

Outburst of Tongues

FRANK FARRELL

THE
NEW
PENETRATION

*Margaretta Mary Woodruff
Memorial Library*

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In ancient Corinth today, seven Doric columns look down upon the tumbled debris of a once great city. At Caesarea marble pillars lie desolate on the shore of a formerly magnificent harbour, waves gently washing the marks of the erosive eons. Above the ghostly streets of Ephesus soar the skeletal remains of a tremendous theatre. Seats and stage are empty. No Greek drama disturbs the silence. Rather, the silence is the drama. Not far away the base of a column protrudes above swamp water just enough to whisper the transient glory of Diana of the Ephesians and her mighty temple.

The three cities slumber on in the deep, dreamless sleep of the ages, sharing a common silence which is broken only the the sounds of nature. The tongues of men have been stilled. But the cities share something else, which centuries after their death is causing men to look to them once more. In striking contrast to their noiseless present, each of them, with Jerusalem, holds a common memory of that strange and lively phenomenon of the early Church - the practice of speaking in tongues other than those commonly heard in their streets. And today Bible scholars, theologians, ministers, and laymen are scrutinizing the New Testament passages dealing with these occurrences. Not many months ago these same people showed relatively little interest in the subject despite a half-century of aggressive promotion on the part of the Pentecostal movement. For the movement was outside the historic, mainline denominations. Now it is within, and clergy and laity have been driven to a probing of the Scriptures and church history for answers to questions and explanations of phenomena pressed hard upon them by fellow ministers and parishioners. And assessments are about as varied as the phenomena.

Ecumenical leaders have shown increasing interest in the Pentecostal movement, known as the fastest growing segment of Protestantism in the Western Hemisphere, where approximately one of every three Latin American Protestants is Pentecostal. While many of these churchmen have favoured courting Pentecostal churches on behalf of ecumenism, they had never dreamed of the possibility of considerable numbers within their own denominations incorporating Pentecostalist experience and doctrine. They are reacting quite gingerly to this - the new penetration.

Nearly all the major denominations have been affected by what is called the charismatic revival, Episcopalians and Lutherans preeminently so. Greatest strength of the new penetration is in Southern California, but in past months reports of developments have come in from across the nation.

Two ends of the ecclesiastical-cultural spectrum come together in Springfield, Missouri, as officials of the Protestant Episcopal Church and the Assemblies of God (largest of the Pentecostal bodies) converse on the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church today; some 2,000 Episcopalians are said to be speaking in tongues in Southern California (these Episcopal developments calculated to give fits to Vance Packard's status-seekers); also speaking in tongues are upwards of 600 folk at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, world's largest Presbyterian Church; James A. Pike, Episcopal Bishop of California, confronts the practice in the Bay Area to the accompaniment of front-page headlines in San Francisco newspapers; a journal relates that in the entire state of Montana only one American Lutheran pastor has not received the experience of speaking in tongues; Dr. Francis E. Whiting, director of the Department of Evangelism and Spiritual Life of the Michigan Baptist Convention (American Baptist) speaks in support of present charismatic works of the Spirit at a Northern Baptist Seminary evangelism conference, declaring the choice is Pentecost or holocaust; a Minneapolis Evangelical Free Church splits over the issue; a United Presbyterian minister who wishes to ask youth to repent and receive the Holy Spirit at the First North American Reformed and Presbyterian Youth Assembly is stopped by a church officer before he reaches the Purdue University stage and is escorted out by a campus policeman; members of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at Yale speak in tongues, as does also a Roman Catholic student, a daily communicant at St. Thomas More chapel; and echoes of penetration come from evangelical institutions and organizations such as Fuller Seminary, Wheaton College, Westmont College, Navigators, and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

In the midst of all this, the question is increasingly heard; Do we confront a new Pentecost or a new Babel? Most common response is: Neither one.

On the day of Pentecost when the assembled disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, they "began to speak with other tongues ("Lalein heterais glossais" -cf. the term "glossolalia"), as the Spirit gave them utterance." Jews of the Dispersion who were then gathered in Jerusalem were amazed to hear God's praises in the languages and dialects of their own lands (Acts 2:1-12).

