

THE PRAYER TONGUE AND THE JESUS PRAYER

THE WITNESS OF ABBOT DAVID GERAETS

CLYDE GLANDON

Spiritus 9.1 (2024) 39–55

<https://doi.org/10.31380/2573-6345.1344>

© The Author(s) 2024

Keywords *prayer tongue, Jesus Prayer, Pentecostal monastic community, Eastern Churches, spiritual direction, depth psychology, charismatic prayer meetings, spiritual journal, baptism of suffering, baptism in the Holy Spirit, contemplative prayer, Taboric light*

Abstract

To my knowledge Abbot David Geraets (1935–2012) of the Pecos Benedictine Monastery has been the only Christian witness and writer, past or present, to join the practice of the ancient Jesus Prayer and the prayer tongue. He simply says that “repeating the name of Jesus can become a masterful art of glossolalia prayer.” Abbot David’s statement is not found as such in the centuries of Eastern Orthodox literature about the Jesus Prayer. Nor is such a joining found among classical Pentecostal Christians who, while fully familiar with the prayer tongue and with life and power in Jesus’ name, commonly have no particular awareness of the practice of the Jesus Prayer. Such a joining moves across the boundary between the ecclesiastical cultures that normally separates Eastern Christian communities and Western Pentecostal communities. It is a matter of spiritual practice.

Introduction

In this writing I am inviting readers who are Pentecostal Christians to consider a practice of prayer that may be new to many, the Jesus Prayer, especially as it may be related to one’s praying in tongues. My observation is that there are virtually no Pentecostal prayer meetings today in which participants may experience a community that prays the Jesus Prayer together in the context of prayer tongues and singing in tongues among the gifts.

In this sense, what is offered in this article has little to do with theological argumentation, and more to do with pondering examples and witnesses—especially from Abbot David Geraets—that might inspire and encourage prayer, new practice, and its effects. I invite the reader to approach the contents of this article as an exercise

itself in devotional reading, reading that might lead to prayer. Abbot David's personal witness in the excerpts included here, as well as the samples of classical teachers of the Jesus Prayer I include, come out of the experience of revelatory prayer. Ascetical theology is about prayer, arises from prayer, and is offered as a witness to inspire prayer. The Jesus Prayer tradition seeks to avoid scholastic theological intellectualism, but instead seeks to read, to pray, and to live *with the mind in the heart*. Pentecostal theology, if it remains Pentecostal, is not a scholastic exercise. Much theology, as David Geraets said repeatedly, becomes a "head trip."

It probably goes without saying that many Christian communities that are neither Eastern Orthodox nor Pentecostal—i.e., those that have been referred to in the West as "mainline" denominations, as well as Evangelical traditions—have had no emphasis upon either the Jesus Prayer or the prayer tongue.

What follows is a presentation of Abbot David Geraets' Pentecostal witness and ministry, and a brief introduction to the Jesus Prayer. I offer several excerpts from Abbot David's witness about his interpretation and practice. I close with examples of discussions of prayer in the classic and modern ascetical literature of the Eastern Churches, which Abbot David's integration may illumine. That is, I follow David Geraets in communicating, shall we say, a Pentecostal hermeneutic of the Jesus Prayer tradition as far back as the early writings in *The Philokalia*.

From my first exposure in 1981 to the Pentecostal community of the Pecos Benedictine Monastery, and since my co-founding of the ecumenical Fellowship of the Holy Name in 2010, I have been calling Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal Christians to see a ground for the "charismatic renewal"—the living contemporary experience of Pentecost—in the biblical and ascetical theology of the Desert and Christian East. This tradition lies deeply behind more recent movements that often are seen by some as new, and by others as simply passing. David Geraets discovered in his personal experience of the Jesus Prayer an unrecognized doorway to, and instance of, the prayer tongue. His contemporary George Maloney writes of the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" in introducing the fifth-century *Macarian Homilies*,¹ as well as describing Christians who prayed the Jesus Prayer in that era as "charismatics."² Here grace is a perceptible *energy* of God, beyond a doctrinal tenet. "Grace" is, after all, a translation of the word *charis*.

The combination of teachings and practices at the Pecos Monastery in its charismatic era is a combination that, in this writer's experience for over forty years, is unknown in practice, and one that deserves wider knowledge among Pentecostal

¹ George A. Maloney, "Introduction," in *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, ed. and trans. George A. Maloney (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 19.

² George A. Maloney, *The Breath of the Mystic* (Danville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1974), 84.

Christians. David Geraets' leadership offered a specific and distinctive path for *discipleship* in Pentecost among individuals and communities.

