

8. The Spirit of Truth in the New Testament: Glossolalia

Glossolalia or speaking with tongues, strictly speaking, did not come under the general category of prophecy in the early Church. Prophecy, as it has already been made clear, had reference to that gift of inspiration by which Divine Truth was communicated to certain recipients by the Spirit, and declared by them in turn to mankind. Glossolalia, on the other hand was the phenomenon whereby *revealed truth* was disseminated to the peoples of the then known world in their respective native tongues. The relationship between the two phenomena, however, was very close; whereas the one had reference to *revelation*, the other was of the character of *proclamation*. Hence, because there has been a great deal of confusion on the subject of glossolalia, I think it would be well to look into the nature of the phenomenon at this point.

Now speaking with tongues, in the apostolic age, was not incoherent, meaningless jargon uttered by the speaker in a moment of orgiastic ecstasy, as some have contended. Certainly, it was not "spiritual language unknown to man, uttered in ecstasy," not "the utterance of incoherent and meaningless sounds," as Rees would have it.¹ Undoubtedly this interpretation of the phenomenon was introduced into Christian theology from Gnostic, or other pagan or semi-pagan, circles. It is well known of course that the utterance of unintelligible gibberish had been characteristic of pagan orgies for many centuries; and this fact alone, it seems to me, would have made such a practice anathema to the Apostles, guided into all the truth as they were by the Holy Spirit. The practice also appeared, soon after the apostolic age, in Montanism. A Christian writer is quoted by Eusebius as stating that Montanus "became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy, he raved and began to babble and to utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the custom of the Church, handed down by tradition from the beginning."² Celsus referred to certain "prophets" whom he had heard, who uttered "strange" fanatical and quite unintelligible words, of which no rational person can find the meaning, for so dark are they as to have no meaning at all."² But whether these were pagan, Gnostic or

1. T. Rees, *The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience*, 66.

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, V, 16, 7. (Italics mine)

2. Origen, *Against Celsus*, VII, 9.

Montanistic "prophets," we have no means of knowing. Small wonder, then, that the orthodox Christian leaders attributed such business to the devil, and expelled the Montanists: a fact which, in itself, proves that no such practice had existed in the early Church. No less an authority than Irenaeus refers to "many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speaking all kinds of languages."³ that is, *extant languages*, not incoherent babbling.

Speaking with tongues, as described in the New Testament, certainly was anything but orgiastic jargon. It is made unmistakably clear what this phenomenon was in the second chapter of Acts, so clear that no one need be deceived about it, that is, no one who is willing to allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves. Here we are told that when the Spirit first descended upon the Apostles, on the Day of Pentecost, to the outward accompaniments of a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and tongues parting asunder, like as of fire, which sat upon each one of them, they, the Apostles, "were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (vv. 1-4). "Now," Luke continues, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven." No doubt the majority of them had come back to Jerusalem for the express purpose of participating in the feast of Pentecost, the great national thanksgiving celebration of Jewry from time immemorial. "And when this sound was heard," the inspired historian goes on to say, "the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them [the Apostles] speaking in his own [native] language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans? *And how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born?* Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, *we hear them speaking in our tongues* the mighty works of God. And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this? But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine," etc. (vv. 5-13).

3. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V, 6, 1.

Certainly the fact could not be made plainer that the Apostles on this occasion were speaking in foreign *i.e.*, *un-acquired*, tongues; yet speaking intelligibly to the members of the mixed multitude present, because the latter are expressly said to have heard and understood each in the language in which he was born. Luke explicitly declares that the Apostles spoke with *other* tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance; certainly *other* tongues did not mean *inextant* tongues but *foreign* tongues or tongues with which the speakers were not familiar. Rees frankly admits this fact: The "meaning clearly is," he says, "that the Holy Spirit had caused the disciples, separately or collectively, to speak a number of foreign languages, so that men of various countries heard them speak, each in his own different language."¹ He goes on to imply, however, that Luke did not know what he was writing about. "But the fifteen countries enumerated," he says, "did not, as might be assumed, represent fifteen different languages. In ten of them at least the Greek language was in common use. and the crowd consisted entirely of Jews and proselytes, all of whom probably knew Greek."¹ To these sophistries, I would reply: Where, in Luke's account, does he state that *fifteen* languages—or any definite number, for that matter—were represented in this audience? Or, what if the Greek language was in common use in some of the regions enumerated? Or again, what if the majority of the Jews and proselytes who made up this audience did know Greek?—a sheer assumption, of course. What does all this prove? Absolutely nothing. The essential historical fact that Luke intends to convey here is that the Jews and proselytes who composed this Pentecost audience were from many different parts of the Mediterranean world, and that several different native dialects were represented among them: just this, and nothing more. The fact is well known that the Jews were even at that time quite generally scattered over the whole civilized world, just as they are today. And just as German Jews today speak German, and Polish Jews speak Polish, and Russian Jews speak the Russian language, and American Jews speak English, so on that occasion the native tongues of the Jews who were present in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost were those of the regions in which they had been born. The exact number of dialects

