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Tongues: An Evaluation from a Scientific Perspective

Klemet Preus

I took a test a while ago called “a spiritual gifts inventory.” The test was supposed to determine what spiritual gifts were possessed by those who took it. Happily, I passed, scoring quite high on one particular gift — discerning of spirits. The gift was defined by the inventory as the ability to tell truth from falsehood with relative ease. Excited over my newly discovered spiritual gift I boldly approached the administrator of the test and informed him of it.

“Congratulations,” was his predictable reply, “I’m sure that the body of Christ can use the gift of discernment.”

I then proceeded to explain to the instructor that the test was replete with false doctrine, based on heterodox assumptions and completely invalid as to its results. “Clearly,” I claimed, “you are faced with an insoluble dilemma. If I really do have the gift of discernment, then your test is invalid because I say so. If I do not have the gift, then your test is invalid because it is in error. I either have or do not have the gift. Therefore, your test is invalid.”

The administrator looked wryly at me and said, “My experience is that the test works perfectly well.”

I began to understand how Alice must have felt in the presence of the Queen of Hearts.

Similar frustration is incurred by questioning the supposed Biblical basis of tongues with practicing charismatics. Experience has told them what God’s Word has not. Present-day tongues are claimed to be the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Any critical look at them from an exegetical perspective is considered to be either the work of Satan, a sign of quenching the Spirit, or simply contrary to the experience of Christian people. Although such charges may have had some deterrent effects upon exegetes,¹ scientists have risked the charismatic epithets and have arrived at conclusions regarding tongues which from an experiential perspective, cast significant doubts on the supernatural nature of present-day tongues.

The Central Charismatic Teaching

The central teaching of Neo-Pentecostalism (the charismatic movement) is that subsequent to regeneration a second experience, the Baptism in the Spirit, is to occur in the life of the

Christian. According to almost all Pentecostals and Neo-Pentecostals, the necessary initial sign of the Baptism in the Spirit is speaking in tongues. Donald Gee, a leading Pentecostal theologian, says that "tongues regarded as an isolated phenomenon rather than as an initial evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit had not launched a worldwide revival."² David J. DePlessis, the Pentecostal most responsible for bringing Pentecostalism into the mainline denominations in the form of the charismatic movement, makes the same claim:

By way of simple illustration let us take a man that goes into a shoe store to buy a pair of shoes. He never mentions the tongues in the shoes, he knows they go with the shoes. Why not accept the baptism in the Spirit just like Jesus gave it on the day of Pentecost when they all spake with tongues as the Spirit gave utterance?³

Larry Christenson, the most prolific Lutheran spokesman for the charismatic movement, is equally committed to the doctrine:

Is speaking in tongues the only valid objective manifestation that a person has had this definite instantaneous experience of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit? Scripture does not say that it is the only one. But in showing us the pattern, Scripture gives us no consistent suggestion of any other.⁴

The legitimacy of the present-day phenomena of tongues is crucial to charismatic theology and to the movement itself.

The Charismatic Denial of Biblical Authority

The Pentecostal doctrine of tongues, however, is precisely the doctrine which the movement will not subject to the scrutiny of Scripture. In fact, in charismatic theology the Pentecostal experience of tongues has replaced the Scriptures as the norm of Christian doctrine. By so doing the movement has rejected the sole normative authority of the Bible.⁵

Charismatics demonstrate their preference for experience over Scripture in two ways. First, they have an inveterate tendency to reject, on experiential grounds, any exegetical conclusions which conflict with the experience of tongues. This tendency was demonstrated in the pages of *Christianity Today* a number of years ago. Carl Tuland wrote an article in which, on the basis of a study of the Greek texts, he came to the conclusion that the tongues in I Corinthians were unintelligible babbling.⁶ In the following weeks the editors of *Christianity Today* published letters from people who took issue with Tuland, not on the basis of the Biblical testimony, but because his conclusions differed

from their experience. One writer wondered if Dr. Tuland had ever been in love.⁷ Another suggested, "Don't knock it till you've tried it."⁸ A third remarked:

The author struggles valiantly with the text trying to answer other problems that come to his mind. On this he is to be commended. I have found from experience that most of these questions dissolve into the atmosphere when one takes the leap of faith into this new dimension of the Spirit. I highly recommend this way of life to him.⁹

Even Oral Roberts took the time to answer and object to Tuland's article because "the depth of edification and inner strength derived in my own and in the lives of countless others through tongues is too precious and too practical to be summarily dismissed."¹⁰ Finally Dr. Howard Ervin, a Baptist charismatic, was called upon to speak on behalf of the Neo-Pentecostals. He wrote an article and came to conclusions which were, at least ostensibly, based upon a study of the texts.¹¹ But the charismatic propensity had already been revealed. The results of Biblical study had been rejected solely because they had questioned the nature of present-day tongues.

The second way in which charismatics elevate the Pentecostal experience above the Scripture is their insistence that only those who have received the necessary experience can discover the full meaning of God's Word. Ervin himself admitted that his interpretation of tongues passages had "been enriched for me by this very experience as it unfolded in my own life."¹² Lutheran charismatics extol the tongues experience since it "makes the Bible come alive,"¹³ "opens the Bible,"¹⁴ or makes people "able to understand the Bible better."¹⁵ Frances Hunter, a popular charismatic writer and speaker claims that such essential passages as I Corinthians 12-14 are not clear until tongues are spoken — the passages need the experience in order to be interpreted.¹⁶ Former Lutheran, A.G. Dornfield, employs the same reasoning in his discussion of Jude 20. "After you speak in tongues for a while," he claims, you "just know" that Jude 20 refers to tongues.¹⁷ Exegetical or theological discussion between tongue-speakers and non-tongue-speakers becomes impossible. Any assertion by the non-tongue-speaker can be dismissed on the grounds that the Bible is still unclear to him. By this method the Bible is not allowed to speak for itself but is subject to the religious experience of the charismatics. Ian MacPherson has summarized the charismatic position:

Of recent years a considerable literature on the subject [of

tongues] has grown up, much of it from pens of people, who, not having themselves had the experience, are as little qualified to deal with it as a deaf and dumb man to be a teacher of languages.¹⁸

Tongues - Evaluated from a Scientific Perspective

Since the Pentecostal experience of tongues is more important than the texts of the Scripture to the charismatic, no amount of Biblical evidence is likely to shake the Neo-Pentecostal's confidence in his experience. Knowing this, many scholars have attempted to evaluate tongues from a different perspective. Their studies show that the tongues phenomena can be explained on psychological, sociological, physiological and linguistic ground alone. The scientific evidence is significant since it challenges Neo-Pentecostalism at its central and only distinctive point — tongues.

What Are Present-Day Tongues?

The consensus of most social scientists is that glossolalia (tongue-speaking) takes place when a person is functioning in some type of altered mental state. Wayne Oates, the prolific Baptist psychologist, described speaking in tongues as "a form of dissociation within the personality, in which a set of voluntary muscles respond to control centers other than those associated with consciousness."¹⁹ Paul Kildahl, a Lutheran psychologist, says somewhat the same thing: "a psychologist must say the glossolalia is not completely under conscious control of the person who speaks in tongues."²⁰ Felicitas Goodman, who has done extensive study of glossolalists from many different cultural settings, differs only slightly in her conclusions:

In my terms then, when a person has removed himself from awareness of the ordinary reality surrounding himself he is in an *altered mental* state. The state of the glossolalist, of the meditating person, is in this sense an *altered mental state of consciousness* (in German *Ausnahmestand*, an exceptional state). As a synonym emphasizing a different aspect of the same generalization. I use *dissociation* to characterize the subject's divorcement from ordinary reality.²¹

Goodman also refers to the state of the glossolalists as a "hyper-aroused trance."²² William Samarin, who has also done extensive research into tongues, defines the phenomenon "simply as a pleasurable state of intense emotion whether natural or linked to an altered state of consciousness."²³ Stuart Bergsma, a former medical missionary, says that tongues are dangerous, "for the

dissociation, the depersonalization in glossolalia, goes off without being related to the wholeness of the person.”²⁴ Even George Cutten, writing in 1927, refers to tongue-speaking as “dissociation of consciousness” or “disintegration of personality.” Cutten agrees with contemporary analyses:

In terms more directly borrowed from the vocabulary of modern psychology, in considering speaking with tongues we have to do with a state of personal disintegration, in which the verbomotive centers of the subject are obedient to subconscious impulses . . . to use another term, dissociation of consciousness. Inability to remember a name is a dissociation of consciousness, and is a most common experience. When disintegration becomes so severe that the subconscious is in control, we have an abnormal condition. When the subconscious concentrates its energy on one motor or sensory function, this is likely to attract attention. We find this last condition in speaking with tongues.²⁵

Whether tongues are called “dissociation,” an “altered mental state,” “loss of complete conscious control,” “hyperaroused trance,” an “altered state of consciousness” or “disintegration,” it does seem that psychologists consider them to be explainable in terms not necessarily supernatural or spiritual. And regardless of the different conclusions drawn by psychologists concerning the subtleties of the tongues phenomena, they agree with each other concerning its basic form: the psychological state of the glossolalist is altered in some way so that he is functioning in a manner that is abnormal. In defense of the psychologists cited above, I should point out that all but one (Felicita Goodman) confess to be Christian, some of them (Oates, Cutten) with reputable theological credentials. These people have no “axe to grind” with religion in general or even with Christianity.

Why Are Tongues Spoken?

Why should people seek this altered mental state? It is because tongue-speaking, like sleep or meditation, is a release from tension. Wayne Oates describes tongues:

In the experience of speaking in tongues there seems to be a conglomeration of several of these non-medical approaches to releasing the tension of the voluntary muscular situation of a person. There is certainly a buildup of tension, there is a hypnotic impact of a mass or a group, and there is an ecstatic release of tension.²⁶

Kildahl comes to the same conclusion:

Emotionally, the experience [tongue-speaking] was one of

fantastic release, comparable in intensity to sexual orgasm, or to the sense of freedom just after an intense stomach cramp subsides.²⁷

Others have referred to tongues as a "reassurance agent" over latent guilt feelings.²⁸

The tension-relieving virtue of tongues is demonstrated by tongue-speakers themselves. Kildahl and Qualben discovered that in eighty-seven percent of the cases which they examined a personal crisis of some kind had preceded the initial experience of speaking in tongues.²⁹ Kildahl's studies have, of course, been challenged by tongue-speakers.³⁰ But by their personal testimonies they support Kildahl's suggestion. Rodney Lensch, a Lutheran charismatic, describes the experience which precipitated his seeking of the Baptism in the Spirit:

On this particular Sunday I found myself unable to even compose a sermon. By evening I had given up again. Nothing came. I was like a fountain gone dry. That night I went into the sanctuary and wept like a child before the altar. My self-confidence had been shattered and it appeared as if there was no honorable way to escape.³¹

Lensch's trauma is exactly the type of mental state to which Kildahl refers. Erwin Prange, another Lutheran, tells of a man who had taken the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) many times. The results of one test showed "some rather poor frustration tolerance together with chronic anxiety and guilt."³² It was following this test that the man spoke in tongues for the first time.³³ Goodman transcribed from tapes some conversion experiences recounted by tongue-speakers. Each conversion experience always included speaking in tongues. In nine of the ten cases which were reported in full there is mention of some situation which caused trauma for the person who subsequently spoke in tongues. One man wanted to be a minister but could not; one was greatly worried over his work and lack of money; one was suffering from severe anemia in which she vomited up almost all she ate and became very thin; one, a pastor, had lost all his money in an illegal adventure, and his wife was unconverted; one had just experienced crop failure and the prayers of a priest of the Roman Church had gone unanswered; one experienced anxiety over drinking, playing cards, sleeping in the street; one had a son who was deathly ill, the family could not afford the medical expenses, and the mother was pregnant again with her ninth child; one had an unconverted husband and had spent some time in the hospital because she fainted often and

shook; one had just experienced the death of a father.³⁴ Goodman had no intention of demonstrating trauma before the initial tongue-speaking experience; she does not even point out this consistency. But her findings are quite similar to Kildahl's. These findings and the tension-relieving nature of glossolalia help to explain why tongue-speaking is so attractive and widespread in our country and in the world generally.