David Geraets

David Geraets made his monastic profession at the St. Benedict's Abbey in Benet Lake, Wisconsin, in 1962. His doctoral thesis at Gregorian University in Rome was on music and catechetics. The charismatic renewal that had begun in Roman Catholicism in the United States in the late 1960s came to the community in Benet Lake and, as Abbot David says below, it split the community. He and his brothers who had come to know the baptism in the Holy Spirit moved to Pecos, New Mexico, to found Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery as a charismatic monastery. He thus gave Pentecostal meaning, witness, and embodiment to the Benedictine vocation itself.

He served as abbot there from 1973 until 1992, when he and several brothers moved to a sister monastery, the Monastery of the Risen Christ, in San Luis Obispo, California, where he lived until his death. In 1974 he invited Morton Kelsey³ to begin the integration of the Catholic charismatic renewal with Jungian depth psychology. The year 1978 marked the community's first school for charismatic spiritual directors. The Pecos community founded Dove Publications, which focused on Pentecostal subjects.

Abbot David's writings are few. His primary book was *Jesus Beads*.⁴ A shorter piece is *Baptism of Suffering*.⁵ He wrote the foreword to George Maloney's *Man the Divine Icon*⁶ and the preface to *Exploring the Gift of Prophecy* by Arthur Labonte.⁷ I transcribe below several excerpts from audiotapes of lectures he offered at the school for spiritual directors at Pecos, from my personal collection.⁸ I also include short transcriptions from Abbot David's video interview with Bill O'Donnell in 2006 on the Roman Catholic television network EWTN.

³ Morton Kelsey was an Episcopal clergyman and Jungian psychotherapist who wrote prolifically and taught for many years at Notre Dame. Among his writings are: *Encounter with God; God, Dreams, and Revelation; Dreams: A Way to Listen to God; Discernment: A Study in Ecstasy and Evil; The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation; Tongue Speaking; and Adventure Inward: Christian Growth Through Journal Writing*.

⁴ David Geraets, *Jesus Beads* (Pecos, NM: Dove Publications, 1973).

⁵ David Geraets, *Baptism of Suffering* (Watching, NJ: Charisma Books, 1971).

⁶ David Geraets, "Foreword," in *Man the Divine Icon: The Patristic Doctrine of Man Made according to the Image of God*, by George A. Maloney (Pecos, NM: Dove Publications, 1973), vii-x.

⁷ David Geraets, "Preface," in *Exploring the Gift of Prophecy*, by Arthur LaBonte (Pecos, NM: Dove Publications, 1974), 1-7.

⁸ Permission to use excerpts from Abbot David's lectures in 1981 has been granted by Abbot Aiden Gore of the Pecos Monastery.

The Pecos Community

It is realistic to say that few have known of such a thing as a Pentecostal monastic community. I attended their fourth school for charismatic spiritual directors in 1981–82. The community’s life and mission combined the following elements: a Roman Catholic monastic community that included daily Eucharist and morning and evening community prayer with charismatic practice; a single residential community of celibate men and women, unique in Roman Catholicism; a ministry of charismatic retreats, with missions to many outside communities, including Tulsa, Oklahoma; a school for charismatic spiritual directors; the use of Jungian psychology and dream work in Christian spiritual direction and the life of sanctification; and the daily personal practice of the Jesus Prayer among its members.

Some Emphases

Prayer Meetings

Jesus Beads is David Geraets’ integration of the Jesus Prayer and charismatic manifestations. In this book and in his lectures and organization of participants at the Pecos schools, he makes a strong emphasis upon the charismatic prayer meeting as a primary arena, and relatively safe context, in which to experience and practice the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That is, in an ongoing community of relationships, practice, and accountability. At this writing, I have been aware that charismatic prayer meetings have not been emphasized or practiced in Christian congregations for a long number of years. I see this as a strategically missing arena in Pentecostal Christian formation, practice, life, and ministry, given that the Wesleys, Smith Wigglesworth, and Azusa Christians, among others, proactively formed and continued prayer meetings as basic to Pentecostal life and mission. It is fair to say that for David Geraets prayer is fully as vital as Holy Scripture is for Christian discipleship.

Practicing into the Charismatic Gifts

He taught quite specifically that Christians can and do practice into the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that we are in fact called, for our part, to act and participate in moving into the gifts.

Discipline in Pentecost

Abbot David spoke of the problems of the “Shepherding Movement” as part of his reasons for seeking to raise up a cadre of spiritual directors who included journaling and “inner work” as part of their responsible participation in and leadership of charismatic prayer communities. It was at Pecos that I first heard the term “stewardship of

consciousness,” most especially as it applies to many of the excesses of so-called “charismania,” as well as to personal misconduct among Christian leaders. In integrating Jungian depth psychology into charismatic Christian culture, he placed a strategic and well-developed psychology into the path of Christian sanctification. He placed spiritual direction, journaling, and dream work as defining elements of our participation in Pentecost. He said he would not continue to offer spiritual direction to anyone who did not take their spiritual life seriously enough to keep a journal.