1. T. Rees, *op. cit.*, 67.

1. T. Rees, *op. cit.*, 67-68.

represented is not specified, however, in Luke's narrative. It must have been true, too, then as it is today, that all of those Jews, or nearly all of them, had been taught by their parents the home dialect of Judea. They obviously knew little or nothing of the men who were preaching, except that they were Galileans, yet they knew quite well that these Galileans were speaking in the various foreign tongues represented in the audience, all of which enhanced the reality of the miracle. No wonder the multitude "were confounded," "amazed," "perplexed," etc., on hearing these simple Galileans speaking in different foreign languages. No wonder they asked one of another, "What meaneth this?" Had it been nothing more than orgiastic jargon, the chances are that the spectators would have passed it off with a mere shrug of the shoulders and gone on their way. Nor should we overlook the fact that the miracle of glossolalia, on this occasion, had been preceded and supported by visible evidences of a supernatural character, namely, the sound of the onrush of a tornado and tongues like as of fire. All in all, the mystery of these events must have impressed the Jerusalem throng very deeply.

But Rees offers another objection, as follows: "After the excitement had subsided, Peter delivered his sermon, apparently in Greek, and there is no suggestion that it was miraculously translated into other languages."¹ This is certainly specious reasoning of the worst kind; it evinces a completely distorted conception of Luke's account. In the first place, Luke makes it obvious that *all* the Apostles were preaching, *all* delivering the same message, *all* speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance (v. 4). Peter's sermon is recorded, however, for the simple reason that the Lord had previously promised Peter the exalted privilege of being the first to state the terms of pardon under the New Covenant, to open the door of the Church to both Jews and Gentiles (Matt. 16:15-19). On what ground, moreover, does this author say that "Peter delivered his sermon, apparently in Greek"? Why should Peter have spoken in Greek, when his audience was composed chiefly of Jews? There is the fact to be taken into consideration, too, that it was the Plan of God that the Gospel should be proclaimed "to the Jew first," and *then* also to the Greek (Rom. 1:16, 2:9; Acts 3:26); in view of this fact is it not reasonable

1. T. Rees, *op. cit.*, 68.

to think that the Spirit would have moved Peter to preach to his own people in their native tongue? And, in the third place, it is difficult to think that an unlettered fisherman, such as Peter was, *could* have spoken in Greek, unless, of course, he was himself being qualified by the Spirit to speak in an unacquired tongue, which indeed may have been the case. To me it seems more reasonable to conclude, however, that Peter spoke in his native Judean dialect. Because Luke wrote his history in the Greek, naturally he recorded Peter's sermon in that language; this fact is no necessary indication, however, that Peter delivered the sermon originally in the Greek. "There is no suggestion," adds Rees, "that it [Peter's sermon] was miraculously translated into other languages." Who has said that it was miraculously translated into other languages? Certainly not Luke. Since all the Apostles were preaching, it is to be concluded, obviously, that they were severally speaking in the various tongues that were represented in the audience; that is to say, one in one foreign tongue, another in another, and so on. *The essence of the miracle was in the Spirit's qualification of the Apostles to speak in other tongues than their own native Galilean dialect; in a word, in languages which they themselves had never acquired. And this was the thing that made such a tremendous impression upon the audience.*

