

# TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF "SPEAKING IN TONGUES"

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THE INCREASING frequency of the phenomenon of "speaking in tongues," in the Roman Catholic and other Christian denominations, challenges one to outline a "theology" of this spiritual gift. Morton Kelsey has made an important contribution in the field of psychology.<sup>1</sup> However, while psychological investigations are valid and interesting, they can hardly throw adequate light on supernatural phenomena. One may compare 1 Cor 2:14-16: "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 'For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."<sup>1a</sup> The present essay will be approached purely from the biblical point of view.

First, it might be useful to give a brief survey of representative exegetical expositions of the pertinent scriptural texts. After this we shall discuss "tongues" from (a) the individual's and (b) the community's point of view. It is becoming impossible to assemble all the articles relating to glossolalia. Our main interest, however lies in the fact that there is a general tendency among more recent exegetes to accept to some degree the validity of this spiritual experience, to interpret "tongues" as genuine languages uttered in noncstatic state rather than "gibberish" in ecstatic or frenzied state.

## REPRESENTATIVE EXEGETICAL EXPOSITIONS

In the main, exegetes may be divided into four classes: (1) those who regard "tongues" as unintelligible sounds produced in an emotional state; (2) those who admit some intelligibility; (3) those who view tongues as a real language; (4) articles written in the last decade. In the first class one may place Clemens (1898), Dewar (1924), Thomson (1926), Synge (1934), and Martin (1944).

<sup>1</sup>Morton T. Kelsey, *Speaking with Tongues: An Experiment in Spiritual Experience* (London, 1965), examines the biblical, patristic, and contemporary evidence concerning "speaking with tongues" but emphasizes especially the association with certain aspects of Jungian psychology (pp. 169-233). His book will be translated into German.

<sup>1a</sup>Cf. also Kilian McDonnell, "Holy Spirit and Pentecostalism," *Commonweal* 89, no. 6 (Nov. 8, 1968) 198-204.

Carl Clemens<sup>2</sup> reviews the second- and third-century references found in Origen and Irenaeus<sup>3</sup> and concedes that they interpret “tongues” as speaking in “foreign languages.” He admits that Irenaeus appears to equate the “speaking of tongues” in his day with the “tongues” at Pentecost, but he avers that Irenaeus had no firsthand experience of this.<sup>4</sup> However, Clemens doubts whether this means an absolutely new language. In Acts 10:46 and 19:6 the word “tongues” is used without reference to foreign languages. If one compares these texts with the narrative of Pentecost, the phrase used is “tongues,” not “other tongues.” He asks, therefore, if the phenomenon of Pentecost was a miracle of speaking in “other” tongues. Perhaps this speaking in “other” tongues was a later addition in imitation of the midrash according to which seven voices changed into seventy tongues at Sinai. Before this addition the text read “tongues” like Acts 10:46 and 19:6. He remarks that the end of Mark is not clear.

Clemens feels that Tertullian is in a different position. Tertullian challenges Marcion to produce psalms, visions, prayers, and tongues.<sup>5</sup> “Tongues” seem to be understood as prayer in ecstasy. However, Clemens asserts that Tertullian was probably speaking about the

<sup>2</sup> Carl Clemens, “The ‘Speaking with Tongues’ of the Early Christians,” *Expository Times* 10 (1898-99) 344-52.

<sup>3</sup> Clemens does not give the reference to either source. He would appear to refer to Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5, 29-30. Origen refers to Dt 32:8-9 and Wis 10:5 (LXX) and Gn 11 (the Tower of Babel). He states that each nation possessed a language peculiar to its guardian angel. Chap. 30 begins “all the people upon the earth are to be regarded as having one divine language and so long as they lived harmoniously together were preserved in the use of this divine language. . . .” The reference to Irenaeus is probably *Adv. haer.* 5, 6, 1, which reads: “For this reason does the apostle declare ‘We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,’ terming those persons ‘perfect’ who have received the Spirit of God and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as He used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear [the old Latin has *audivimus*, ‘have heard’] many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men. . . .” (*ANF* translation).

<sup>4</sup> See below for the alternative reading in Irenaeus.

<sup>5</sup> Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5, 8, where Tertullian refers to Is 11:2-5 and accommodates it to 1 Cor 12:4-11. Concerning faith he says: “‘To another, faith by the same Spirit’; this will be ‘the spirit of religion and the fear of the Lord.’” He makes healing and miracles equate the spirit of might. Prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation comprise the spirit of knowledge. Another interesting note is Tertullian’s remark: “When he [Marcion] mentions the fact that ‘it is written in the law’ how that the Creator would speak with other tongues and other lips, whilst confirming indeed the gift of tongues by such a mention, he yet cannot be thought to have confirmed that the gift was of another god by his reference to the Creator’s prediction” (1 Cor 14:21). The *OT* passage to which he refers appears to be Is 28:11.

Montanist idea of speaking in tongues and one cannot draw inferences from this about the early Christians.<sup>6</sup> Clemens then proceeds to compare prophecy and tongues and finds the distinguishing feature to be that prophecy is "universally intelligible" while tongues are not. However, Clemens would not think that one can go so far as to say that it consisted of inarticulate sounds. Rom 8:26 appears to be different and 12:3 would suggest that one can hear intelligible utterance. But in general they were not intelligible, even if some words were understood.

Clemens then turns to "interpretation." He asserts: "Perhaps the practice and familiarity with the matter enabled some to interpret simultaneously the speaker's face expressions and gestures." He feels that those who spoke in tongues were in ecstasy, so that they could not interpret their own tongues, but perhaps some remained conscious a little longer and were able to interpret some of their speech.<sup>7</sup>

His conclusions, therefore, are: (1) the speaking in tongues occurred in ecstasy, and was in general unintelligible; (2) there were differences in the case of different individuals, and even of the same individual at different times. Sometimes a man was conscious to such an extent that he afterwards remembered his utterances; but at other times he had so entirely lost control of his senses that he gave to his feelings an expression exactly contrary to their content. If, in addition to this, we may suppose that with these unconnected words and sentences meaningless sound combinations alternated, then some additional light will be thrown upon the Apostle's expression "kind of tongues" (Rom 12:10).<sup>8</sup> However, Clemens does contrast these New Testament tongues with pagan ecstatic speech, with Gnostic prayers consisting largely of names of gods, with the speech of the Camisards at the end of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, which consisted of inarticulate sounds and newly created words, and with the fanatical movement of the Jansenists in 1731 who believed that the organs of speech were controlled by another power. He also contrasts the forties, when there was "sermon-sickness" in Sweden, which consisted of inarticulate sounds, unconscious singing of hymns, sometimes horrible oaths. Least of all can it be compared with the speaking in tongues among the Irvingites, "for this

<sup>6</sup> Yet if Tertullian is referring to "unfrenzied ecstasy," tongues might be equivalent to *ebrietas spiritalis* or *iubilum mysticum*. It is regrettable that Tertullian's books on ecstasy are lost. On the other hand, *glossais lalein* is not used with regard to the Montanists. They were criticized for para-ecstasy and passivity and speaking strange sounds. The word is *xenophōneō* (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5, 16, 7).

<sup>7</sup> These statements show that Clemens had no firsthand experience of tongues; contrast Gundry's article (n. 40 below).

<sup>8</sup> But this is a wholly arbitrary "exegesis," for different "kinds of languages" cannot be subject to this interpretation.

phenomenon was from the very beginning artificial." Clemens asserts that the speaking in tongues at Corinth was "thoroughly natural." Perhaps the tongues at Pentecost, at the Cornelian Pentecost, and at Ephesus were a wonderful inspiration, though unconnected words and sentences. Moreover, the apostles were masters of themselves when Peter asked for silence. Further, Paul forbade anyone to stop speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:39). Clemens concludes that speaking with tongues soon died out and must not be confounded with speaking in foreign languages, but that there is an association because of their similarity. Thus arose the concept of Pentecost which we have now.

Clemens' article leaves an air of uncertainty. He seems to vacillate between accepting the validity of the experience and regarding it as ecstatic, inarticulate, and emotional; yet there is not the wholesale condemnation of tongues found in so many writers' work.