In Caesarea, tongues accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first Gentile converts (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15) (and was perhaps one of the external manifestations of the receiving of the Spirit by the earliest Samaritan believers (Acts 8:17, 18).

In Ephesus, the phenomenon appeared again among a group of disciples who had apparently not heard of Pentecost (Acts 19:6).

Protestants often interpret this visible evidence of the giving of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost as an endorsement of the reception of new classes of believers into the distinctly cautious young Jewish-Christian church. Most commentators, though not all, believe that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were foreign languages. And many believe this to be so in the other references in Acts because of parallels in terminology.

But when it comes to the Pauline treatment of the subject in relation to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 12:14), the weight of biblical scholarship favours identification of tongues not as foreign languages but rather as ecstatic ("glossolalics" themselves differ as to the propriety of this word) and unintelligible utterances: "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful... Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (14:14,19). Thus for instruction, tongues were valueless apart from interpretation (v.13) - an added gift which was not required at Pentecost. In Acts the phenomenon appeared to be an irresistible, initial experience which was temporary, while at Corinth its nature was that of a continuing gift which was controlled by the recipients, not all Corinthian Christians possessing it (14:27,28; 12:10,30).

Paul spoke in tongues himself and valued the practice as a gift of the Spirit, primarily for worship but also for a sign to unbelievers and, when interpreted, for edification of believers (14:5,18,2,14-17,28,22).

But commentators have generally concluded that the total effect of Paul's instructions in chapters 12 through 14 is to play down the relative importance of this gift, despite vital appeals to this passage of Scripture by Pentecostals. For the Corinthian church was in trouble - spiritually, theologically, and morally. Its very setting was a serious handicap, for the name of Corinth had become synonymous with vice. A wealthy commercial centre, its pleasures and high cost of living were famed across the Mediterranean and beyond. The summit of Acro-Corinth behind the city bore a temple of Aphrodite served by a thousand priestesses. To describe an evil life, the ancients coined a new word: "Corinthianize."

The church at Corinth had not risen heroically to the challenge of its environment, nor had it fully withstood the pervasive temptations.

And though rich in gifts (1:5-7), the saints there had indulged themselves in the more spectacular of these, notably tongues. Their excesses perhaps echoed a pagan background wherein Greek oracles made ecstatic utterances with consciousness of priest or priestess in complete abeyance and subsequent explanation being needed. A gift of the Spirit could thus be abused by the immature Christians of Corinth to serve as a vehicle for their divisiveness, pride, and self-glorification, the result being confused scenes of profit neither to believer nor unbeliever.

So the great Apostle to the Gentiles lays down guide-lines for use of the gift that "all things be done decently and in order" (14:40): Not more than three are to speak in tongues at a single service; they are to speak not simultaneously but in turn; in the absence of an interpreter, they are to remain silent; women are not to speak tongues in the church (14:26-36).

Paul's deemphasizing procedure does not stop there, for he compares the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy to the disadvantage of the former (14:1-6). He seems to strike at Corinthian axiology as twice he puts tongues last in his listings of the charismata, the "grace-gifts" (12:4-10, 27-30; in a similar listing in Romans 12:6-8, he omits tongues completely). And soaring above all the gift of the Spirit is agape, celebrated by Paul in his great hymn to love which is First Corinthians 13 - introduced by the words: "... covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way..." He speaks of the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22,23 - love is first named), which has precedence over the gifts of the Spirit. Love remains even when the gifts pass away (13:8).

DURATION OF THE GIFTS

The question being echoed and re-echoed today, as in every period of glossolalic manifestations, is: How long do the gifts remain? Answers vary greatly, and explanations of the same answer also vary. Perhaps the most common view relates the gifts of the Spirit to the founding of the New Testament Church, their cessation during the fourth century taking place after it was well established under the authority of completed New Testament cannon. Presbyterian theologian B. B. Warfield believed the charismata to be given for authentication of the apostles as God's messengers, a sign of apostleship being possession of the gifts and the ability to transmit them. Gradual cessation of gifts thus came with the death of those who had received the gifts through the

apostles (see his *Miracles : Yesterday and Today*). For W.H. Griffith Thomas, the charismata constituted a testimony to Israel of Jesus' Messiahship and thus ceased at the end of Acts with the Jewish rejection of the Gospel (*The Holy Spirit of God*, 1913, pp. 48,49).

