

STRANGE TONGUES WAG IN BALLARAT

*"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries."
(1. Corinthians, Chap. 14, Verse 2)*

The unknown, or "strange", tongues have been heard by groups of Ballarat people in recent times, but some of these tongues are creating a problem.

The problem is: Those who speak with "strange tongues" cannot understand the words which flow from their mouths. All they know is that they are speaking to God.

And, according to these people (Pentecostals), one cannot speak to God with a "strange tongue" unless he has received the "gift" of the Holy Spirit.

"Born-again"

Many people in Ballarat including school students claim they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) and have since spoken with strange tongues.

These people call themselves "born-again" Christians.

The Christian Revival Crusade, a branch of the Pentecostal movement, each Sunday takes part in special services, and then the assembly goes into deep, but boisterous prayer.

It is at this time three members of the congregation break independently into the English dialogue by speaking in "foreign" languages.

After each member has "spoken to God with a strange tongue," a member of the congregation, usually Pastor A. W. Stevens'

wife, interprets their prayers in English.

To interpret the gift of tongues, one has to receive the "gift of interpretation," the Pentecostals claim.

Speaking with strange tongues is practised at other Pentecostal assemblies, also.

And, after each special service, the sick come forward to be healed.

Healing power

Pastor Stevens claims he can heal those in need, sickness or any other adversity, by placing his hands on their heads and praying for those who are suffering.

The Pentecostal movement in Ballarat claims it has former atheists, Protestants and Roman Catholics within its ranks.

This week Pastor Peter Kay, of the Christian Revival Centre (another Pentecostal movement) said: "Recent publicity about speaking with other tongues has been over emphasised - it is nothing new to the world - speaking in tongues has been practised right throughout the ages. "

Pastor Kay said that to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to receive

the gift of tongues was a "supernatural experience", but also an act of God.

Parents of children attending some high schools in Ballarat are concerned and afraid that their children are being indoctrinated by this mystery of speaking in strange languages.

At Ballarat East High School 23 students, ranging from forms three to six with two in form one, claim they have been filled with the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" and speak with strange tongues.

School meetings

During recess and lunch breaks students get together and conduct Bible and prayer meetings.

Some have asked the Lord to "fill them with the Holy Spirit" at school, even on the football oval.

About three months ago, two teachers, who also claim they speak with strange tongues were asked to sign a declaration not to witness about their faith to students during school time, students claimed.

Students said the signing of this declaration had not interfered with their religious beliefs, as they could continue prophesying their experiences to other students.

Students attending Ballarat High School and State schools claim they, too, can speak with unintelligible tongues.

A student teacher at Ballarat Teachers' College, Richard Winter, 20, who attends the Revival Centre, this week told of his supernatural experience.

"I received the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' the first time I attended the centre about 13 months ago."

"It was easy. I got down on my knees and asked the Lord for it, and about 30 seconds later I was speaking another language unknown to me - I couldn't control my tongue."

"The rest of the assembly prayed with me and, after I had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, I kept on praying for about half an hour, which was something I had never done before. Praise the Lord!" he added.

On the road

At any time or at any place even when driving his car, Richard said he could speak to God in strange tongues.

"Speaking in tongues edifies me and builds me up - I'm praying to God, not to anybody else, through the Holy Spirit. There are several benefits - he is a God who answers prayer," he said.

However, some people have been disappointed in not receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One young man said this week he wanted to "abide with God" by receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit at the first Pentecostal meeting he attended, about three weeks ago.

"After the service the pastor and his wife took me into a room at the back of the assembly hall and prayed that I would receive the "gift," he said.

They laid their hands upon my head and prayed earnestly that I would be "filled".

"It was peculiar - I thought I was being hypnotised. I fell asleep," he added.

The pastor told the young man that he wasn't ready to be committed to the Lord, as he had a "mental block" which first needed clearing.

Another young man, over 21 years, said he went to the Christian Revival Centre and sought the gift of the Holy Spirit, but failed.

He too was told he had a "mental block," which needed clearing.

"I only go along to please my parents, anyway," he said.

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