Lindsay Dewar takes a different approach.<sup>9</sup> He proposes that only the apostles spoke in other tongues, that Acts 2:9-11 are an editorial and so they cannot be used as a guide to suggest which languages were heard. He feels that the speaking in tongues was due to "sudden breaking down of a repression in the unconscious minds of the Apostles." This repression was due to the shock which they had sustained owing to the Crucifixion. He tries to support his point by referring to St. Peter's speech where the cross is spoken of, not with horror, but as a divine plan. Therefore the apostles, through emotion, broke into meaningless syllables which were probably learnt from the polyglot community in Jerusalem or may have been fragments of Hebrew texts. He notes that Jesus' attention was given to Old Testament texts when speaking of His approaching death. Dewar would suggest that some parts of the apostles' speech would appear as "gibberish" but other parts proclaimed the wonderful works of God. For the Jews, Hebrew could be regarded as "the tongue in which they were born." For once the Galileans may have spoken without the distinctive impediment to which their speech usually succumbed, that is, the confusion of gutturals in their dialect. Dewar compares the Camisards who spoke exhortations in good French from the Huguenot Bible.

When Dewar turns to the Cornelian episode, he claims repression once again. Cornelius felt this repression because as a proselyte he was unable to participate fully in the synagogue services. He would have heard the Hebrew or Greek text of the Bible and therefore spoke in fragments of passages. But the Holy Spirit did dwell in the community after Pentecost and His outpouring was a deepening of the receptive powers of men.

<sup>9</sup>Lindsay Dewar, "The Problem of Pentecost," *Theology* 9 (1924) 249-59.

Dewar, therefore, does not really regard tongues as "natural" but rather as abnormal behavior. His article would suggest that he sees little genuine spirituality in the experience.

W. S. Thomson regards "speaking in tongues" as a state of religious exaltation.<sup>10</sup> "It begins with a sense of being uplifted or *above oneself*, strengthens and then passes on through ecstasy and frenzy to a state of complete trance. . . ."<sup>11</sup> The frenzied and trance state produces the inarticulate ejaculations, moanings, and mutterings described by the Apostle in 1 Cor 12-14.<sup>12</sup> Thomson declares these to be bedlam, incoherent, childish; they may be of spiritual value to the speaker but are useless without an interpreter. When he examines Acts 2, he speaks of the emotional effects of the Crucifixion, of the enormous crowds of pilgrims (he states that the census of Nero gives two and a half million Passover pilgrims, and Pentecost was a more important feast<sup>13</sup>); the accusation of drunkenness suggests a disorderly scene. He declares that the theory that these tongues were languages has been "long abandoned." The text lists eighteen provinces or states. As the foreign pilgrims arrived, the apostles changed their praise to foreign words which they recalled at the sight of the pilgrims.

Thomson's view, therefore, appears more disparaging than Dewar's. It might be noted that no one who has ever heard the exquisitely beautiful choral singing in tongues at a quiet prayer meeting could ever declare this to be "bedlam." In a most inexplicable way the singing harmonizes, although different languages, tunes, and keys appear to be present.

F. C. Synge sees Acts 2 as a fulfilment of Is 59:21 and Jl 2:28-30.<sup>14</sup> He cites examples of the Spirit's work in the Old Testament and says:

the examples cited are all connected with abnormalities of behaviour, and probably a strain of animism lies behind the language. Such phrases as the spirit of a deep sleep, Isa. xxix. 10 or of perverseness, xix. 4, are due to the same diagnosis of abnormal behaviour as are the explanations of prophecy and Saul's fits. Partial hypostatisation, as in 1 Sam. xvi. 14-23, is due partly to the

<sup>10</sup> W. S. Thomson, "Tongues at Pentecost, Acts ii.," *Expository Times* 38 (1926-27) 284-86.

<sup>11</sup> Again Thomson cannot have experienced "tongues."

<sup>12</sup> But Thomson does not give the specific verses. Rom 8:23, 26 might have been more appropriate for his thesis, although the present writer would see even those texts in a different light.

<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Pentecost does not seem to have been so important in mainline Judaism until at least the second century A.D. It was more important among the sectarians, e.g., Qumran.

<sup>14</sup> F. C. Synge, "The Spirit in the Pauline Epistles," *Church Quarterly Review* 119 (1934) 79-93.

old animistic ways of thinking and partly to a new philosophy, an attempt to solve the problem of evil which culminated in the personification of Satan.

He suggests that the outpouring of the Spirit in the New Testament produced similar abnormal or supernormal manifestation.<sup>15</sup> He attempts to translate such texts as Gal 4:6; Th 5:19, and 2 Th 2:2 as ecstatic utterance and pronounces that this is "the key-word, so to speak, for the interpretation of Acts ii. 10-14." In the same category he places Rom 8:26, 27; Eph 5:18.

Thus Synge, too, attributes tongues to psychological abnormality.

Ira Jay Martin wrote his article in 1944, but he seems to list bibliography mainly ranging from 1913-21.<sup>16</sup> Martin asserts that in Acts 2:1-42 the glossolalia was coincidental with being possessed by the Spirit and that Peter quoted Joel to prove this association: "ecstatic speech became the chief evidence of this [the Spirit's] possession—at least in some Christian circles."

Of Acts 4:31 he notes (with Harnack) that this is probably a doublet; glossolalia is not specifically mentioned "but we may assume that some of the speaking was ecstatic." Speaking of Acts 8:14-24, he says that Peter regarded glossolalia as a proof that the Spirit had come and that in Acts 10:44-48 and 11:15-17 he says that the Spirit has descended "even as on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15), that is, he equates the Cornelian episode with Pentecost. In Acts 19:2-7 the converts spoke with tongues and prophesied. Approximately twenty-five years later, speaking in tongues is found as one of the charismata but 1 Cor 13, on love, is a "poetic characterization of the true Christian, contrasted to a mere ecstatic speaker."

Martin then proceeds to claim that glossolalia is not confined to Christianity; it is found, e.g., in the episode of Eldad and Medad (Nm 11-12), in the Baal prophets (1 K 18:16-46), in the case of Aaron (Nm 12:1-2), in the Greek poets, the Cumean Sibyl, the *Aeneid* of Virgil, the Gerasene demoniac (Lk 8:26-39); but his references do not seem to refer to glossolalia. He continues by saying that "it might appear at any time and place under proper motivation," for example, the Irvingites of England, the Little Prophets of Cevennes, the Holy Rollers and the Pentecostal sects today. "There are also ample illustrations of uncontrolled speaking in delirium and in insanity."

<sup>15</sup> W. R. Shoemaker, in a very interesting article entitled "The Use of *Ruah* in the Old Testament and of *pneuma* in the New Testament: A Lexicographical Study," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 23 (1904) 13-67, demonstrates that the concept of the Spirit of Yahweh did not become, as it were, acceptable until the prophets became nonecstatic. One would date Is 11:2-5 as exilic.

<sup>16</sup> Ira Jay Martin, "Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944) 123-30.

Martin thinks that glossolalia arose from a desire to have an objective sign of the possession of the Holy Spirit, and he avers that this "speaking may have been occasionally intelligible and coherent, but for the most part it consisted of frenzied, inarticulate, incoherent, ecstatic speech"; the converts gained prestige and hoped to secure divine power and favor among men.<sup>17</sup>

Martin's article presents the theses of Dewar, Thomson, and Synge in a more exaggerated form, but his arguments are hardly compelling owing to his indiscriminate references and lack of linguistic analysis.

All these articles appear to speak from the standpoint of persons who have no empirical experience of the phenomenon which they wish to evaluate. The contention that tongues are due to psychological abnormality is contradicted by Kelsey and others who have made clinic experiments or acquired empirical evidence. It is not to be doubted that there are some cases of abnormality, but contemporary firsthand experience would seem to be analogous, for example, to archeological empirical evidence which confirms certain hypotheses in Scripture. Moreover, viewed objectively, the biblical text does not witness to the ecstasy or intense emotion of which these writers speak. *Ekstasis* in the sense of "trance" occurs only in Acts 11:5 and 22:17 but not in the texts concerning glossolalia.

In the second class one may place Edwards (1928), Taylor (1928), and Stoll (1943).