The Three Baptisms

His writing on “the baptism of suffering” is in the context of his witness that there are three “small-b” baptisms in the one Christian baptism. That is, our conscious awakening to the risen Christ, our baptism in the Holy Spirit, and our baptism into the Father, or the laying down of our lives in a baptism of suffering, following Jesus, so that brothers and sisters may come to know the first two baptisms. As a Roman Catholic, he taught this from his view that sacramental infant baptism is theologically accurate, but often is not experientially or existentially dynamic in a maturing Christian’s actual consciousness of God’s perceptible life and activity.

A Sampler of David Geraets’ Incisive Statements

In my experience of forty years, for most of the short excerpts here—like David Geraets’ singular joining of the prayer tongue with the Jesus Prayer—I have not heard Pentecostal Christians, or other Christians, speak this way. That Jesus is the model charismatic. That charismatic renewal is a poor man’s mysticism, said positively. That love is higher than truth. That if contemplative practice only leads to non-response and silence, no one will turn to the God we proclaim. That our actions matter and play a part—putting our foot out—in miracles of the Kingdom.

Jesus is the model charismatic.⁹

I got filled with the Holy Spirit, which is a kind of way of saying that you know God’s love deeply. Charism means love, that you are filled with love, the overwhelming love of God’s presence, which brings charismatic gifts.¹⁰

Experience continues to teach us that this Divine Love is most effectively communicated through spontaneous shared prayer.¹¹

⁹ David Geraets, “Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal,” Lecture 2 (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 6, 1981).

¹⁰ David Geraets, interview by Bill O’Donnell, “Charismatic” Prayer Ministry, Pt. 1, EWTN, 2006.

¹¹ Geraets, *Jesus Beads*, 53.

[In regard to tongues] If you want to catch a squirrel, you have to climb up a tree and act like a nut.¹²

The Red Sea parted when someone put their foot out, and not before.¹³

Charismatic gifts must be present in a Christian community if it is to be a witness to the Divinity of Jesus, just as much as human compassion and social activity should evidently witness to His humanity.¹⁴

Love is higher than truth.¹⁵

Until our churches recapture this vision of the Holy Spirit's manifestation of signs and wonders of the Kingdom and in God-given loving community in this world, there will be mediocrity in Christendom.¹⁶

The charism is lost if you put someone in office who doesn't own the charism.¹⁷

If your God is deaf and dumb, who in the world is going to turn to Him?¹⁸

Shucks, when someone is healed, your evangelism is done for you.¹⁹

The charismatic renewal is a poor man's mysticism.²⁰

The Jesus Prayer

There is a rich bibliography on the Jesus Prayer. Those unfamiliar with the Jesus Prayer will find most helpful practical wisdom in the anthology edited by Igumen Chariton of Valamo, *The Art of Prayer*,²¹ and in Lev Gillet, *On the Invocation of the Holy Name*.²² *The Art of Prayer* consists primarily of the writings of Theophan the Recluse (19th C.). The first book on the Jesus Prayer to become widely known in the West was *The Way of a Pilgrim*, in various editions now. I first learned of the Jesus Prayer in Anthony Bloom's

¹² David Geraets, "Basic Spirituality," Lecture 1 (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 13, 1981).

¹³ David Geraets, "Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal," Lecture 1 (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 5, 1981).

¹⁴ Geraets, *Jesus Beads*, 51–52.

¹⁵ David Geraets, "Sexuality" (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, March 1, 1982).

¹⁶ Geraets, "Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal," Lecture 1.

¹⁷ David Geraets, "The Charismatic Gift of Discernment," (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 22, 1981).

¹⁸ David Geraets, "Relationships," (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 15, 1981).

¹⁹ Geraets, interview by Bill O'Donnell.

²⁰ David Geraets, "Christianity and Depth Psychology," (lecture, Benedictine Monastery, Pecos, NM, January 28, 1981).

²¹ Igumen Chariton of Valamo, ed., *The Art of Prayer: An Orthodox Anthology*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and E. M. Palmer (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1981).

²² Lev Gillet, *On the Invocation of the Holy Name* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1985).

book *Beginning to Pray*.²³ Authors in the volumes of *The Philokalia* discuss the Jesus Prayer, notably Hesychios and Diadochos. Classically, its form is “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me,” taken from the blind man’s cry from the side of the road in Mark 10:47–48. The practice is to pray this—or a shorter version, simply “Jesus”—repetitively, that is, as a way to pray without ceasing, to pray at all times in the Spirit, to make melody to God in our hearts, and to do everything in the name of Christ.