How Are Tongues Spoken?

The sociological aspects of glossolalia suggest that tongues are learned.³⁵ Kildahl says:

It is our definite opinion that those who have the necessary psychological characteristics can *learn* to speak in tongues. This gives rise to the question, "If it is truly a gift of the Spirit, why must it be demonstrated and taught?"³⁶

Kildahl bases this statement on a number of observations: (1) The tongue-speaker is always extremely dependent on some leader to whom he looks for guidance. (2) The tongue-speaker is very reliant upon external authority. (3) The tongue-speaking group displays an inordinate amount of group camaraderie. (4) Tongue-speakers tend to speak in tongues in the same manner as the one who introduced them to the tongue-speaking:

The importance of the leader was well illustrated by the fact that the style of glossolalia adopted by the group bore a close resemblance to the way in which the leader spoke. A linguist engaged in glossolalia research found that prominent visiting speakers affected whole groups of glossolalists. Although no two tongue-speakers sounded exactly alike, if the prominent leader spoke in a kind of Old Testament Hebraic style, those who were taught by him also spoke in this manner. If the leader of the group evidenced Spanish diction and mannerisms, his followers also developed that style. It is not uncommon for linguists to be able to tell which prominent itinerant glossolalist has introduced a congregation to tongue-speaking.³⁷

(5) Kildahl was not aware of any instance of anyone speaking in tongues who had not first been told what they were or had been given a demonstration.³⁸ In another work Kildahl tells of five steps necessary in the process of "inducing someone to speak in tongues,"³⁹ which are very similar to the observations listed above. They include a magnetic relationship with the tongue teacher, an individual sense of personal distress, an understanding of the rationale of what tongue-speaking is, the presence

of a supporting group, and somewhere in the process an intense emotional atmosphere.⁴⁰

Goodman's cross-cultural studies⁴¹ show that Kildahl is not alone in his conclusions. She found that dissociation, the necessary psychological state for glossolalia, although achieved by some spontaneously, is usually learned, and is induced by what she calls driving.⁴² Driving is the conscious effort on the part of the tongue leader and other tongue-speakers⁴³ to alter in the supplicant the normal rhythmic patterns of bodily functions. Some of these functions — walking, breathing — can be altered by anyone at will. Others, such as heartbeat, can be altered by certain people at will (e.g., subjects versed in *Hatha Yoga* and other eastern disciplines).⁴⁴ Driving in the tongues setting is described by Goodman:

Now: what seems to be aimed at implicitly at least, in driving as I have observed it is somehow to produce dissociation by affecting these rhythms, that is, those least amenable to conscious control such as brain patterns, possible by altering their shapes or interfering with their base frequency — making them faster or slower.⁴⁵

Driving is the persistence of rhythmic music, hand-clapping, loud persistent prayers in a strongly accented pattern, loud incessant glossolalia which is rhythmic and patterned, and persistent shouted directions to the supplicant. This driving is almost always successful in the cases where the supplicant earnestly desires to speak in tongues. Goodman also shows that dissociation can be achieved by hyperventilation. Hyperventilation is rapid breathing in which more oxygen is inhaled than is exhaled. It results in a condition in which the brain has an imbalance of oxygen and carbon dioxides, and can, according to Goodman, easily lead to dissociation.⁴⁶ Once dissociation is achieved, glossolalia is possible. "To be sure, . . . vocalization can and does occur spontaneously. But for most the step is a hard learning task."⁴⁷ This "task" is facilitated by comprehensive indoctrination which creates intense desire, as well as more acoustical driving.