Finally, Rees says: "The impression which the 'speaking with other tongues' made upon a part at least of the crowd was, not that the disciples were endowed with a miraculous gift of languages, but that they were drunk."¹ Cf. Acts 2:13—"But others mocking said, They are filled with new wine." J. W. McGarvey's note on this passage is so simple that a child can understand it, and at the same time exposes Rees' comment for the absurdity which it is. McGarvey says: "The mockers who said, 'They are filled with new wine,' were irreverent men, who either did not understand more than one of the tongues spoken, and so mistook the rest for nonsense; or were so excessively irreverent as to mock at that which filled all others with amazement. Their mockery received due notice in the speech which followed."¹

That this speaking with tongues, by the Apostles, on the

1. T. Rees, *op. cit.*, 68.

1. J. W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Acts*, 25.

Day of Pentecost, definitely was *not* "the utterance of incoherent and meaningless sounds," is evident from other considerations. In the first place, such a notion is utterly contrary to the law of parsimony which has ever characterized God's dealings with humankind. God does nothing purposelessly or ineffectually: and the objective of this phenomenon of glossolalia, obviously, was the rapid dissemination of the doctrine of the Gospel among all the peoples of the then known world. The Spirit's procedure on Pentecost was an exemplification of the Divine missionary policy, a policy designed to insure the immediate propagation of the Gospel message by these visitors to Jerusalem to their respective peoples, *in their own respective languages*, on their return to their various homelands. Indeed the Church would do well to profit from this Divine example. The spread of the Gospel in heathen lands today would certainly be accelerated if, for example, instead of sending American missionaries to China, where they have to spend years learning the Chinese language and Chinese mores before they can even begin to preach the Gospel effectively to the Chinese, we should indoctrinate native Chinese preachers in our Bible colleges, and then send them back to preach the Gospel to their own people in their own native tongue. Difference of language has ever been an outstanding obstacle to the effective dissemination of the Seed of the Kingdom, and the Holy Spirit gave us a concrete demonstration on the Day of Pentecost of the only method by which this obstacle is most easily to be overcome. By way of contrast, modern missionary methods are surely slow and ponderous, to say the least. Hence, in view of what happened on Pentecost in Jerusalem, it is not to be wondered at that primitive Christianity had swept over the entire Mediterranean world within less than a century after the first proclamation of the Gospel in the holy city of the Jews, A.D. 30. In striking contrast, moreover, to what actually did happen on Pentecost, no purpose whatever would have been served had speaking with tongues on that momentous occasion taken the form of unintelligible gibberish. In that case, no miracle would have occurred at all, but only an oft-repeated psychic phenomenon of no significance whatever, a phenomenon which has been associated with hypnosis and auto-hypnosis, even in pagan cults, from immemorial times.

In the second place, the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the Spirit's inspirations and accompanying revelations have always been embodied in words, and in words, moreover, addressed to the intelligence of men; hence, in words or language intended to be received and understood by men, if not immediately, at least in the light of subsequent revelations. Otherwise, such inspirations, if such they could be called, would be utterly purposeless and to no effect whatever; and indeed there would be no accompanying revelations at all. Ordinary common sense would testify that when or where no truth is received by man, there has been no revelation. But the revelation—the Gospel itself—which the Spirit designed to communicate to mankind through the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost was certainly not something to be hidden under a bushel; it was God's final and complete revelation of His Eternal Purpose, the Mystery of His Will. It was the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people" (Luke 2:10); it was the Gospel of the Kingdom which was, according to the plan and purpose of God, to be "preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations" (Matt. 24:14). Cf. Luke 24:46, 47—"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Among the last words of the risen Lord to His Apostles were these: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In a word, this Divine amnesty proclamation was, as the name signifies, to be *proclaimed*—"unto the uttermost part of the earth"—and to be proclaimed first from Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 2:3); nor was its proclamation to be delayed beyond the time appointed by the Divine Will. On the face of it, therefore, and in the light of these Scriptures, it is utterly inconceivable that the Spirit should have concealed the first proclamation of this message on the Day of Pentecost, or delayed the proclamation beyond that day, beneath a meaningless profusion of orgiastic jargon. Such a notion belies the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit Himself.