Hubert E. Edwards recalls that Greek was the lingua franca of the Roman Empire and that it could be understood anywhere from Syria to Spain.<sup>18</sup> Most of the countries listed in Acts 2 would have understood this language. Why, then, should the Holy Spirit speak in "other tongues"? He says that there is nothing to suggest that St. Peter's speech was not spoken in either Greek or Aramaic; probably "tongues" were not used for addressing the crowds. It is not said that the crowd itself came to Jerusalem recently but that they were dwellers in Jerusalem. In the *LXX* and papyri, *katoikein* is used in a technical sense to distinguish permanent residents in the towns from those "dwelling as strangers" or "sojourners" (*paroikountes*). St. Peter seems to stress that they were local people from Judea and Jerusalem. Why, then, does the text say that they came from "every nation under the sun"? Edwards suggests that the Roman peace brought many Diaspora Jews back to their country to live (cf. Acts 23:6 and Paul brought up in Jerusalem) and that the miracle was hearing dialects from homes left

<sup>17</sup>I have been unable to procure I. J. Martin's book *Glossolalia in the Apostolic Church: A Survey of Tongue-Speech* (Berea, Ky., 1960).

<sup>18</sup>Hubert E. Edwards, "The Tongues at Pentecost: A Suggestion," *Theology* 16 (1928) 248-52.

some time ago. Dialects would occur in the praises of God uttered by the apostles.

Edwards' article appears much more tenable, but more evidence would be needed to show that these were dialects in languages.

R. O. P. Taylor does not agree with those who say that the miracle was one of hearing (interpretation) only, not of speech.<sup>19</sup> The text militates against this, but the obstacle overcome might be that of dialect rather than language (cf. Edwards above). There is a gap of time between the speaking in tongues and the hearing of the crowd, and one need not prolong it into the second part of the narrative. However, he adds: "we have to remember that in all other cases where the phrase speaking with tongues occurs, it appears to mean uttering inarticulate cries under the stress of great emotion. The speaker, through the very intensity of his feelings, was unable to put them into articulate words, and this had to be done by some other person who was capable of discerning the cause of his emotion." He quotes Canon Raven, who speaks of interpretation as thought-transference. Taylor cannot accept the meaning of foreign languages for "other tongues" in the first part of Acts 2. The proclamation may have consisted largely of quotations from Scripture, probably Messianic texts, so that people would understand the meaning.

R. F. Stoll<sup>20</sup> refers to the appearance of tongues which had the form and color of fire,<sup>21</sup> and says that they symbolized the speech and preaching by which the New Law was given through the Spirit. Stoll gives the modern names for the tribes listed in Acts 2 and calculates that about five or six distinct languages were represented, but each had different dialects: there seem to have been about fifteen different dialects. In the New Testament, *dialektos* is used only in Acts 1:19 (of the Jerusalemites), 21:40, 21:2, and 26:14, each time with reference to a language spoken by the Hebrews. Stoll takes the view that the speaker was in control of himself, that the language could be understood by those who knew it, and that it was not a meaningless jumble of muttered sounds.

Stoll would, therefore, seem to support Edwards' and Taylor's contention that tongues comprise dialects rather than languages. On the whole, these three scholars take a more realistic and spiritual view of

<sup>19</sup>R. O. P. Taylor, "The Tongues at Pentecost," *Expository Times* 40 (1928-9) 300-303.

<sup>20</sup>R. F. Stoll, "The First Christian Pentecost," *Ecclesiastical Review* 108 (1943) 337-47.

<sup>21</sup>The Hebrew for flame is "tongue of fire"; I do not know whence Stoll derives the "color."



tongues: their opinions (save for Taylor's reference to inarticulate cries and great emotion) are consonant with the biblical text.

In the third class fall Brown (1875), Beel (1935), Lyonnet (1944), and Sirks (1957).

David Brown argues that the languages in Acts were "real articulate tongues" unknown to the apostles, but he thinks that the tongues in the Corinthian community differed to some degree from those in Acts.<sup>22</sup> He notes,<sup>23</sup> however, that the verb *apophtheggomai* is used in the *LXX* both of inspired utterances (1 Chr 25:1<sup>24</sup>) and of those falsely claiming inspiration (Ez 13:19, Mi 5:12, Za 10:2), and also that the gifts of tongues came to all Christians irrespective of sex, age, or rank.

A. Beel writes about the nature of the charism and notes that the speech was distinct from the apostles' native tongues.<sup>25</sup> It was not a miracle of hearing but of speaking, and was not incoherent or unintelligible. However, although it was articulate and audible, the accusation of drunkenness was made because there were 120 people speaking with religious fervor. He discusses also the object and scope of the gift of tongues and states that it was not preaching the word (cf. Acts 14:11 ff.) but for the praise of God. He asserts that it was not a habitual or permanent gift.<sup>26</sup>

S. Lyonnet gives a summary of the opinions of various exegetes,<sup>27</sup> but his main point of interest is the fact that he refers to *ebrietas spiritualis* or *iubilum mysticum* and quotes St. Teresa of Avila (*Life* 16), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (*In Cant.* 67, 3), and St. Alphonsus Liguori (*Homo apostolicus*, Appendix 1, 15). This seems to be a phenomenon akin to tongues.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> David Brown, "The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter ii., The Day of Pentecost," *Expositor* 1 (1875) 392-408.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339, n. 2.

<sup>24</sup> This reference is to the selection of certain sons of Asaph etc., "who should prophesy with lyres, with harps, and with cymbals." One wonders whether "prophesy" is a very apt translation.

<sup>25</sup> A. Beel, "Donum linguarum juxta Act. Apost. ii. 1-13," *Collationes Brugenses* 35 (1935) 417-20.

<sup>26</sup> The present writer's firsthand and secondhand information would seem to prove him incorrect.

<sup>27</sup> S. Lyonnet, "De glossolalia Pentecostes eisque significatione," *Verbum domini* 24 (1944) 65-75.

<sup>28</sup> St. Teresa: "Then the soul does not know what it should do, whether to speak or to be silent, laugh or cry . . . then many words are pronounced in praise of God, yet without order, unless God Himself gives them order; however, the human mind can do nothing." St. Bernard: "Thus love, especially divine [love], is strong and burning; when it is not able to restrain itself within itself, it does not wait for any order . . . it overflows because of poverty of words, while it feels no loss to itself through this. Meanwhile it re-

G. J. Sirks claims that tongues are interpretations of glosses on the text of Scripture, that *lalein* can mean "ordered recitation of *pericopae*," that "other tongues" may mean offering Scripture interpretations contrary to those commonly accepted.<sup>29</sup> The Diaspora Jews were astonished at the variance of pericopes and interpretation in a new fashion, especially because they pointed to Jesus as Messiah. C. S. Mann remarks: "Sirks rightly observes that not only is there quite another word for 'languages' in Acts 2 than *glossae (dialektoi)*, but also that the behaviour of Peter was anything but that of a man possessed."<sup>30</sup>

These four writers seem to grasp the key to the gift of tongues, namely, that it is an inspired gift, a gift of prayer or praise, and associated with Scripture and possibly instruction. Their articles treat the text with an empathy not always discovered in the writers discussed previously. It might be remarked that the classical prophets and concept of the Spirit arose after the disappearance of the ecstatic prophets; a similar observation may be made with regard to classical Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism.

Scholars who have written on the gift of tongues during the last decade include Beare (1964), Currie (1965), Gundry (1966), and Sweet (1967). It is in the first quarter of this decade that the gift of tongues was bestowed more profusely upon the historical churches—that is, neo-Pentecostalism was born.

Beare makes several important observations.<sup>31</sup> First, he rightly draws attention to the injunction in Matthew that one should not repeat meaningless sounds. Secondly, he recalls that we find no reference to "speaking in tongues" in the canonical Gospels (if one accepts Mk 16:9 ff. as an addition); it is never attributed to Jesus or His followers.<sup>32</sup> Thirdly, although there is much about the Spirit in John's Gospel, there is no mention of tongues. Fourthly, he remarks that there is much symbolism in Acts 2 and that tongues in Acts appear to be different from tongues elsewhere, "where it is taken to mean some kind of unin-

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quires neither words nor voice, content alone with sighs." St. Alphonsus: "Spiritual intoxication causes the soul to break forth in, as it were, delirium, such as songs, cries, immoderate weeping, leaping, etc., as it used to happen to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi." Yet I do not think these symptoms are always found with the gift of tongues. Tongues may be used even in a state of deep aridity, although an effort is required.

<sup>29</sup> G. J. Sirks, "The Cinderella of Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 50 (1957) 77-89.