While the method of driving differs from place to place the results are proportional to the effort exerted by the drivers. After explaining the different methods of driving in the four cultural settings in which she worked, Goodman concluded:

In summary then, a comparison of the various congregations shows that the more concerted the effort, the sooner is the desired result attained. In Hammond [Indiana], only immediate associates are involved in a relatively easygoing

driving, and the returns are low. In Cuarta [Mexico City], and in Merida, both the congregation and the ministers and their helpers drive, but there is something about the spatial arrangements that cuts down its intensity. Dispersed as the supplicants are among others in the congregation, all praying, to be sure, but some in ordinary language, some in tongues, some directing their prayers directly at them, some not, the effect is diffuse. In Utspak [Yucatan], with the supporters of the supplicant arranged in a semi-circle around him and very close, and all of them involved in the same rhythmical driving pattern of the deafening "*sellalo, sellalo*," a favorable result is almost a foregone conclusion.⁴⁸

The lack of spontaneity in tongues, conceded even by charismatics, also demonstrates their learned nature. Wayne Robinson, in his book, *I Once Spoke in Tongues*, tells how a woman was coached into tongue-speaking by repeating over and over again a religious tongue twister.

He [the pastor] asked her to stand and to follow him as he walked around the room. Meanwhile, she was to repeat verbatim the following words, "Blessed Jesus, suffering savior, save the sin-sick souls of sinful sinners. We wait, willingly, wantingly, wonderfully, wistfully right now!"

With the group cheering the marching pair, the pastor led the woman around the room repeating the words. Fast, then slow, then fast again. When she began to mix up the words, he sped up the pace. Soon she was standing with her arms lifted high and tears streaming down her face while she repeated strange sounds. To the watching group, the pastor announced that she had received the infilling of the Spirit.

What they were hearing, he said, was talking in tongues.⁴⁹

Christenson also admits to using the repetition of "nonsense syllables" in order to "coach" people into tongues.⁵⁰ Some people have learned to speak in tongues apart from any religious context:

A linguist has reported that he has been able to teach a classroom of students to speak in tongues — without references to any religious beliefs about it. An actress once explained to me that verbal expression without using a known language was an important part of the training in her acting classes. She proceeded to speak a "language" for me which sounded exactly like glossolalia. She spoke somewhat different "languages" when she was asked to express joy, or warmth, or intensity, or sadness.⁵¹

The pattern suggested by this data is that tongues are not

inspired but learned. Obviously not every incident of tongue-speaking can be examined. Charismatics are quick to share their experience of spontaneous tongues or lack of previous indoctrination.⁵² Researchers have found the opposite true often enough to conclude that no miraculous explanation of contemporary glossolalia is necessary.

Felicitas Goodman has offered a credible explanation of tongues from a physiological perspective. Noticing the high degree of agreement between the four groups she investigated, Goodman theorized:

Such agreement of pattern despite linguistic and cultural differences, to my mind, can be explained only if we assume that the glossolalia is not simply uttered while in dissociation but is an artifact of the mental state, or rather of its neurophysiological processes. It is thought, for example, that in epilepsy the cortex is driven by discharges from subcortical structures. I am proposing that something similar is happening during glossolalia. In some manner, the glossolalist switches off cortical control. Then, with considerable effort, at least initially, he establishes a connection between his speech center and some subcortical structure, which then proceeds to drive the former. Thereupon the vocalization behavior becomes an audible manifestation of the rhythmical discharges of this subcortical structure, resulting in the described pattern.⁵³

Here is presented an attractive theory which seems to take into consideration all the ready data, which offers a physiological explanation for tongues along with the psychological, and which, noticeably, is without any reference to the miraculous.

The Language of Tongues

Many researchers have analyzed tongues from a purely linguistic point of view. The consistent result is that tongues cannot be considered any form of cognitive language. John Kildahl made tapes of tongues and subjected them to the close scrutiny of Eugene A. Nida, the well-known linguist from the American Bible Society. Dr. Nida and his group of specialists knew a hundred and fifty aboriginal languages from twenty-five countries. They concluded that tongues were not languages.⁵⁴ Kildahl also cites the research of Charles Hockett, who detailed sixteen criteria for language. "The research of linguists clearly reveals that the spoken utterances of glossolalists do not meet these criteria."⁵⁵ Kildahl concludes that "in the history of tongues speaking there are no scientifically confirmed recordings of

anyone speaking in a foreign language which he had never learned."⁵⁶ Charles Smith, New Testament scholar from Grace Theological Seminary, concurs:

Numerous psychologists and linguists have listened to hundreds of tongues utterances and evaluated many hours of tongues recordings, but no recorded instance of religious tongues speech has ever contained a clear message in any language. A group of government linguists found tongues to be unrecognizable.⁵⁷