It is a prayer, not a mantra from the non-Christian East, but interestingly, many Westerners who are familiar with the mantra from Hinduism come home to the Jesus Prayer for the experience of Jesus’ and Paul’s teachings about our life in Christ. That is, Christ being formed in us, having the mind of Christ, God making God’s home in us, opening the door of our hearts, our bodies being filled with light, what Jesus says his followers will do in his name, and the Holy Spirit’s interceding for us with sighs too deep for words. Theophan especially offers counsel on the way of *descending with the mind into the heart*. In the language of Western Christian spirituality, this is a joining of mental with affective prayer. Theophan’s words below about the name of Jesus becoming like a quietly-flowing inner stream as well as fanning a spark to flame in our hearts are easily associated with the prayer tongue.

One of the Fellowship of the Holy Name’s mottos is: *The Name of Jesus brings Pentecost, inside and out.*

Excerpts from David Geraets’ Witness

The Name of Jesus and Permeation in the Holy Spirit

In this excerpt, the Jesus Prayer is linked with baptism in the Holy Spirit, and is identified as a form of glossolalia prayer. Inviting people into this prayer is itself a form of evangelism.

The immediate purpose of praying is to grow in communion with our Triune God.

... One manner of making “head” knowledge (i.e., God exists) also become “heart” knowledge (i.e., I personally know He lives in me) is to practice repetition. It is precisely this “heartfelt prayer of a good man which works very powerfully” (James 5:16, Jerusalem Bible).

²³ Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970).

Speaking the name of Jesus repeatedly with love, humility, and reverence creates a vacuum within our hearts which evidently draws down the living Presence of God's Spirit to permeate our entire being.²⁴

He who has not yet received a charismatic Gift from God need not feel abandoned or left out of the Pentecostal renewal. Repeating the name of Jesus can become a masterful art of glossolalia prayer, complete in itself.²⁵

Revelatory Vision, the Jesus Prayer, and Vocational Commitment

In this section, Abbot David combines his experience of vision and being filled with light—what he calls the Taboric experience—with his witness about the Jesus Prayer and tongues. He calls it “The Jesus Prayer of tongues.”

For some Christians, David Geraets' description of the Jesus Prayer below is another way of describing contemplative prayer. Fr. Rusty Shaughnessy, a member of the Pecos community at the time, said that the prayer tongue is “voiced contemplation.” However, nearly all contemporary Western Christian teachers of contemplative prayer, in dozens of volumes—with the notable exception of Thomas Merton—do not discuss the Jesus Prayer. Merton says nothing of the prayer tongue, nor do they. Based in my experience a year after hearing this lecture—when I was again at Pecos and when, unlooked for, the light of the Holy Spirit filled me as I lay in bed at night—my witness is this: *Baptism in the Holy Spirit is our participation in Jesus' transfiguration*. Is not contemplative prayer an immersion in the Holy Spirit's revelation of Jesus the light of the world?

Abbot David says here he was “looking for a theological justification for tongues” and not finding it in the Western world. One might make the wry comment that, whether or not tongues are identified in Western *theology*, the New Testament itself might offer whatever justification Christians may seek.

The most important thing in the life of a Christian is that you get a vision, that you know who you are and where you're going. I have a classical Pentecostal friend who says that there are three very important things in regard to the vision.

First, if you don't have one for your life, pray that you get one. Everybody needs a burning bush like Moses. Needs a vocational call like Isaiah, or the wheels like Ezekiel, or some deep manifestation of God's presence in your life. Call, vocation.

The second thing is that you move into that vision, once you've received it. I have known people who have had a call to move into Pentecost who didn't have

²⁴ Geraets, *Jesus Beads*, 6, 8–9, 14.

²⁵ Geraets, *Jesus Beads*, 83.

enough guts to move into it. That's the second stage. And that will cost you oftentimes.

And the third one is to last it out all the days of your life. That's the dimension of commitment. Either we have commitments or we have affairs. It is going toward a goal, believing in a future, having a hope. People without a vision perish.

The main function of prophecy is to give people a view of the Kingdom. Two thirds of Jesus' teaching is about the Kingdom.

And so: To move into the vision. That's so important. You're really going to have to have that reiterated many times in your life. Never lose your vision. Because then life is meaningless. Keeping the end in view. Jesus keeping his eyes on the cross and the resurrection.

When they began to move in charismatic circles in the abbey, the first thing it did was split the community right down the middle. Some went into the Baptism in the Spirit into the renewal, some couldn't go into it. And that was the hardest thing I ever suffered in my whole life. My deepest revelations in life have come when I have experienced the deepest pain.

Now I could have written those people off, and said, those people, well, they're just not Christian. That would have been pretty easy, but when you've lived with people and you know their sincerity and you know their practice, you can't write them off, but your great pain, my great pain is—I'm something of a musician—it's like trying to share my song with someone who can't sing. That's why, the experience for me, I try to share the experience of the Baptism in the Spirit with someone who can't open up to it. And so I was wondering whether I was supposed to go into the renewal or not.