<sup>30</sup> C. S. Mann, "Pentecost, the Spirit and John," *Theology* 62 (1959) 188-90.

<sup>31</sup> F. W. Beare, "Speaking with Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964) 229-52.

<sup>32</sup> But this would be to exempt Acts.

telligible utterance which does not involve the mind of the speaker at all and may even give outsiders the impression that he is mad." Acts 2 foreshadows such a scene as Ap 7:9. Fifthly, he adds a remark on those who say "Jesus cursed" (1 Cor 12:3: *anathema Jesus*): "A modern teacher would perhaps think of such 'spirits' as evidence of a subconscious hostility to Christ and the gospels breaking out in words when the controls of the conscious mind were removed in a state of ecstasy."<sup>33</sup> Beare appears to take a psychological approach with regard to 1 Corinthians, but his reservations with regard to the rest of the New Testament are important in the light of the Pentecostal stress on tongues.

S. D. Currie states that the phrase "to speak in tongues" might mean either a nonhuman language or utterance, which may not be languages at all "in the sense of connected discourse, even if the sounds are in some way meaningful."<sup>34</sup> However, the phrase may mean human language. He refers to Chrysostom, who believes that the phrase means unlearned human languages,<sup>35</sup> and to Irenaeus, who says: "many brethren in the Church having prophetic gifts and speaking through the Spirit in all tongues and bringing to light men's secrets for the common good and explaining mysteries of God. . . ." <sup>36</sup> Irenaeus' statement is found also in Eusebius' *Church History* (5, 7, 6), but probably the Latin text is older. The Greek text differs only in having the present tense instead of the past at "we have heard many brethren. . . ." Irenaeus also thinks that *glossais lalein* is a human language which one has not learned. However, between Luke and Irenaeus there is little suggestion of speaking in tongues. Even the apocryphal Gospels do not refer to the phenomenon, although they do refer to animals speaking human language. In the Acts of John (chap. 106) the gift of tongues is noticeably absent from the list of powers of the spirit: "wonders, healings, signs, charismata, teachings, governing, refreshments, services, knowledge, praises, graces, confidences, sharings." Tongues are not mentioned in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 39, 2, where charismata are listed.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Beare, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-42. I would like to add that obsession or possession by an evil spirit would certainly produce a "tongue" which cursed Jesus. The writer has some experience in the mission field and elsewhere, and finds it difficult to argue against the existence of evil powers.

<sup>34</sup> S. D. Currie, "'Speaking in Tongues': Early Evidence outside the New Testament bearing on 'glossais lalein,'" *Interpretation* 19 (1965) 274-94.

<sup>35</sup> Chrysostom, *Homily 29*, on 1 Cor 12:1-11.

<sup>36</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5, 6, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 39, 2: "For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God." One notes the blending of the "Isaian" and "Corinthian" gifts.

Currie considers whether the "tongues" at Corinth could be angelic languages (cf. 2 Cor 12:3-4, where Paul heard "sayings which cannot be expressed, which are not for man to speak"). Enoch 40 refers to the various languages of angelic beings; in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17, Abraham is taught the song of an angel and the song is reported.<sup>38</sup> In the *Ascension of Isaiah* 6-11, each rank of angelic beings has its own voice; with this text one may compare also the *Testament of Levi* 3 and the *Testament of Judah* 25. But the most interesting document which Currie quotes is the *Testament of Job* 45-50. The daughters of Job receive the ability to speak in angelic voices: Hemera is given a change of heart and "the utterance of the angelic dialect"; Kasia, "the dialect of principalities"; the third daughter, "the dialect of those on high"—she spoke in the language of the Cherubim.<sup>39</sup> Nahor wrote down these hymns.

Currie concludes that speaking in tongues may be "some sort of oracular utterance, a dark saying which requires interpretation." But if speaking with tongues were some kind of cadence of vocalization, it could be confused with charlatanry; but if so, then the silence of the first and second century is surprising. The aberrations of Montanism may have quenched the charismatic gifts.

This is an interesting and important article, but it is surprising that he does not refer to Qumran, especially to the seven words of blessing by the chief princes, the liturgy of the three tongues of fire, and the passage based on Ez 1:10.

A great turning point in the theology of tongues is reached with R. H. Gundry's article.<sup>40</sup> Gundry takes his thesis further than J. D. Davies.<sup>41</sup> He questions the New English Bible's translation "ecstatic utterance" for this phrase: this suggests that it means "the broken speech of persons in religious ecstasy," either in "antiquated, foreign, unintelligible, mysterious utterances" or in "marvellous, heavenly languages" (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *glossa* 3a). He produces the following arguments for regarding tongues as human speech:

1. *Glossa* through the New Testament is used for human speech. "The use of the term for understandable language far exceeds its use for obscure speech, especially biblical Greek." There are only two cases where it is used of unintelligible speech and these are not in ecstasy but in stammering, Is 29:24 and 32:4 (*LXX*); nevertheless, it does refer to language.

<sup>38</sup> The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is first or second century A.D.

<sup>39</sup> Currie does not compare the liturgy of angels at Qumran; see A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (New York, 1962) pp. 329-36.

<sup>40</sup> R. H. Gundry, "Ecstatic Utterance," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 17 (1966) 299-307.

<sup>41</sup> J. D. Davies, "Pentecost and Glossolalia," *ibid.*, n.s. 3 (1952) 228-31.

2. As regards the word *hermēneia* (interpretation), normally this means translating a language (except for the seven occurrences in 1 Cor 12-14); one case refers to satire, two to explanation, eighteen to translation.

3. In Acts 2:6-11 *glossais lalein* must mean languages.

4. As regards the "tongues of angels" in this context, Paul does speak of the tongues of men as well. Further, *ean* with subjunctive, "if I speak in the tongues of angels," would not necessarily suggest factual reality; the supposition is that Paul does not speak in the tongue of angels, just as he has not all the powers to prophesy etc.

5. In v. 28b neither "mystery" nor "in the Spirit" denotes ecstasy. It is the absence of an interpreter which causes the tongue to be unintelligible, not the ecstatic nature of the tongues. Indeed, the "effectiveness of glossolalia as an authenticating sign (as well as its effectiveness in conveying a divine message—see xiv, 6-12, 16-18, and especially 23) depended on its *difference* from the ecstatic gobbledegook in Hellenistic religion."

6. "Tongues" seems to be a convincing miracle but not a means of overcoming a communication barrier.

7. St. Paul's use of *lalein* does not militate against the argument that tongues are a human language. *Lalein* can mean incoherent speech but does not mean so ordinarily. In 1 Cor 14:6 Paul uses *legō*, and he uses *lalein* when speaking-with-the-mind is the subject in 1 Cor 14:9. In 1 Cor 14:29 *lalein* is used in association with the prohibition of wives speaking in the church (14:34 f.). It is probably the use of *lalein* in Is 28:11 f. in the *LXX* which caused its use for glossolalia.

8. The accusation of intoxication does not necessarily imply that the speech was unintelligible; it was the "others," the non-Palestinians, who were the accusers.

9. In 1 Cor 14:5 Paul says that tongues with interpretation are just as valuable as prophecy.

10. The precepts for order to be observed with reference to tongues are the same as the precepts for prophecy and for wives asking questions: neither of the last two mentioned is concerned with incoherent speech.

11. The fact that Paul rules that only two or three should speak in tongues and that there should be no tongues if there is no interpreter implies that the speaker was in control.

12. Paul in 1 Cor 14:10 f. must be speaking of tongues as a gift of language.

Gundry's article leaves little doubt that Corinthian speaking in tongues is not ecstatic and that the gift is one of language.

Gundry's article is complemented by an article of larger compass in which Sweet discusses 1 Cor 12-14 in the light of the modern Pentecostal phenomena.<sup>42</sup> Anti-Pentecostals may wish to overstress Paul's

<sup>42</sup>J. P. M. Sweet, "A Sign for Unbelievers: Paul's Attitude to Glossolalia," *New Testament Studies* 13 (1967) 240-57.

disapproval of tongues, but he merely wished to deny that tongues were the *exclusive* sign of the Spirit. He did not object to glossolalia itself, but to glossolalia paraded in public. He affirmed that all Christians are spiritual people (*pneumatikoi*) through sacramental baptism and lose this quality only if they deny Christ. 1 Cor 12 stresses the diversity and the "equal authenticity" of the charismata. The Apostle, through an adaptation of Is 28:11-12, warns the recipients of the letter that tongues are meant as a sign "for (=against)" people who reject God's message, not as a sign for the benefit of the faithful. Thus, as in the Old Testament, it was a sign for the faithless Jew. Sweet may be right on the last point; but while concurring with the rest of his thesis, I am a little exercised about this part.