Other scholars respond that these theories fly in the face of history. But then to darken matters further, commentators duly remind us that the degree of similarity between the New Testament phenomenon of glossolalia and later manifestations (e.g., current ones) is uncertain. New Testament scholar Leon Morris points to the obscurity of the present-day understanding of the exact nature of some of the gifts, such as "helps" and "governments" (1 Corinthians 12:28): "We may make... conjectures.... But when we boil it all down, we know nothing about these gifts or their possessors. They have vanished without leaving visible trace." On tongues he says: "Despite the confident claims of some, we cannot be certain of exactly what form the gift took in New Testament days. We cannot feel that the Spirit of God would have allowed this state of affairs to develop and to continue if the gift were so important" (*Spirit of the Living God*, 1960, pp.63,65,66). Even as early as the fourth century, Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) expressed puzzlement at Paul's account of the Corinthian situation: "The whole passage is exceedingly obscure and the obscurity is occasioned by our ignorance of the facts and the cessation of happenings which were common in those days but unexampled in our own."

Any tracing of tongues phenomena through church history faces the hazard of the common lack of clear-cut distinctions between tongues and prophecy, and between use of foreign languages and ecstatic utterances. Before the apparent cessation which Chrysostom mentions, Irenaeus in the second century makes reference to some who speak "in all kinds of languages," and there is evidence of glossolalia among Montanists in the same period, when the practice was attacked by Celsus. This Platonist wrote of Christians who spoke gibberish and claimed to be God. In the third century, Origen associates the phenomenon with the Gnostics.

Some occurrences are reported in the Middle Ages, but to G.B. Cutten the surprising thing in "this age of wonders" was their infrequency (*Speaking with Tongues, Historically and Psychologically Considered*, 1927, p.37). It is recorded that Francis Xavier and others possessed the gift of languages, used in missionary labors.

In the modern era, prophecy and languages are claimed for persecuted French Huguenots called the Little Prophets of Cevennes - very

young children sharing the gifts. There were also outcroppings among Jansenists and Shakers. Mother Ann Lee, founder of the latter sect, which regarded her as the "female principle in Christ" with Jesus being the "Male principle," is said to have testified in seventy-two different languages before Anglican clergymen who were also noted linguists. Certain emotional phenomena among early Methodists and Quakers have been linked to glossolalia. In contrast to the twentieth century, with its fast-expanding Pentecostal movement, the nineteenth century was relatively quiescent, presenting only the Irvingites and the Mormons, the latter tending to discourage tongues because of ridicule thus provoked.

The trial of glossolalia through church history is slender and broken. It is generally absent from the mainstream churches, but rather tends to be found in enthusiastic sects particularly in times of persecution. An apocalyptic aura is often present, and the trial leads frequently to heretical byways.

Glossolalia is not to be thought confined to Christian groups and offshoots. This emphasizes the fact that the practice is not self-authenticating. It occupied an important place in ancient Greek religion. Plato discourses on the phenomenon. Many Asian and African cultures afford examples of the practice.

ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF PENTECOSTALISM

The modern Pentecostal movement is often traced from an eruption of tongues in a mission on Los Angeles' Azusa Street in 1906, though Pentecostals also point to origins in revivals of the late nineteenth century. Due to common emotional excesses, Pentecostals were frequently made unwelcome by the old-line denominations and formed their own groupings which often fragmented. Their virility, in recent years particularly, has aroused the wonder of the church world, and they form the largest segment of what has become known as the "Third Force in Christendom." Apart from Pentecostalism's largest group, the Assemblies, the movement encompasses such bodies as the numerous independent Churches of God, and the International Church of the Four-square Gospel - founded by Aimee Semple McPherson. (There are well over a hundred sects in America which practice glossolalia, not all Pentecostal, e.g. Father Divine's **Peace Missions**.)