I went into a real crisis on that, and I remember—I don't know if I would advise this, whether it would be prudent for your life—but I went on my knees and I said, *Lord, I am not moving off my knees until you talk to me. I want to know whether I'm supposed to be in this thing or not.*

And I remember the first evening, I don't know if I was awake or was sleeping, I am waiting in prayer, and I saw the map of the United States at that time, and I'll never forget these visions as long as I live—the interpretation changes, but the vision never changes—I saw little fires breaking out, different geographical locations, becoming one big fire. And the Lord speaking, saying, *that's how I'm going to renew my people. I'm going to have these little fires breaking out, and they'll become one big fire*, and I watched it into England and continental Europe and I saw parts of Latin America. I didn't see it in the Orient, parts where the Lord was going to take me later.

And the second night I was in prayer again, like that was not good enough, with the Lord saying that's how I'm going to renew my church, you know I'm going to bring these people into one big bonfire, and then he showed me a large river. See, the background to your visions and dreams frequently are the

background of where you're raised. I'm raised fifteen miles from the Mississippi River, and I see this big river going, and the Lord said, *Do you see the river?* and I said, *Yes, Lord, I see the river.* And he said: *Now regarding the river, a person can do one of three of things. He can swim across it, ignore the current, he can swim with the current, or against the current, but that's not going to stop the flow of the river.* And then he went on to say, *Now that's how it's going to be these days with this renewal. I'll pour my Spirit out and some people will be like the one who chooses to ignore the current, swims across the current, and some will go against my Spirit, some will go with my Spirit, but, He said, they won't stop the outpouring of my Spirit.*

And that's how it's been, you know, these thirteen years. Beyond my fondest expectations I've seen this renewal when it wasn't kosher to even have it in a house, if you were Catholic, I've seen it just spread all over the world. And do you realize, in what a short time? In the Catholic church especially. Goodness, you know in the first years, when something happens, we normally say it's a heresy. Then after maybe about twenty-five years, we say, well, there's maybe a few good things in it. Then after a hundred years, we say, well, that's already in the writings of St Augustine! [laughter] But it's happened a little faster this time.

One reason is probably because we don't have that much time. I'm not talking end of times, but I'm talking the urgency of the gospel. Because without it, an awful lot of people are getting hurt, getting smashed up, aren't they? That's why I have an urgency to preach the gospel. I don't come from a place that *Jesus comes tomorrow, panic today.* I hope he comes tomorrow because since he's left, it hasn't been too good. I'm working and praying for it. But I have an urgency to preach the gospel, because without it I see young people on dope, frying their brains, I see them smashing into the mountains out here beside us, I see marriages falling apart, I see good families shattered. And that's the urgency for me to preach the gospel, because without that Word, God's people perish. That's why I'll go across the country, I'll go across the world, I told the Lord you can take me anywhere you want, because I sense the urgency of the gospel, because without it we don't make it, we just don't make it.

The third evening, as I was in prayer, I had no precedent for it, but I will never forget it as long as I live, and I've never had as powerful experience as this, maybe there'll be one down the line, I hope so. Because, having experienced God's light, there is nothing like it in this world, and I'd do anything to experience that light again, and I hope that isn't just selfish. It came to me at 2 o'clock in the morning, with a bright light that went straight through my whole body. And it was peaceful and it was loving and it was ecstatic. He didn't say much in words. I've never had the Lord be very verbose with me.

He didn't waste words. He said *Go, and I will be with you.* He didn't say very much, but He said everything, didn't he? What more do you need?

And then I heard, but this wasn't a voiceless voice. St Augustine talks about the voiceless voice, you hear down here, it's almost like your own imagination, it goes around and around, and then other times it gets so loud I'm afraid that

somebody sitting beside me is going to listen in. And he said, *I want you within the church, and not outside the church.*

In those days it was very easy to get an invitation to speak outside the Catholic church settings. I couldn't get many on the inside.

And I want the witness in the core center where you are.

Now that's how I learned the Taboric experience. I went to my spiritual director, I went all over, I tried to find someone who could tell me what this light is. Went through all of them. They didn't know what the light was. So I had to go back in my Scriptures. And I went back in the writings of the Fathers. And I searched out the whole Eastern Church. I learned about the Jesus Prayer because I was looking for a theological justification for tongues. I can't find it in the Western world.

I found the best theological explanation of it in the Jesus Prayer. A prayer of abandonment. Where you don't go to God with preconceived notions in your head, or preconceived notions in your heart, but you go empty, and you say, you put in my head what you want, you put in my heart what you want. That's the essence of the Jesus Prayer of tongues, it's a prayer of abandonment, it's the apogee, the high point of abandonment, where you become totally feminine, totally receptive and you don't program anything between you and God but you receive God on God's own terms.