Sweet feels that the Cephas party in Corinth may have been too insistent on this manifestation of the Spirit; "the demand came from the leaders of the Cephas party, and was part of the concerted move to instill Palestinian piety and orthodoxy into the Corinthian Church" (p. 246). Sweet, however, recognizes that the practice of glossolalia was not introduced by Peter into Corinth and that it did exist elsewhere. Sweet concludes his important article by offering seven "Pauline points" for guidance with reference to the contemporary Pentecostal phenomena:

1. Baptism, not tongues, is the criterion of a Christian.
2. Tongues are not devil-inspired.
3. One must recognize the polemical character of 1 Cor 12-14 and understand that Paul does not condemn tongues.
4. Paul valued tongues highly as a private gift but ranked it lower than the other gifts because it did not contribute so much to the community.
5. Paul does not see glossolalia as childish but as childlike.
6. Paul did not conceive of the Holy Spirit without concrete manifestations. I would add that he may not have had a clear view of the Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity in distinction from the spirit of Jesus.<sup>48</sup>
7. However, the absence of a reference to tongues in Rom 12 is significant. Paul's authority cannot be claimed for viewing tongues as an essential element of the Christian life, and yet he would not quench a manifestation of the Spirit (cf. 1 Th 5:19-22).

The result of the survey would seem to suggest that the question of tongues is complex, but the most recent exegesis, guided by the contemporary experience of those who possess or have witnessed the gift, would favor the interpretation of noncstatic utterance of one or more

<sup>48</sup> See my article "Holy Spirit in the New Testament," *Commonweal* 89 (1968) 173-79.

languages not learnt by human means.<sup>43a</sup> Our next consideration will be the utility of this charism (1) for the individual and (2) for the community.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE INDIVIDUAL

To understand the importance of "tongues," we must consider the gift's relationship to Pentecost as "new creation."<sup>44</sup> An examination of certain traditions about the creation of man suggests that a certain emphasis was placed upon man as a speaking being. This is seen, for example, in the targums. The Onkelos Targum reads: "And the Lord God created Adam from the dust of the ground, and breathed upon his face the breath of lives, and it became in Adam a *Discoursing Spirit*. . . ." The Palestinian Targum reads: "and there was in the body of Adam the inspiration of a speaking spirit, unto the illumination of the eyes and the hearing of the ears . . ." (the Jerusalem Targum adds "and Adam became a soul of life").<sup>45</sup>

Speech or language, to the ancients, was a mysterious science. "God knew words and determined their meaning even before there were any men to speak them."<sup>46</sup> Speech, therefore, might be regarded as the result of the direct inspiration of the Spirit of Yahweh; in fact, "revelation" or "divine inspiration" is sometimes called "speech."<sup>47</sup> Thus it is man's speech which distinguishes him from the animals and places him partly in the category of intellectual spirits or angels, because he is able to utter some of the wisdom of God and pronounce His praise.<sup>48</sup> However, the Palestinian text quoted above appears to imply that the divine inspiration not only affected speech but was "unto the illumina-

<sup>43a</sup> Some books which may be of interest are: F. Stagg, E. Glenn Hinson, and W. E. Oates, *Glossolalia; Tongue Speaking in Biblical, Historical and Psychological Perspective* (Nashville, 1967), a symposium on these different aspects; John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (New York, 1964), describing his search to discover the genuineness and meaning of "tongues"; Howard M. Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken As Ye Suppose* (Plainfield, N.J., 1968).

<sup>44</sup> For Pentecost as new creation, see, e.g., J. Goettmann, "La Pentecôte prémices de la nouvelle création," *Bible et vie chrétienne* 27 (1959) 59-69.

<sup>45</sup> The English translation is from J. W. Etheridge, *The Targums* (New York, 1968).

<sup>46</sup> Cf., e.g., A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, tr. G. Vermes (New York, 1962) p. 204, n. 1.

<sup>47</sup> See the interesting article by Herbert Parzen, "The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n.s. 20 (1929-30) 51-76. For this point cf. pp. 53 and 75; the ten synonyms of the Holy Spirit are proverb, metaphor, riddle, word (revelation), speech, glory, command, burden of prophecy, prophecy, vision (only two are not associated with speaking).

<sup>48</sup> It is praise which constitutes the most exalted use of the faculties of the mind and speech. It is the lament of the Psalmist (Ps 115) that the dead cannot praise God and that idols are dumb (*ibid.*). For the association of angels with priests who minister at the altar, see A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning* (London, 1966) p. 95.

tion of the eyes and the hearing of the ears. . . ." This would seem to refer not merely to the organs of the physical senses, but to the employment of the spiritual senses;<sup>49</sup> for animals, too, possess eyes and ears and indeed a tongue, but not for speech. For further reference to the spiritual senses, one might compare the text of Sir 17 concerning the creation of mankind. The relevant verses are as follows:

He [God] endowed them with strength like His own, and made them in His own image (3). He made for them [Syr., Gk.: inclination and] tongue<sup>50</sup> and eyes; He gave them ears and a mind for thinking. He filled them with knowledge and understanding, and showed them good and evil (6-7). Their eyes saw His glorious majesty<sup>51</sup> and their ears heard the glory of His voice (13).

This text may refer to the theophany on Mount Sinai, but in the context of a creation story it is more likely that it refers to man's intimacy with God before the Fall, when probably it was believed that he possessed the full use of his spiritual senses. The idea of the spiritual blindness and deafness caused by rebellion or sin is a fairly constant theme in the Old Testament and rabbinic sources and recurs in the literature of Qumran. The most notable Old Testament text is Is 6:9-10:

<sup>49</sup>For an account of the spiritual senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell), cf. e.g., A. Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, tr. Leonora L. Yorke (London, 1957) pp. 88-113. For a similar thought in Judaism, see J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (London, 1912) pp. 94, 82-115, 212-23. See also my *The Spirit and the Human Person* (Dayton, 1969).

<sup>50</sup>For the association of the gift of tongues with the fact that mankind was created in the image and likeness of God, see Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5, 6, 1: "Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modeled after, His own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy Spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of man, but certainly not *the* man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was molded after the image of God. For this reason does the Apostle declare, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,' terming those persons 'perfect' who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as He used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God, whom also the Apostle terms 'spiritual,' they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away, and because they have become purely spiritual."

<sup>51</sup>A similar phrase occurs frequently in the targums and appears to be almost identical with the Shekinah, whose presence was frequently experienced as radiance or light (the *ziv*) of the Shekinah.



And he said, "Go, and say to this people: Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive." Make the heart<sup>52</sup> of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

While the targum on this text does not give further light upon these two verses, a rather remarkable alternation is made in vv. 6-8:

And there flew unto me one of *the ministering* angels, and his mouth was *the speech* which he had received from before him, whose Shekinah is on the throne of glory in the highest heaven, high above the altar; and he placed it in my mouth, and said, Behold, I have set the words of my prophecy in thy mouth, and thy transgressions shall be taken away, and thy sins expiated. And I heard the voice of the Memra of the Lord which said, Whom shall I send to prophesy, and who will go to teach? Then I said, Here am I; send me.<sup>53</sup>

Divine inspiration to prophesy is here described as speech, but unfortunately the speech of the prophet will not be "unto the illumination of the eyes and hearing of the ears" of the sinful people.

The same Isaiah theme appears at Qumran. For example, in the *Rule*, in the section concerning the doctrine of the two spirits, the evil spirit, or spirit of perversity, brings in its train numerous vices, but among them are "a *blaspheming tongue*, *blindness of eye* and *hardness of ear*, *stiffness of neck* and *heaviness of heart* causing a man to walk in all the ways of darkness, and malignant cunning" (*Rule* 4, 11). One may also compare "Moreover, they [those who follow Belial, i.e., Satan] have defiled their Holy Spirit, and *with a blaspheming tongue* have opened their mouth against the precepts of the covenant of God, saying, They are not true" (*CD* 5, 11-12).