William Samarin, who is often sympathetic to Neo-Pentecostalism, in his classic work *Tongues of Men and Angels*, concluded that the major features of tongue speech are that it "consists of strings of generally simple syllables" which "are not matched systematically with a semantic system" and are consequently "lexically meaningless."⁵⁸ Goodman, examining the tongues utterances of four cultures, concluded, "Glossolalia is lexically noncommunicative. The utterer of the glossolalia and his listener do not share a linguistic code . . . Glossolalia involves . . . the privation of the informative and communicative side of discourse; speech becomes musical sound."⁵⁹

It is true that Don Basham, a leading Neo-Pentecostal, in response to magazine solicitation received over thirty letters from Neo-Pentecostal readers who claimed either to have spoken in a foreign language or heard one. But in no case were the tongues recorded and tested, nor were they confirmed. Ultimately, the question reduces itself to this: Shall we believe dozens of linguistic experts who know hundreds of languages from dozens of language families and who have listened to hundreds of tapes for hundreds of hours, or shall we believe Don Basham when he says that Rose Robertson says that her friends's husband says that Rose spoke Syrian?⁶⁰

On the basis of its lack of cognitive meaning, analysts have interpreted glossolalia to be a regression to a previous level of linguistic maturity. George Cutten compared the learning of tongues to the manner in which a child learns to speak normal language. The different levels of speech for the tongue-speaker are (1) inarticulate sounds, (2) articulate sounds which simulate words, and (3) fabricated coined words.⁶¹ Both Oates and Kildahl arrive at the same conclusion:

As speaking in tongues actually expresses itself, however, it is a childlike, unguided, and unpatterned kind of speech. It is untranslatable and is meaningful to the person experiencing it in much the same way that the first utterances of a small

child are meaningful to him. A study of speaking in tongues comparative with the development of language in the thought of the child, therefore, is appropriate here.⁶²

The deep subordination to an authority figure required for learning to speak in tongues involves a type of speech regression. The ego is partially abandoned; that is, the ego ceases its conscious direction of speech. Subordination also involves emotional regression; without it there cannot be the unconscious, automatic, and fluent selection of audible syllables which constitutes glossolalia.⁶³

Why Tongues Are Widespread

The regressive and non-cognitive nature of glossolalia corresponds to the general indifference toward meaningful theological expression within the charismatic movement. Charismatics, in fact, seem to pride themselves for their non-theological approach to faith and practice. Larry Christenson boasts that "the Charismatic movement has introduced a new element into their framework or belief, what Emil Brunner calls, 'the pneumatic factor, the non-theological, the purely dynamic.'" ⁶⁴ This "factor" results in theological indifference for "whether the church doctrine has a background of Calvinism or Arminianism, this matters little, proving God is bigger than our creeds and that no denomination has a monopoly on Him."⁶⁵ The non-theological and experiential "oneness of the Spirit dims the [charismatic's] view of doctrinal differences."⁶⁶

Thus, that phenomenon which is exalted as a sign of high spirituality is, in fact, a sign of theological poverty. Charismatics are often entrapped in a vicious circle. The more the charismatic speaks in tongues the more he relies on the "non-theological" aspects of his religion. To him "theology" and "doctrine" are signs of sterility or the truth "in deep freezers."⁶⁷ As he grows in his antipathy toward theology, tongues, the epitome of "non-theology," become ever more vital to him. The test of spirituality, which the charismatic easily passes, is not faithfulness to the doctrine of God's Word, but the possession of a religious experience. Oates has called this non-doctrinal approach to Christianity a "conspiracy of silence."⁶⁸ The churches, he bemoans, through social gospelism, over-emphasis on cake and coffee fellowship at the expense of Bible study, and doctrinal reductionism have deprived Christian people of any meaningful means of theological growth or expression. Instead of attempting a renewal of meaningful theological growth, the charismatic movement has offered Christians an opportunity for religious

expression and "edification" without the theological underpinnings that normally accompany these. Tongues in this context are, in fact, a concession of theological privation. The charismatic movement has merely substituted one "non-theological" activity for another. Oates contends that the religious needs of people, lacking coherent theological address, "may erupt into turbulent upheaval and expressions of pent up feelings such as we find in speaking in tongues." People who are denied any opportunity for cognitive growth and expression, both in the mainline churches and in the charismatic movement, "finally break forth and 'they have no language but a cry.'"⁶⁹ Theologically deprived people are forced to engage in non-theological exercises. The result is a mass exodus from mainline denominations or mass conversions within these churches.