Common to all Pentecostals in the one basic belief that "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" is an experience subsequent to conversion - all

believers should have it, and the initial physical evidence of this baptism or infilling is the speaking of tongues. For proof, one is pointed back to Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Ephesus. Tongues as initial evidence is distinguished from the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10), which was not granted to all.

Exponents of classical Protestantism counter that: (1) The few historical accounts of tongues in Acts, in comparison with the other Scriptures, provide a flimsy foundation indeed upon which to erect a doctrine of the Christian life; no directives for normative Christian experience are contained in these passages (2) Not all references in Acts to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit speak of an accompaniment of tongues. (One could as well argue from the accounts the necessity of laying on of hands of an apostle, as recorded in Acts 8:17 and 19:6). (3) Pentecostal use of the terms "infilling" and "baptism" of the Spirit in connection with tongues is unsupported by the texts cited. Only one of nine references to the terms "filled with" or "full of the Holy Spirit" in Acts (not to mention four references in Luke's Gospel) is directly connected by Luke with the expression "speaking with (other) tongues." This referred to Pentecost, where the tongues were apparently foreign languages. Key passage for baptism of the Spirit is First Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." All Christians are thus by definition baptized into the body of Christ, being thus constituted members of the body regardless of race or social status. Unlike the filling of the Spirit (Acts 4:31), there is no second baptism. (4) There are indications that tongues are associated with spiritual immaturity (see 1 Corinthians 13:11; 14:20). Those recorded as speaking in tongues were recent converts. Paul possessed the gift in great measure but stated his preference for intelligible words (14:18,19), and there is no record of a specific instance when he used the gift. (5) New Testament tests of the Spirit's presence are the glorification of Christ (12:3) and the ethical fruit of the Spirit, preeminently love. (6) Dearth of Pentecostal biblical scholarship highlights an overshadowing of exposition by experience.

Traditional Pentecostal fears regarding higher education are slowly waning in some quarters. For example, evangelist Oral Roberts has announced the opening in 1965 of the Oral Roberts University, a \$50 million liberal arts institution in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for 3,000 students. Some observers cite the difficulty of getting enough Pentecostal scholars with earned doctorates, especially since the Assemblies are divided in

their views on Roberts.

Of significance to current discussion of Pentecostalism is the presence in the United States of a single copy of an M.D. dissertation, *Glossolalia*, by L.M. Van Eetveldt Vivier from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. Temporarily in possession of New York's Union Seminary, the sympathetic treatment contains results of a number of psychological tests taken by a test group of Pentecostals who had spoken in tongues. Two control groups of similar educational and vocational standing took the tests as well. One was comprised of Pentecostals who had not spoken in tongues, and the other of Reformed Church members whose pastor believed tongues had ended with apostolic times. Psychologically the latter group ranked highest, followed by the Pentecostals who had not spoken in tongues. The glossolalics were discovered to have had, psychologically, a poor beginning in life characterized by insecurity, conflict, and tension, which led to a turning from the orthodox and traditional to "an environment of sensitivity for emotional feeling and a group of people clinging to each other for support" toward the goal of being freed from themselves.

But what of the new Pentecostals who remain within their main-line denominations and purpose to make these Pentecostal in experience? They are generally recognized as standing on a much higher plane intellectually and culturally than the old Pentecostals. Spearheading the new penetration is The Blessed Trinity Society, whose leaders travel indefatigably to spread the message of charismatic revival. Chairman of the Board is Dutch Reformed minister Harald Bredeken of Mt. Vernon, New York, who testifies to a transformation through a Pentecostal camp meeting. He has spoken in tongues over California television and claims to have witnessed to foreigners in their own languages, unknown to him (such as Polish and Coptic Egyptian). But he believes most of the current glossolalia is unknown languages. A group of government linguistic experts sought to analyze for Christianity Today a tape of his glossolalia but found it unrecognizable, though one said it sounded like a language structurally. A Christian expert states that it is usually impossible to identify a given utterance as a language in as much as there are 3,000 languages, many of them unknown.