So I searched my Scriptures and I found some amazing things. I found Paul talking about that light that was on Moses' face being the light now in the heart of a Christian. Do you know that the early fathers and the Christian and the patristic writers and the Scriptures, expected that the Christian would have the light within the heart as well as the love within the heart. *See how they love one another*, was the sign of a Christian but they also were to have the glow of the Spirit on their face. You would be able to tell if they were a Christian by the way they were lit up, if you want. Have you ever had an experience like that? That's happened to me once. When I went to Japan for the first time, I came back through San Francisco, and I went up to the desk there to the man who was taking the tickets, and I looked at him, at his face, and I said, *Brother, are you baptized in the Holy Spirit?*—I've never done that before or since—and he said *Praise the Lord*, and here are all of these people around us. [laughter] And it's not like me to do that.

But you should be able to walk down the street and see Christians. I'm not putting a judgment on others, but if there's not something special about being a Christian, why would you want to be one? If it doesn't show, a light on your face.

And I looked in II Peter, and this is a gem. Chapter 1:16. He's talking about evangelization—*we were eyewitnesses of his majesty*. What we relate to you was an actual historical happening. *We ourselves heard this voice when we were with him on the sacred mountain. We have the word of prophecy made more certain. And you will do well to pay attention to it as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.* What's he saying? You keep your eyes focused on the revelation, you keep believing, until you have an experience where

light comes into your heart. And that light will verify two things to you. The first one is that the gospel is real in a way that you never dreamt before.

And the second thing is, that you can lay your life down for it. I don't think you can put your life on the line without that type of revelation. I think it was necessary in the life of Jesus and I think it is necessary in the life of every Christian if they're to last out a commitment.²⁶

The Jesus Prayer and Relationship with God

Abbot David speaks of our personal identity as grounded, and defined, in experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ. His witness is that the Jesus Prayer is a way into this relationship, in his experience and in the experience of others he has counseled. Again, living relationship with God is more vital than ideas about God.

Nobody knows who they are until they know who Jesus is. The only way I know to get a deep knowledge of Jesus, like John the Baptist at the Jordan and Peter's Spirit-anointed recognition of Jesus, is to spend a lot of time with the Jesus Prayer. Until I can say the Name of Jesus 1,000 times without repeating myself, I think I'll begin to know a little bit about prayer. We are talking about relationship and the quality of relationship. The Holy Spirit is like the finger of God. I send a lot of people out into the mountains to pray among the pinons, walking, doing the Jesus Prayer, and the Lord touches them.²⁷

Realization of Christian Initiation, Prayer Community, the Word, and Charismatic Gifts in Prayer and Worship

Here Geraets talks about several subjects in a brief space, saying that Christian initiation, indeed evangelism, is to bring baptism in the Holy Spirit, as well as Christian community. Again, there is a key emphasis upon the charismatic prayer meeting for Christian leaders to form. The gifts of the Spirit are to be part of the experience of the gospel if, as he says, the word and worship are to be real and personal. Without elaborating, he states how easily non-charismatic worship actually makes for *accidia*, or no living sense of God's activity among us.

Catechesis [Christian formation, i.e., in Christian education or preparation for Confirmation] isn't complete until they know Jesus, until there's baptism in the Holy Spirit, and until there is some kind of solid community, solid relationship.

I found myself when I was moving in that ministry, I went out to the various prayer groups—I get closer to those people in the prayer groups than I was to those in my own community.

²⁶ Geraets, "Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal," Lecture 2.

²⁷ Geraets, "Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal," Lecture 2.

I found myself saying: David, you've got to be real.

Either you get this type of spirituality in community or else you're going to have to step outside that community where it is.

I think everyone is going to have to ask that question sooner or later.

If you don't have a charismatic prayer meeting, you've got to form one.

I think a diocesan priest should be praying with his people, where we pray with one another. I mean daily, that's what the Liturgy of the Hours is. There should be a charismatic prayer meeting there; if it isn't, go form one.

Your own parish, your own neighborhood, I don't care, no one can keep you from praying. No one has the authority to do that.

The Word is not broken open by someone getting up and proclaiming the Word. That's one form, and I'm not putting that down. But the way the Word is really broken open, the way the powerful Word of God becomes personal, is when you have a movement of prophecy and tongues and inspiration in the assembly. That's how it becomes personal. That's why you need charismatic gifts.

Some people say, "Oh, what is the rationale for mumbling and tongues and prophecy, etc.?" That's how the power, the Word of God, with its power in the assembly, becomes personal, and it's not really worship until that happens.

The prayer meeting is the liturgy of the Word *par excellence*. It's a preparation for Eucharist and flows out of Eucharist.

You can go through the choreography of religious life without praying. It's called *accidia*. Holy indifference.²⁸

Practicing into the Charismatic Gifts

Unlike some interpretations of Augustine in the Protestant Reformation, David Geraets does not believe that it is Pelagian to practice into the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is, to put your foot out. That there is such a thing as a practicum in the gifts of the Spirit. It is striking that his counsel is not to let sin block us from aspiring to move in the gifts.