Conclusion

This evaluation of tongues should not be interpreted as a denial of the Spirit's power. The findings of modern psychology, sociology, and linguistics cannot be applied to the tongues of which Scripture speaks. The Biblical accounts are beyond linguistic investigation since no speech in these tongues was recorded, although three thousand witnesses understood them on one occasion (Acts 2) and Paul expects a translation in another situation (I Corinthians 14). Psychologically, it would be inaccurate to say that the apostles were in an altered mental state. Peter himself discounts drunkenness, and nothing in any of the relevant episodes indicates anything psychologically abnormal. Sociologically, at least in the book of Acts, the tongues of which Scripture speaks have none of the elements which modern tongues do. There is no evidence of coaching or of driving, no mention of tension which needed relief, nor of any trauma. There is no mention of leader dependency; in fact, the opposite is implied (cf. Acts 8 and 10). No mention of group camaraderie is made. No one seems to have been indoctrinated previously. In short, none of the present sociological or psychological manifestations inherent in the tongues of today are present in the Biblical narratives.

Hopefully, more research into the phenomenon of tongues will be done. Many questions still need to be asked. But on the basis of the extensive research already done we can conclude the following: Tongue-speaking is a regressive return to an earlier level of linguistic maturity. It is accomplished through a learning process in which, by various methods, people are taught to achieve an altered mental state and thereafter taught to speak in

tongues. It is a release from tension and an answer to personal stress and trauma. It is not a language, communicates no cognitive thoughts, and can be accomplished by almost any person who really wants to, Christian or not.

FOOTNOTES

1. Walter Bartling, "The Congregation of Christ — A Charismatic Body: An Exegetical Study of I Corinthians 12," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XL (February, 1969), pp. 67-80.
2. Donald Gee, in *Pentecost*, no. 45 (Sept., 1958), p. 17.
3. David J. DuPlessis, *The Spirit Bade Me Go* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1970), p. 40.
4. Larry Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1968), p. 54. Some charismatic sympathizers claim that, "most glossolalists do not weave their entire theology of personal religion around this gift." Clark Pinnock, "A Truce Proposal for the Tongues Controversy," *Christianity Today*, XV (October 8, 1971), p. 7. However, all leading Neo-Pentecostal writers maintain that tongues are essential to the full Christian experience. Cf. Howard Ervin, *And Forbid Not to Speak in Tongues* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1971), p. 30. Frances and Charles Hunter, *The Two Sides of a Coin* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1973), p. 104. Dennis Bennett, *Nine O'Clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1970), p. 20. Don Basham, *A Handbook on Tongues, Interpretation, and Prophecy* (Monroeville, Pennsylvania: Whitaker Books, 1971), p. 33. Ian Cockburn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1971), pp. 28-30. A. G. Dornfield, *Have You Received the Holy Spirit?* (St. Charles, Missouri: published by author, 1973), p. 12. Bob Buess, *You Can Receive the Holy Ghost Today* (Van, Texas: published by author, 1967), p. 36. Kenneth E. Hagin, *Why Tongues?* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Kenneth E. Hagin Evangelistic Association, 1975), p. 3. Rodney Lensch, *My Personal Pentecost* (Kirkwood, Missouri: Impact Books, 1972), pp. 49-50.
5. Cf. C. George Fry, "Pentecostalism in Historical Perspective," *The Springfielder*, XXXIX, 4 (March, 1976), pp. 183-193. This may seem harsh, especially since almost all Pentecostal denominations and Neo-Pentecostals formally confess a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible and its verbal inspiration. But the normative authority is implicitly denied when Biblical clarity is denied or when the principle of *sensus literalis unus est* is ignored. The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, a Pentecostal lay group which believes "the Bible in its entirety to be the Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and conduct" concedes that there "are many differences in interpretation among genuine Christians." While the Bible may be true to charismatics, any appeal to it can be dismissed as only one of many "valid interpretations." Tract from Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (no place, no date).
6. Carl G. Tuland, "The Confusion about Tongues," *Christianity Today*, XII (December 6, 1968), pp. 207-209. His exegesis, admittedly, was not the best. While it is possible that some in Corinth were "babbling," the tongues which were from the Holy Spirit were hardly unintelligible: (1) They needed translation (I Cor. 14:5). (2) They are compared to the cognitive but incomprehensible language of the Babylonians (v.21). (3) The word *glossa* in