A director of the Blessed Trinity Society is David J. du Plessis, Pentecostalist from South Africa who believes he has a call to take the message to ecumenical leaders. In his opinion, the "Pentecostal revival" within the ecumenical movement may become greater than that outside it. His ecumenical activities have led to a serving of his ministerial

relationship with the Assemblies, by the latter.

Personable Jean Stone, wife of a Lockheed Aircraft executive, is a broad member and the editor of the society's attractive, Episcopal-tinted quarterly, *Trinity* (paid circulation: 4,000; printed order: 25,000, many of which go to churches by the hundred), published in Van Nuys, California. Episcopalian Stone contrasts the new penetration with the old Pentecostal movement as follows: less emotion in receiving the gift of tongues after which they are spoken at will - their private use more important than public, more oriented to clergy and professional classes, more Bible-centred as against experience, not separatist, more orderly meetings with strict adherence to Pauline directives, less emphasis on tongues.

The new penetration as a definitive movement is usually traced to Sunday, April 3, 1960, when the Rev. Dennis J. Bennett, rector of St. Mark's Episcopal, Van Nuys, told his congregation of his Pentecostal experience which had its roots in the October previous. He was asked to resign, did so, and the event gained national publicity which drew attention to beginnings of the penetration already under way.

But apart from tongues, leaders cite evidence to support their claim that all nine of the gifts of the Spirit listed in First Corinthians 12:8-10 are manifest in the movement, including miracles and healing. Episcopal leaders are divided in their response to the penetration, but the general mood is one of caution and forbearance, which is generally true of most other denominational leadership - there being little desire to force the new wave of Pentecostals from the churches as was done half a century ago. Yet they are somewhat fearful of divisiveness resulting from glossolalia.

Conservative Protestant reactions range from participation in the movement to warnings that tongues can be Satanic. Some tell of the love, joy, and peace found in meetings, and the increased zeal for Bible study and power in witnessing manifest in those who have "received" the manifestation of glossolalia. Accounts multiply of nominal Christians, casual churchgoers, being transformed into vital believers, many experiencing conversion. *Christian Life* magazine is actively promoting the charismatic revival.

Some approve of the tenor of the movement in certain places, Yale for example, but speak of excess in others, along with divisiveness and pride of possession. Criticism has been directed at the commonly used method to induce tongues in after-meetings: those wishing to receive

the fullness of the Spirit are told to offer their voices and make noises, during the laying on of hands. It is feared that the physical sign is unintentionally given priority over the infilling of the Spirit.

Critics point also to self-confessed spiritual immaturity of the majority of those heard from by way of testimony. Prior to their experience of tongues, many were formalistic Anglo-Catholics, church members in name only, or backslidden evangelicals lacking a warm devotional life. Echoes of Corinth?

There is also a confessed lack of theological leadership, and evangelicals have been disappointed to note a resultant drift to the Pentecostal doctrine that tongues are the outward manifestation of the Baptism of the Spirit. Possibly the majority in the movement now believe that non-glossolalics have yet to receive the baptism or fullness. When one reflects upon the work of such non-glossolalics as Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Carey, Judson, Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Edwards, Moody, Spurgeon, Torrey, Sunday, Graham, he would perhaps, if desiring to do a great work, ask the Lord to excuse him from the baptism of the Spirit - which is of course unthinkable save on Pentecostal terms.

Probably most evangelicals who are informed on the subject are sympathetically waiting to see the fruit of the new movement, not wishing to quench the Spirit, but sensing a need to try the spirits. They generally believe God is working in and through the movement but are questioning how close it may be to the biblical ideal. They are grateful for spiritual awakening.

And a salutary facet of the whole phenomenon is renewed and widespread study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit - if His ministry is properly fathomed, the issue is the exaltation of Jesus Christ, glorious fruition indeed.

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lundi

...par la mort il rendit impuissant celui qui
avait le pouvoir de la mort, c'est-à-dire le
diable.

Hébreux 2, 14.