I affirm, therefore, that the phenomenon of speaking with tongues on the Day of Pentecost was precisely what Luke says

it was, namely, that of speaking with *other* (i.e., foreign or unacquired) tongues, so that those present could hear and understand, each in his own native language, what was being spoken. "The apostles," we are told explicitly, "were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Certainly this means that the inspired men were, on this occasion, acting as mouthpieces of the Spirit; that is to say, they were in a state comparable to that of hypnosis, in which they were but giving utterance to the very words which the Spirit Himself was suggesting to their subconscious minds. Hence, there is nothing incredible in the fact that the communication should have been made by the Spirit in words of other languages than the native language of the speakers, or in the words of those native tongues represented in their audience. At any rate, however we may account for the phenomenon itself, Luke's account forbids our thinking that the Apostles were speaking unintelligibly to their hearers, that is, speaking in non-existent languages or merely babbling. If the language of this account does not mean that they were speaking in *foreign* tongues, then language is never to be relied on.

Nor is there a shred of evidence anywhere in the New Testament that the phenomenon of glossolalia was ever, throughout the entire apostolic age, anything different from what it was in Jerusalem on the occasion of the first proclamation of the Gospel. We are told, in Acts 10:44-48, that the miracle occurred again in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, by the Apostle Peter of course (cf. again Matt. 16:15-19), to Cornelius and his household, the first Gentile converts to Christianity. Here we read as follows: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the Word. And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we [literally, 'even as we did']? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In this instance, as on the Day of Pentecost, the phenomenon of glossolalia was an accompaniment of the outpouring of Spirit-power, *directly*

from Heaven, in *baptismal* measure. The conferring of Holy Spirit baptism and its concomitants upon Cornelius and his house, the first Gentile converts, was, of course, for the purpose of demonstrating once for all that it was the Will of God that the Gospel should be preached to Gentiles as well as Jews, and that both should be admitted to the blessings and privileges of the New Covenant on the same terms. This is clearly implied by Peter's challenging question to the six Jewish brethren (Acts 10:23, 11:12) who had accompanied him to Caesarea: "Can any man forbid the water that these [Gentiles] should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit even as we [the Jews, in the person of the Apostles, on the Day of Pentecost] did?" Now who were the Gentiles present at Caesarea on this occasion, to whom Peter delivered the Good Tidings? What sort of an audience was it? The answer is found in v. 24: "And Cornelius was waiting . . . *having called together his kinsmen and his near friends.*" This particular audience, then, was made up of Cornelius and his household and also his kinsmen and close friends, all of whom he had called in, as he himself said to the Apostle, "to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord" (v. 33). Now in view of the fact that Cornelius was an officer of some rank in the Roman military contingent then stationed at Caesarea, it is only reasonable to suppose that his household consisted not only of his immediate family, but also of a retinue of personal servants (cf. Acts 10:1-2), and that among his kinsmen and near friends present were several of his military aides and fellow-soldiers. Hence, there can be little doubt that various native languages were represented in this audience, as in the audience to whom the Apostles had preached on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, for it is well known that the Roman armies were recruited from all the provinces over which Rome had established hegemony. In view of these facts, we conclude that the opportunity was nearly as favorable, on this occasion, for disseminating the doctrine of the Gospel through the instrumentality of glossolalia, as it had been in the occasion of its first proclamation several years before in Jerusalem. Moreover, that the gift of tongues on this occasion was precisely what it had been on Pentecost—that is, the gift of speaking in *other* languages—is evident from Peter's subsequent account of the event to the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem. "If then,"

said the Apostle, "God gave unto them [the Gentiles] *the like gift as he did also unto us* [the Jews], when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). The "gift" of course, in both cases, was Holy Spirit baptism and its concomitants. Hence, as the Apostles, as a result of Holy Spirit baptism, spoke with *other* tongues, on the Day of Pentecost, so the Gentiles who, in this case, received Holy Spirit baptism, must also have spoken with *other* tongues. As McGarvey again puts it so clearly: "As Luke has once described speaking in other tongues under Pentecost, and showed that men of these other tongues understood the speakers, it was but natural that in his second reference to the same phenomenon he should use a briefer form of expression; and if, by 'speaking in tongues,' he does not mean other tongues than were natural to the speakers, his words are without meaning. The supposition that either this phenomenon or that mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians was more 'jubilant ecstatic praise,' not uttered in any human tongue, is to suppose that these inspired persons spoke nonsense; and it is far more likely that the nonsense is with those who adopt this supposition."¹ The assumption that the difference between the two phrases, "speaking with other tongues" (Acts 2:4) and "speaking with tongues" (Acts 10:46) indicated a variation in the phenomenon itself, is a fair sample of the flapdoodle that has been perpetrated in recent years in the name of Biblical criticism.

