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THE IMPACT OF GLOSSOLALIA ON CHRISTIAN
UNITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SELECTED
PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN THE
ELDORET MUNICIPALITY

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

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ELDORET, KENYA

MAY, 1996

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ABSTRACT

Glossolalia (the practice of speaking in tongues) has brought controversies both in churches and in the scholarly world. The purpose of this study was to find out the extent of the impact of this phenomenon on christian unity. The focus of this research was on selected Protestant denominations in the Eldoret Municipality.

This study had the following concerns. First, to find out the nature and purpose of glossolalia and whether it is disruptive in christian communities. Second, to find out how individuals perceive and practise glossolalia and how this affects christian unity. Third, to investigate the phenomenon of glossolalia in the book of Acts, the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Chapters 12-14) including a discussion on the longer ending of Mark's gospel where this phenomenon is mentioned. This involves tracing instances of unity or disunity caused by glossolalia. Fourth, to find out the extent of the impact of glossolalia on christian unity in Eldoret Protestant Churches.

The nature of glossolalia seems to have contributed to the impact the phenomenon has on christian unity. In instances when it has been intelligible it has fostered christian unity. But in instances when it has been unintelligible it has caused disunity among christians. The misunderstanding of the purpose of glossolalia has also led

to a creation of two camps of christians: those who see the necessity of glossolalia and those who do not.

In the New Testament an ambivalence may be noticed with regard to glossolalia. In the book of Acts, especially the Pentecost event (Acts 2), glossolalia promoted unity. The Corinthian glossolalia (1 Corinthians 12-14) caused disunity among Christians.

Glossolalia in Eldoret Protestant Churches as the data shows has negatively affected christian unity. In the first place it has caused disunity by uniting Christians of the same view at the exclusion of others. Another aspect is that some christians have been expelled or have left their Churches because they practised glossolalia where their churches did not approve of it. However, in some churches where glossolalia is not part of their practice, the phenomenon has been accepted due to some factors. The pastors of such churches generally practise the phenomenon. Glossolalia as a community phenomenon affects christian unity, as the findings of this research indicate.