Rebellion, therefore, causes a "sacrilegious speech," but those who adhere faithfully to the covenant are a people "learned in the precept" . . . with intelligent under[standing . . .] who *hear the voice of the venerated (Being)* [either God or the Teacher of Righteousness] and see the angels of holiness; . . . *whose ear is opened and who hear profound things . . .*" (*M* 10, 10-11; cf. *Sir* 17).

Moreover, the faithful recognize the divine origin of speech and music:

It is thou who hast created breath on tongue and known the words of the tongue and determined the fruit of the lips before ever they were. And thou

<sup>52</sup> For the Hebrew, "heart" is the seat of the intelligence and the innermost life of man.

<sup>53</sup> Text and translation from J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford, 1949).

hast set out words on a measuring cord and measured the breathing of breath from the lips and hast sent out sounds according to their mysterious (laws) and breathings of breath according to their harmony, that thy glory might be made known . . . (*Hymn Scroll 1*, 28-30).

Further, to the Teacher of Righteousness God gave the special office opening "the fountain of knowledge to all the understanding" (*Hymns 2*, 18), but the unworthy "bartered it for uncircumcision of the lips and for the foreign tongue of a people without understanding, that they might be lost in their straying" (*Hymns 2*, 18-19), and the false prophets deceived the people by speaking to them "with bar[bar]ian lips and in a foreign tongue" (*Hymns 4*, 16). On the other hand, the good reply of the tongue is associated with the Spirit or good spirits, e.g., in *Hymns 17*, 17: "[I give Thee thanks, O Adona]i, because of the spirits which thou hast put in me! I will [utt]er a reply of the tongue. . . ." In *Hymns 18*, 10 f. a similar thought is found: "[For] thou hast opened a [fount]ain in the mouth of thy servant and upon his tongue thou hast graven [thy precepts] on a measuring cord, [that he] may proclaim them unto creatures because of his understanding, and be an interpreter of these things unto that which is dust like myself."

But one of the most interesting references is found in *CD 14*, 10, where it is provided that the overseer who is in charge of all the camps should have mastered all "the secrets of men and all the tongues which their various clans speak." Dupont-Sommer thinks that this means "insight into the mind of men and gift of 'speaking in tongues.'"<sup>54</sup> He makes a reference to Acts 2:1-15. I would not wholly concur with this interpretation, but certainly it is worth consideration. Perhaps it would be better to see this skill as the gift of interpretation of languages or even a natural (i.e., learned) knowledge of languages. However, a late midrashic collection (*Agadat Bereshit 14*) attributes to Isaiah, the greatest prophet, and Obadiah, the least of prophets, the knowledge of all spoken languages. Further, certain renowned individuals such as Joseph and Mordecai are said to have known seventy languages or all the languages of the world. This is obviously a gross exaggeration. However, one may ask whether there is a similarity with the duty of the Instructor at Qumran. Does it mean that the overseer is classed with the prophets and personages alluded to above and that he must have perfectly adequate knowledge of the languages spoken in the community?<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Dupont-Sommer, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>55</sup> There are numerous references to seventy languages, and the most convenient source of reference is Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, tr. H. Szold (Philadelphia, 1964). Vol. 1, 62: Adam invented seventy languages; vol. 2, 68-69: Gabriel taught

To sum up, one may say that the members of Qumran strove to purify themselves in order to receive the Spirit of God and thereby to cultivate spiritual sight, hearing, and understanding; their tongue then spoke of the wisdom of God and the Torah and sung the praise of God; evil men blasphemed and were spiritually blind and deaf. Yet, although wise speech, prophecy, and interpreting the Torah are attributed to "divine inspiration," one may see a preparation for, but not the actual possession of, the gift of tongues. Yet this is not to deny the existence of esoteric or mystical traditions at Qumran or among the Essenes and Pharisees of the first century A.D. (I shall discuss this more fully in my introduction to the Anchor Bible Commentary on the Apocalypse of John.)

The theme of spiritual blindness and deafness runs through the four Gospels and is also present in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>56</sup> However, with the resurrection of Christ the eyes of the disciples and their followers were opened, so that they understood the Scriptures and the events of salvation history (cf. Lk 24:31). After the coming of the Holy Spirit they were re-created and entered a different spiritual dimension, so that they adopted a role similar to the Teacher of Righteousness, declaring the wonders of God and His praise and by bold teaching through the Holy Spirit bringing people into the Christian community. It is against this background that one may place the gift of tongues: it is one more spiritual "sense" which has been revived. Seen in this light, the gift of tongues might be the restoration or re-creation of the organ necessary for giving vocal praise to God and communicating divine inspiration to others (cf. the *utterance* of wisdom and *utterance* of knowledge in 1 Cor 12:8). A new language is given as proof of divine intervention. Pentecost recapitulates Genesis and Sir 17. Indeed, in the Johannine Pentecost, where Jesus breathes on His disciples saying "Receive the Holy Spirit," the author uses the same word (*emphysan*) as Gn 2:7 (*LXX*),<sup>57</sup> and Jn 3:1-15 may have the same creation nar-

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Joseph seventy languages so that he might be viceroy of Egypt; 214: Michael and the angels taught the sons of Noah seventy different languages; vol. 3, 360: Mordecai, "being a member of the great Sanhedrin, understood all the seventy languages spoken in the world" and the language of deaf-mutes.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Mk 4:11 ff.; the healing of the blind man in Jn 9 and Acts 28:25 ff.

<sup>57</sup> The only other texts which use this word are 1 K 17:21 (Elijah raises the dead child); two questionable texts in Tobit (7:8 and 11:11 A.B. *al*); Jb 4:21; Wis 15:11: "because he failed to know the one who formed him and inspired him with an active soul and *breathed* into him a living spirit"; Sir 43:4: "but the sun burns the mountains three times as much; it *breathes* out fiery vapors"; Na 2:2, of the opponent breathing against Israel; Ez 21:31: "I will *blow* upon you with the fire of my wrath"; 22:20: "As men gather silver and bronze . . . into a furnace, to *blow* the fire upon it in order to melt it";

rative in view. The gift of tongues could be regarded as a concrete sign, by the giving of an unlearned language, that thus the function of speech is re-created, a symbol of divine inspiration given again to man. F. C. Synge speaks of Luke's interest in speeches and the fact that "the sign of the spirit which he most frequently records in Acts is in some way connected with speech. Twenty-three times in Acts and five times in the Gospels [*sic*] he uses *pneuma hagion* in connection with speech."<sup>58</sup> The gift of new speech, then, may be regarded as one of the basic charismatic gifts. "Tongues" is the least gift but it may be "expanded" into others, such as poetry and music and prophecy.

In addition to the Scrolls, other nonbiblical traditions attribute not only speech but also poetry and music to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit (*Ruah Hakodesh*) was "God's representative," "the Greek Logos,"<sup>59</sup> and the effects of the possession of the *Ruah Hakodesh* are that some recipients "become prophets, others sages, still other poets and musicians. . . ." <sup>60</sup> One reads in *Sukk.* 5, 4 that the water libation of the Feast of Tabernacles brought jubilation to the pious men and was the occasion of the outpouring of songs, dancing, and other manifestations of rejoicing<sup>61</sup> (cf. the songs which Luke places in the mouths of his "saints" and the number of times jubilation is associated with the Spirit, e.g., Mt 11:15-30). Artistic work was also inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. Ex 31:3; 35:31).

The greatest gift of the Holy Spirit, however, was prophecy (cf. 1 Cor 14:1). Prophecy is not necessarily prediction but rather a speaking forth a word or message from God. Parzen states: "examination of the texts in which the *Ruah Hakodesh* is defined as prophecy, we believe, will show that by prophecy is understood the power to foretell events, the ability to foresee occurrences as well as the faculty to know what is in another person's mind."<sup>62</sup> According to some Jewish traditions

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Ez 37:9: "breathe upon these slain, that they may live." These references suggest a strong or vehement breathing which will result in "resurrection" or "destruction"; the association with fire is interesting.

<sup>58</sup> F. C. Synge, "The Holy Spirit in the Gospels and Acts," *Church Quarterly Review*, July, 1935, pp. 205-17, at 209.