- Greek should normally be translated "language." Our word "tongues" is simply a carry-over from King James' English. (4) Paul, who was present in Ephesus when some of the disciples spoke in tongues (Acts 19), and probably wrote his first Letter to Corinth from Ephesus makes no indication that the tongues in Ephesus and in Corinth were different in essence. This argument is especially cogent since no distinction between the tongues of Acts 2 and Acts 19 is made by Luke.
7. Larry Collins, "Letter to the Editor," *Christianity Today*, XIII (January 3, 1969), p. 299.
 8. Carl G. Connor, "Letter to the Editor," *Christianity Today*, XIII (January 17, 1969), p. 360.
 9. Gordon L. Lyle, "Letter to the Editor," *Christianity Today*, XIII (January 17, 1969), p. 359.
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 17. Dornfield, p. 45.
 18. Ian MacPherson, *Like a Dove Descending* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1969), p. 103.
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 20. John P. Kildahl, *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 35.
 21. Felicitas D. Goodman, *Speaking in Tongues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 59-60.
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels* (New York: MacMillan, 1970), p. 203. Cf. also Charles Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective* (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1973), p. 106.
 24. Stuart Bergsma, *Speaking With Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 17.
 25. George B. Cutten, *Speaking With Tongues* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 160.
 26. Oates, p. 95.
 27. Kildahl, p. 46.
 28. Bergsma, p. 16.
 29. Kildahl, pp. 62-66.
 30. "The Charismatic Movement and Lutheran Theology," a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (January, 1972), p. 8.
 31. Rodney Lensch, p. 4.

32. Erwin Prange, pp. 127-131.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Goodman, pp. 29-55.
35. Kildahl claims that ten million people could not fake the tongues experience, especially since tongues are apparently almost impossible to imitate. Kildahl, p. 35.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 51, 70.
39. John P. Kildahl, "Six Behavioral Observations about Speaking Tongues," *Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ*, ed. J. Elmo Agrimson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), p. 74.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Goodman investigated tongue-speakers from a Presbyterian congregation in Hammond, Indiana, and from Pentecostal congregations in Mexico City, Merida (which is the capital of the Yucatan territory), and a small Yucatan village. The towns in Yucatan had an altogether different cultural base than Mexico City, speaking a different language and engaging in different cultural mores.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
49. Wayne Robinson, *I Once Spoke in Tongues* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1973), p. 79.
50. Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 127-128.
51. Kildahl, "Six Behavioral Observations," p. 76.
52. John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1965), pp. 18-19. Cf. also Michael Harper, *As at the Beginning* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1965), p. 66.
53. Goodman, pp. 123-124.
54. Kildahl, *Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, p. 47. Cf. also Charles Smith, p. 95, and Watson E. Mills, *Understanding Speaking in Tongues* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), p. 11.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
57. Smith, p. 94. Cf. the reference to Qualben by Douglas Judisch, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 15.
58. Samarin, pp. 127, 211.
59. Goodman, p. 122.
60. Don Basham, *The Miracle of Tongues* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1973), p. 70.
61. Cutten, p. 85.
62. Oates, p. 97.
63. Kildahl, *Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, p. 53.
64. Larry Christenson, *A Message to the Charismatic Movement* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), p. 22.
65. Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues*, p. 99.

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66. Hunter, pp. 93-94. Cf. also Dennis Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1971), p. 96.
 67. David J. DuPlessis, p. 18.
 68. Oates, p. 78.
 69. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.