I know some people who didn't fear to babble like an idiot, only to find Jesus in their heart, in a way they'd never dreamt of. You will never pray in tongues until you are willing to babble like an idiot. And you may need to babble like an idiot for maybe nine months before you get the gift of tongues. I don't know how long I bounced it off the wall before a breakthrough came. And when we start out, there's an awful lot of practice. When you start with tongues, I will wager that as high as 90% is not tongues. But it's a practicum, or praxis, *toward* tongues. And only if I continue in the practice does the gift break in.

²⁸ Geraets, "The Charismatic Gift of Discernment."

I share with you tonight, don't let any sin ever block you from your ministry, and don't let pride and deception block you from moving in and appropriating charismatic gifts, because an awful lot of people are doing that today, and what they really get hung up on is tongues.²⁹

One Additional Reference in Christian Writing to the Prayer Tongue and the Jesus Prayer

I cite here Agnes Sanford in her book *The Healing Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, in her chapter "The Gift of Tongues and of Interpretation." This chapter, in my view, is well worth revisiting, especially in her emphasis upon moving from tongues, or other inspirations, into active charismatic ministry for others. "This gift is one of the tools with which we do our bit in building the Kingdom of God on earth. A good builder need not say, 'Look at my wonderful tools!' One looks instead at that which he has built."³⁰

This is in consonance with David Geraets' chapter "The Kingdom of Heaven" in *Jesus Beads*. Repeating a statement found in his *Scripture and the Charismatic Renewal, Lecture 2*, that *Jesus is the model charismatic*, he writes:

It will happen something like this. As the gift of swimming is given in and during the simulated action of splashing of water, so the Kingdom of Heaven will come when all God's people imitate the actions of their Master, Jesus. "The man who has faith in me will do the works that I do, and greater far than these" (John 14:12). Their doing these things will be the occasion if not the cause for Jesus to return physically and establish the Kingdom of Heaven in fullness. The effort can be fostered or frustrated by our free-will actions. No splashing, no gift of swimming; no charismatic action, no Kingdom. Therefore we pray and work eagerly that our Lord may return soon.³¹

Here is a conversation Sanford records about the Jesus Prayer and tongues—in effect, an independent aspiration toward David Gereats' experience, without ever knowing of him.

A very holy man, Abbot Lazarus of the Greek Orthodox Church, author of books on the mysticism of this church once said to me, "I wish very much that I had the gift of tongues."

"Why, Abbot Lazarus?" I inquired, surprised beyond measure that this most erudite, British-educated scholar should desire such a gift.

"Because from my study in mysticism I have come to know that it would be a shortcut to contemplative prayer. We spend hours every day saying the Jesus

²⁹ Geraets, "Basic Spirituality," Lecture 1.

³⁰ Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* (New York: HarperCollins, 1966), 182.

³¹ Geraets, *Jesus Beads*, 82.

Prayer ('Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me') in an effort to make contact with God. If I could speak with tongues, this contact would be made instantly."³²

Witnesses from the Eastern Churches

In the context of David Geraets' reports above, I read the following traditional excerpts as witnesses from personal experience of the Spirit rather than as products of speculative theology. The reader is invited to come to know the relationship between the Jesus Prayer and the prayer tongue through his or her own personal practice as well as among other Christians praying together. Gregory of Sinai's words in the fourteenth century are in resonance with the contemplative dynamics in contemporary charismatic worship. I interpret Hesychios' term "intellections" to mean vision as well as words of prophecy, knowledge, and wisdom, when alone and among others.

Theophan the Recluse (19th C.)

What do we seek through the Jesus Prayer? We seek for the fire of grace to appear in our hearts, and we seek for the beginning of unceasing prayer which manifests a state of grace. When God's spark falls into the heart, the Jesus Prayer fans it into flame. . . . Try not to quench this fire, and it will become established in such a way that the prayer repeats itself; and then you will have within you a small murmuring stream. . . .³³

Diadochos of Photike (5th C.)

Knowledge: to lose awareness of oneself through going out to God in ecstasy.³⁴

Then the Lord awakens in the soul a great love for His glory; for when the intellect with fervor of heart maintains persistently its remembrance of the precious name, then that name implants in us a constant love for its goodness, since there is nothing now that stands in its way.³⁵

³² Sanford, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit*, 182, 183. For an introduction to Abbot Lazarus, see Kallistos Ware, "Foreword," in Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On the Prayer of Jesus*, trans. Fr. Lazarus (Boston: New Seeds Books, 2006).

³³ Theophan, "God's Spark" and "A Murmuring Stream" in *The Art of Prayer*, 108, 110.

³⁴ Diadochos of Photike, "On Spiritual Knowledge," in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, ed. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 252.