<sup>59</sup> Parzen, *art. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also *Jer Sukk.* 5, 55a; *Sukk.* 50-51, with reference to Is 12:3—though the Holy Spirit is not explicitly mentioned.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Parzen, *art. cit.*, pp. 51-56; he discusses the conditions for the experience of the *Ruah Hakodesh*. He summarizes this section of his article as follows: "The *Ruah Hakodesh* is experienced only by saintly, godly men in a holy, virtuous environment, preferably Palestine. The Biblical centuries supply the necessary favorable background because of Israel's perfection. With the decrease of Israel's perfection, the *Ruah Hakodesh* diminished its activity. The climax was reached at the end of the Biblical era, with the

every good and wise man has the gift of prophecy,<sup>63</sup> but according to the Talmud only the physically strong, mentally wise, and rich have the gift (*Shab.* 92a, *Ned.* 38a), which also depended upon the worthiness of the generation: if the generation were not worthy, the Holy Spirit could not come.<sup>64</sup> However, in the future all men and women will be under divine inspiration (cf. *Jl* 2:28; 3:1 f.; *Is* 44:3; 59:19-21).

So the gift of speech inspired by God is the organ of much "spiritual cultural activity"; it is something which makes the spiritual man, as it were, a "well-rounded" person. The use of the gift of tongues realizes many of these activities, as we shall see below, but often when it is used one is able to experience the presence of God and occasionally to experience the use of other spiritual senses. Why should it be instrumental in this kind of thing?

The gift of tongues is essentially a gift of prayer, especially of praise and love. Usually the mind is not active but the prayer is one of simple, loving regard—often accompanied by the experience of God's presence. To see why the gift of tongues may be productive of "touches of infused contemplation"<sup>65</sup> and contribute to the building up of spiritual characteristics, one may measure the constructive power of love in the gift of tongues against the destructive, demolishing power of the tongue. The "uncircumcised" tongue or perverse tongue is the source of great danger not only to the individual but also to the community. This is well illustrated in *Jas* 3:1-12:

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness. For we all make many mistakes, and if anyone makes no mistakes in what he says he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Look at the ships also: though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

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death of the last three prophets, when the *Ruah Hakodesh* completely ceased to function." We should, however, be obliged to modify significantly this last statement in view of the findings at Qumran. However, the condition of ritual purity makes one acutely aware of the difficulty experienced by St. Peter and others in realizing that the Holy Spirit could indeed fall upon uncircumcised Gentiles.

<sup>63</sup> See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Inspiration."

<sup>64</sup> *Sanh.* 11a; *Ber.* 57a; *Sukk.* 28a; *B.B.* 134a.

<sup>65</sup> When God gives an experimental intellectual knowledge of His presence rather than our mere thinking of or recalling His presence, then we may say that there is a touch of infused contemplation or incipient contemplation. See Poulain, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-87; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, tr. M. Timothea Doyle, (London, 1951) pp. 279-349.

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by humankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brethren, this ought not to be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

This fact is also referred to in the Gospel, where Jesus speaks of the heart as the source of “uncleanness” (Mk 7:21). If one reflects upon it, one sees that the tongue is the instrument of realizing many sins: falsehood, slander, uncharity, anger, flattery, pride, quarreling, unchastity, blasphemy and sacrilege, etc. It has a disruptive effect on the individual and on the community. As Prv 18:21 says, “death and life are in the power of the tongue,” but contrariwise Prv 15:4 states that the “wholesome tongue is a tree of life” and Prv 12:18 that “the tongue of the wise is health.” Prv 10:20 further declares that the tongue of the just is a choice silver. These are no mere metaphorical statements; for the tongue is the instrument of righteousness (Ps 35:28) and for teaching wisdom (Ps 37:30), expressing kindness (Prv 31:26), proclaiming justice, establishing peace and pardon—in short, for building up the community and indirectly building up the individual, since goodness expressed by the tongue is goodness expressive of the whole personality. One knows the demoralizing effect of the wrong use of the tongue, and contrariwise the moral impetus in the right use; how much more, then, a use divinely inspired?

This type of thought may be in St. Paul’s mind when he says that “tongues” edify or build up the individual (1 Cor 14:4). Indeed, “tongues” are a very useful gift. They can be used when one feels inadequate to praise God in one’s own language, can be used to restore joy, peace, and love of soul and to kindle one’s desire to serve God and neighbor. They are also a useful weapon against sin, e.g., anger, and against the influence of “evil spirits,” even those troubling other people, not the speaker. “Tongues” are often accompanied by the sudden realization of some spiritual truth, especially if the one who prays allows silence to intervene at intervals during the prayer; sometimes these thoughts are “interpretation.” Further, they appear to be especially efficacious in intercessory prayer. The spiritual tongue, therefore, does “build up.” However, the recipient has a responsibility to use this gift in these ways. Initially, exaltation is experienced in the

use of the "tongues"; later it is not necessarily so. If one perseveres in faith, however, good does result and this is very helpful in aridity in prayer.<sup>66</sup>

Further, in the employment of "tongues" one often enters into the realm of poetry and music. Singing in "tongues," especially in chorus, is very beautiful and peace-provoking. Even those who are unable to sing in tune in the natural way or to compose poetry or music often can do so with the gift; interpretations are sometimes given in verse. Some Spirit-inspired songs have been written and printed.

St. Paul says clearly that one should pray for interpretation (1 Cor 14:13-19). This is important, because it would seem spiritually immature to continue to speak without understanding, and it may well be that the first exuberance of tongues is removed so that one conceives the desire for interpretation. Interpretation of one's private tongue can be instructive, e.g., in encouraging one to accept suffering or accomplish charity. Interpretation is close to prophecy. To receive interpretation privately is like receiving an exhortative prophecy.<sup>67</sup>

Thus we may say that for the individual the gift of tongues can be the gateway towards another spiritual dimension.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY

The community aspect of the gift of tongues is seen in Acts and in 1 Corinthians. It is clear that Luke intended the account of the first Christian Pentecost in Acts to appear as the reversal of the Tower of Babel (Gn 2). This "parable" relates that God created diversity of languages (according to the Targum, seventy in number) to divide mankind and prevent the world from becoming man-made instead of God-made. At Pentecost the gift of tongues is given to restore international unity. Davies has shown the verbal similarity between the LXX account and Pentecost.<sup>68</sup> He writes as follows:

God said, "Go to, let us go down, and there confound (*sugcheōmen*) their language (*glōssan*), that they may not understand one another's speech (*phōnēn*)." Representatives of every nation under heaven, according to the account in Acts, were at Jerusalem when the disciples "began to speak with other tongues (*glōssais*) as the Spirit gave them utterance," whereupon "when this

<sup>66</sup> Incidentally, deaf-and-dumb people have received both the gift of tongues and interpretation. Naturally, the "interpretation" must be transmitted to the rest of the congregation in deaf-and-dumb language.

<sup>67</sup> I have not heard a prophecy giving a specific prediction. If one did occur, the utmost prudence, prayer, and counsel should be used before acting on it.

<sup>68</sup> J. D. Davies, "Pentecost and Glossolalia," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 3 (1952) 228-31.

sound (*phōnēs*) was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded (*synechythē*)." The parallel use of words in the two passages is obvious, but at the same time there is a contrast between the two. . . . This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who reverses the previous disruption in the unity of creation, "when the Most High parted the nations asunder (*diemerizen*) by Himself manifesting His coming to the Church under the form of tongues of fire 'parting asunder' (*diamerizomenai*)."<sup>69</sup> Men were scattered (*diespeiren*) from Babel and later the Christians were scattered (*diesparēsan*) from Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup>

Further, M. D. Goulder has demonstrated that the tribes in Gn 10 are parallel to the list of peoples in Acts 2:8–11.<sup>71</sup> These two articles, as well as others, indicate that "tongues" symbolize international unity.

However, "tongues" also indicate "international revelation." This is suggested by the correspondence between the Lucan Pentecost and the traditions about the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. There was a popular tradition that all nature stood still while the Law was proclaimed<sup>72</sup> and that the divine voice divided itself into the seventy languages of the world so that all might understand it. The pertinent references are found in Ginzberg.<sup>73</sup> He reports that in all these sources<sup>74</sup> "the seven voices' (i.e. sounds or tunes) which were heard on Sinai are referred to, whereas in *Berakot* 6b and *BHM* v. 33 mention is made of only five voices, and in *BHM* vi. 41 . . . the number is still further reduced to four. The seven sounds of the trumpet at the resurrection referred to in *BHM* vi. 58 are modelled after the seven sounds on Sinai. The seventy tongues stand for all the languages of the world. . . ."

