, our own growth and development in our Christian life and experience; and, second, the exercise of all our energies towards the conversion of sinners, beginning with those in our own households and neighborhoods.

This is one thing that especially attracted me to the people who worshipped in the Haven and the College on my return from California. I had been strongly set against this movement from its very beginning in Zion City. I abominated it. I raised my hands in holy horror. The bugaboo of trance-evangelism, spiritualism, and other fearful isms rose up before me like a mighty night-mare. I opposed it with all my heart just as many of you dear people are doing today and just like you I refused to go near to investigate but took the exaggerated testimony of those who had been in attendance.

And I left Zion City for California in just this way, still bitter and opposing all these things which I did not understand.

But God was better to me than I was to His people. After several months of work and travel in the state of California I was thrown in contact with many of the Apostolic Faith people, a good many of whom were known to me as former staunch supporters of Zion. I was especially impressed by the spirit of such people as dear Brother Overton of Santa Rosa, who has nearly \$20,000.00 invested in Zion and who has no income whatever from his investments, but who has given his whole life to the work of the gospel. He entertained me in his home and spoke so kindly and considerately and had no harsh criticism for anyone. I attended the meeting and heard a dear sister speak, but I was not in a condition to receive or accept the things I heard and saw. Then in other places and finally at Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles I saw and heard things that broke down my prejudice completely for I became convinced that it was none other than the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit that was working through this people. Not that all that I saw was to be accepted as such, for I saw much of the human element that entered in that caused me much distress at first, but this was so insignificant when compared with the wonderful results that I soon lost sight of the human in the more marvelous manifesta-

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AS DR. SPEICHER SEES IT

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tions of the divine. And I also remembered that in the development of divine healing in Zion there were many things that were quite as objectionable. Hundreds of honest-hearted ministers came to Zion to investigate its wonderful work but turned away disgusted and disappointed when they saw the leaders lay hold of the limbs of the lame and pull with all their might until sometimes serious injuries resulted. And they saw from 500 to 1000 sick present in one day in the healing room and only a score or two at the most were healed of all that great number. And they heard the extravagant utterances of the speakers and the harsh language and the peculiar testimonies of some of the healed.

But this in no way invalidated the claims that were made by the adherents of divine healing that it was scriptural and that it was applicable today, and that in the aggregate thousands were actually being healed of all sorts of disease.

But then, just as today, the great mass of humanity refused absolutely to investigate, but turned away because of the stories of gross inconsistencies which they had heard and because of divine healing differing from their preconceived ideas of things.

Now, let us soberly look at this "Tongues" matter and consider some of the facts, or all we can gather, and before we judge finally and refuse to believe, let us at least be fair enough to be intelligent critics of "things more."

Let us consider the subject under several heads:

First—Is speaking in tongues scriptural?

Second—What was the purpose of tongues?

Third—Are the manifestations in Zion City genuine?

I want to take up these questions separately. I want to deal fairly with them. I want to get at them just as I did with the doctrine of divine healing when I first heard of it.

First, as to the scripturalness of Tongues, I need not try to convince any one of the fact that speaking in unknown tongues was a common thing in the early Church. We find it at pentecost. (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12:10, 28; 1 Cor. 14.) The fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians wonderfully reveals the condition of the church. Paul says in the 18th verse: "I thank God I speak with tongues more than you all." It was a source of thanksgiving to Paul that he spoke in tongues. Then we have Matt. 10:17, 18, which is so widely quoted in favor of divine healing: "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my Name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;" etc. This undoubtedly has as much force for tongues as for healing. Then we have the incident of Cornelius and his household, (Acts 10:36) when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost they spake with tongues.

But I need go no further with this point. This is uncontroversial. The early disciples spake with tongues, cast out devils, healed the sick and preached the gospel generally.

Second—What is the purpose of tongues? I can do no better than to quote the Apostle Paul, (1 Cor. 14:32): "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving." A sign to the unbelieving. God in His goodness is willing to do so much to