³⁵ Diadochos of Photike, "On Spiritual Knowledge," 270–71.

Gregory of Sinai (14th C.)

In others it is manifest as an unconquerable love and peace, shown toward all, or as a joyousness that the fathers have often called exultation—a spiritual force and an implosion of the living heart that is also described as a vibration and sighing of the Spirit who makes wordless intercession for us to God (Rom. 8:26). Isaiah has also called this the “waves” of God’s righteousness (cf. Isa. 48:18), while the great Ephrem calls it “spurring.” The Lord Himself describes it as “a spring of water welling up for eternal life” (John 4:14)—He refers to the Spirit as water—a source that leaps up in the heart and erupts through the ebullience of its power.

You should know that there are two kinds of exultation or joyousness: the calm variety (called vibration or sighing or intercession of the Spirit), and the great exultation of the heart—a leap, bound, or jump, the soaring flight of the living heart towards the sphere of the divine. . . . This is also known as a stirring of the spirit—that is to say, an eruption or impulsion. . . .

Divine awe is accompanied by a tremulous sense of jubilation arising from the prayer of fire that we offer when filled with awe.

The energy of grace is the power of spiritual fire that fills the heart with joy and gladness, stabilizes, warms, and purifies the soul, temporarily stills our provocative thoughts, and for a time suspends the body’s impulses. The signs and fruits that testify to its authenticity are tears, contrition, humility, self-control, silence, patience, self-effacement and similar qualities, all of which constitute undeniable evidence of its presence.³⁶

Lev Gillet (20th C.)

To grow in the invocation of the Holy Name is to grow in the knowledge of the “Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6).³⁷

Hesychios the Priest (8th or 9th C.)

Truly blessed is the man whose mind and heart are so closely attached to the Jesus Prayer and to the ceaseless invocation of His name as air is to the body or flame to the wax. The sun rising over the earth creates the daylight; and the venerable and holy name of the Lord Jesus, shining continually in the mind, gives birth to countless intellections radiant as the sun.³⁸

³⁶ Gregory of Sinai, “On How to Discover the Energy of the Holy Spirit” and “On Divine Energy,” in *The Philokalia*, vol. 4 (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 360, 361, 362.

³⁷ Gillet, *On the Invocation of the Holy Name*, 83.

³⁸ Hesychios the Priest, “On Watchfulness and Holiness,” in *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, 197.

Thomas Merton (20th C.)

. . . the humble invocation of the Lord Jesus. . . This simple practice is considered to be of crucial importance in the monastic prayer of the Eastern Church, since the sacramental power of the Name of Jesus is believed to bring the Holy Spirit into the heart of the praying monk.³⁹

Conclusion

I have offered illustrations for a Pentecostal hermeneutic of the practice of the Jesus Prayer. That is, a grounding of Pentecostal renewal and ministry in the ancient practice of the Jesus Prayer. And David Geraets' virtually unique contemporary joining of the Jesus Prayer with permeation in the Holy Spirit. Accompanied—as only briefly mentioned—by such practices as journaling, dream work, and spiritual direction. That charismatic prayer groups are practicums for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That baptism in the Holy Spirit is in the context of a conscious awakening to Jesus and of a baptism into the Father, a baptism of suffering, to bring brothers and sisters to Jesus and the Spirit. It is my hope that there will be a renewed interest among Pentecostal Christians to cultivate charismatic prayer meetings, to become some of the fires that Pentecost brings to the world, little fires becoming one big fire.

The Spirit-anointed and revelatory utterance of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, tongues, interpretation, evangelical proclamation and witness, spiritual song, and words that bring God's healing, are all of a piece with the Spirit-anointed utterance, silently or out loud, of the name of Jesus. When Jesus and the Holy Spirit are active in prayer and worship and ministry, *a God-altered state of consciousness*, with perceptible effects among us, is set in motion. The name of Jesus brings Pentecost, inside and out. "O, that the Spirit of Pentecost would come and write within us the Name of Jesus in flame."⁴⁰



Clyde Glandon (clyde.glandon@cox.net) is a retired Episcopal clergyman, former Executive Director of the Center for Counseling and Education in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA, and co-founder of the Fellowship of the Holy Name.

³⁹ Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 22.

⁴⁰ Gillet, *On the Invocation of the Holy Name*, 80.

ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

**WHOLE
LEADERS**

**FOR
THE
WHOLE
WORLD**



ORU | ORAL
ROBERTS
UNIVERSITY

Do you want to become part of something more?

At Oral Roberts University, we believe that our students were born to be leaders who impact the world. ORU students represent all 50 states and over 106 nations. They are visionaries and world-changers who become equipped through our whole-person approach to education, graduating empowered to invest in the world around them.

Take your next step with ORU today by applying at apply.oru.edu!

>> Apply today! apply.oru.edu >>