Philo says that the Law was produced with flames and did not grow less distinct because of distance as a human voice would:

But the new miraculous voice was set in action, and kept in flame by the power of God which breathed upon it and spread it abroad on every side and made it

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228–29.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>71</sup> M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London, 1964) pp. 152–58. Cf. p. 157: "the peoples of pentecost are a one-for-one translation of the grandsons of Noah. What we have done is to show that the world of Acts ii is the world of Gen. x, and that it is probable that St. Luke selected and ordered the names of the pentecostal peoples in the way that we have suggested."

<sup>72</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* 3, 97.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 4, 39; *ShR* 5, 9 and 28: 6; *Shabb.* 88b; *Tehillim* 68, 317 and 92: 403; *Tan. B.* 2, 13–14; *Tan. Shemot* 25; *Midr. Shir* 2b; *BHM* 39 and 45; *Yelammedenu in Yalkut* 2, 709 and 843, on Ps 19 and 92 respectively. I have been unable to check all these references. The idea does not seem to appear in the targums.

<sup>74</sup> The references from *Midrash Rabbah* and *Talmud* are probably the earliest; however, one must always allow for this tradition being post-Christian. Cf. also Goulder, *op. cit.*, p. 152.



more illuminating in its ending than in its beginning by creating in the souls of each and all another kind of hearing far superior to the hearing of the ears. For that is but a sluggish sense, inactive until aroused by the impact of the air, but the hearing of the mind possessed by God makes the first advance and goes out to meet the spoken words with keenest rapidity.<sup>75</sup>

In *Spec. leg.* 2, 189 he refers again to the fact that the voice reached the extremities of the earth, and speaks about the general laws which came from the mouth of God, "not like the particular laws, through an interpreter. This is significance peculiar to the nation. What follows is *common to all mankind*" (italics mine).

Whatever the correct tradition is, the symbolism is evident; the idea which the Jewish teachers wished to convey was that the Law or revelation from Sinai was universal; however, only Israel accepted it, the other nations rejected it.<sup>76</sup> There is also a certain historical or linear continuity, for it was believed that every prophet and prophetess or wise man or woman derived their authority from Sinai:

... AND GOD SPOKE ALL THESE WORDS. ... The prophets received from Sinai the messages they were to prophesy to subsequent generations. ... Not only did all the prophets receive their prophecy from Sinai, but also each of the Sages that arose in every generation received his [wisdom] from Sinai. ... (*Exodus Rabbah* 28, 6; one may compare JI 2:28-29 and Acts 2:16-21)

What is suggested both at Sinai and at Pentecost is not so much the overcoming of a communication barrier as a prophetic *ōth* (dynamic symbol) predicting or producing international unity. When speech is not understood, there is disunity; when speech is understood, communication and action are possible, and after this one Torah could be the essence of unity or, in the New Testament, the preaching of Christ and baptism was the foundation of unity (Gal 3:23-29).

Moreover, we are not certain whether "tongues" were used for preaching; rather, we might incline towards those who confine "tongues" to the praises uttered by the apostles and which were a "sign" to "unbelievers" rather than a medium of communication. Yet this does not mean that "tongues" in Acts are in a different dimension from 1 Corinthians. The linking concept is *apistos*. I have argued elsewhere<sup>77</sup> that *apistos* does not necessarily mean "unbeliever," *pace* Sweet<sup>78</sup>; it refers to one who is weak in faith or who is nonkosher. The same mean-

<sup>75</sup> Philo, *De decal.* 33, 35; translation from Loeb edition of the text.

<sup>76</sup> Ginzberg, *op. cit.* 3, 80-82 etc.

<sup>77</sup> "Hast Thou Tithed Thy Meal" and "Is Thy Child Kosher?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 17 (1966) 72-79.

<sup>78</sup> Sweet, *art. cit.*, p. 241.

ing might be apposite to 1 Cor 14:22; to those who are lacking in full faith in Jesus, probably Jews or proselytes, tongues are a sign as they were in Acts and in Is 28:11-12.<sup>79</sup> It is a sign that the fullness of the Jewish-Christian faith is for them (either Jews or those formerly non-kosher). It is not otherwise in the Cornelian Pentecost (Acts 10) or the Samaritan Pentecost (Acts 8).<sup>80</sup> There again tongues are a prophetic sign that the Holy Spirit finds no distinction between Jew, half-bred Jew, or Gentile. In these cases, however, the sign is efficacious to Peter and the apostles as well as to the recipients of the gift.<sup>81</sup>

I have used the term "prophetic sign" because I see no sharp distinction between tongues and prophecy. The biblical data and our existential experience teach us that prophecy is often given in tongues. The value or edification of "tongue-prophecy" lies in the interpretation given either by the speaker or by a second party (one or more persons) or the simple fact that a hearer might know the language in a human way.<sup>82</sup>

However, there is a further aspect to the prophetic sign. When two people or more are involved in the sign, that is, a prophet and interpreter, this would seem to signify the interrelationship between the different parts of Christ's Body. In a prayer meeting or the liturgy there is an act of "community contemplation." The congregation is dependent on the dual action for the hearing of the message, for no one save Christ is sufficient for himself or herself.

When everyone plays his or her part, one with spontaneous prayer, another with a reading, a tongue, prophecy, image, testimony, the Holy Spirit seems to work a kind of mosaic or tapestry until the whole picture or theme is built up for the edification and encouragement of the whole community . . . this interdependence makes one realize community in the deepest sense of the word, but

<sup>79</sup> From contemporary "oral tradition" I have gleaned a story illustrative of 1 Cor 14: 24-25. A woman spoke in tongues to a pagan; she did not receive the interpretation herself, but the pagan knew the language and realized that she was speaking about certain sins or impediments which kept him from the Christian faith. On another occasion a member of the audience at a Pentecostal rally asked God to give him a sign that these experiences were genuine. Not long afterwards a woman spoke in a rather rare Italian-German dialect known to him and his father; this set the seal on his conviction.

<sup>80</sup> Tongues are not recorded here, but there must have been some external sign because of the reaction of Simon Magus.

<sup>81</sup> Acts 19:1-7 might fall into the same category. Here the sign may have been needed to fulfil the faith of those who did not yet believe beyond what John the Baptist taught.

<sup>82</sup> E.g., the Catholic Hail Mary has been recognized. A Catholic was "detected" praying it in Greek by two different hearers on separate occasions, and once a group of people heard a non-Catholic pray this prayer in Latin—the translation was unknown to himself.

it is also a safeguard. The community . . . has the duty to judge the authenticity of the parts played by several members, to keep charity and to see that there are no excesses.<sup>83</sup>

It is not without great significance that Paul's teaching about the Church as the Body of Christ occurs in this section of 1 Corinthians. So "tongues" continue their prophetic symbolism on the existential level.

I should, therefore, summarize this section by saying that in Acts and 1 Corinthians "tongues" are a prophetic sign with the dynamism to re-create faith, either (1) to bring the Jew to the realization of the fulfilment of Sinai, or (2) as a sign that the *apistos* is entitled to the plenitude of Jewish-Christianity; (3) as a sign to apostles etc. that the latter may be received into full membership of the Church; (4) as a general dynamic sign to build up the faith of the individual or the community; (5) as a sign of international unity, a sign that Babel wrought by God has been reversed by God.

We may add one further point on which I propose to enlarge in a second article.<sup>84</sup> In biblical times "tongues" were a sign of international unity and a sign of the extension of the Christian message to all peoples. Today it may be the same profound and dynamic prophetic symbol—a prophetic *ōth* of interdenominational unity. It may be a sign to Christian denominations that they have much to give to and receive from each other, but also much in common. It is not without significance that the charismatic renewal began shortly after Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, the non-Roman Catholic prayers for unity, and then Vatican Council II, which was preceded by the earnest prayer of the Church for a New Pentecost.

<sup>83</sup> I have written simply but more at length on this point in *The Pentecost Experience* (New York, 1970).

<sup>84</sup> I hope to follow this essay with another examining the Jewish and early Christian traditions about Pentecost and the application of this to the contemporary situation. Pertinent material from early Jewish material is also found in my *The Spirit and the Human Person* (Dayton, 1969).