That the phenomenon of glossolalia was a result also of the bestowal of the *evidential* measure of Spirit-power, outwardly indicated by the laying on of an Apostle's hands, is evident from the incident narrated in Acts 19:1-7. Here we read that the Apostle Paul, on coming to Ephesus, found certain disciples there, and "said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?" Evidently this question had reference not to the general indwelling of the Spirit, for this gift all receive who repent of their sins and are baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3:2), and the Apostle could have had no ground for doubting that these disciples had received this measure of the Spirit. It becomes obvious, therefore, that his question had reference distinctly to the evidential measure of Spirit-power which was conferred upon the saints—that is, upon those who

1. J. W. McGarvey, *op. cit.*, 214, n. 1.

had been baptized—by the imposition of an Apostle's hands; the measure from which, primarily, stemmed all those extraordinary endowments designated "spiritual gifts" (*charismata*). And so, when they answered, "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Spirit was given," he immediately recognized that something was wrong; in a word, that they had not been baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); certainly they would not have been ignorant about the Holy Spirit had the formula of Christian baptism been pronounced over them. Therefore "he said, Into what then were ye baptized?" They replied, "Into John's baptism." Evidently John's baptism, then, did not have the name of the Holy Spirit connected with it; indeed it appears that John had not baptized into any name. And so we read: "And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus." We read further that "when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus," that is, they were baptized *by the authority* of the Lord Jesus, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"; no doubt Paul baptized them himself. Then we read: "And *when Paul had laid his hands upon them,*" that is, after their baptism in the manner prescribed by the Great Commission, "*the Holy Spirit came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And they were in all about twelve men.*" Here we have concrete evidence that the gift of tongues was—in some instances at least—a result of the conferring of the *evidential* measure of Spirit-power, by the laying on of an Apostle's hands. This accounts, of course, for the prevalence of the phenomenon in the early church, for, as far as the inspired record informs us, there were only two instances of the impartation of the *baptismal* measure of Spirit-power in the apostolic age, namely, upon the Apostles (Jews) on the Day of Pentecost, and upon Cornelius and his house (Gentiles) several years afterward.

Now the fact that the gift of tongues was a concomitant of the evidential measure of the Spirit accounts, of course, for the prevalence of the phenomenon in the church at Corinth; no doubt the saints there had received the gift at the hands of the Apostle Paul (cf. again 1 Cor. 2:1-5). It must be re-

membered, too, that the city of Corinth itself was at a cross-roads of the Eastern Mediterranean, and hence the center of a vast commercial enterprise between the East and the West. People of all nations were constantly moving back and forth through the city between Italy and the Asiatic provinces. In view of these facts, it would seem obvious that the prevalence of glossolalia among the Corinthian Christians was in adaptation to the opportunities presented them by their geographical location thus to disseminate the doctrine of the Gospel. In any case it was the prevalence of glossolalia, along with other special spiritual gifts, which had given rise to the unspiritual conditions which existed in the Corinthian church following Paul's departure, conditions which prompted the Apostle's inditing of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Hence, in the fourteenth chapter of this Epistle, we find him dealing specifically with the subject of the gift of tongues. His thesis throughout this entire chapter is *the superiority of the gift of prophecy over that of tongues*, and in the course of his argument he makes it very clear what the function of the latter gift was in the early Church. He begins by saying, vv. 1-4: "Desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and exhortation, and consolation. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." The Apostle's affirmation here is a simple one, namely, that *prophecy was superior to the gift of tongues, because it was more profitable to the spiritual life of the local church*. The speaker with tongues might indeed be declaring the mysteries of God, but, speaking them in a foreign language, his message would be understood only by God and by himself; on the other hand, the prophet declaring the same mysteries in the vernacular would be understood by all present, and in this manner the mysteries would become revelations which would serve to edify, encourage and comfort the whole church. Tongues might excite wonder, but prophecy brought forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24). Paul certainly does not mean to convey the idea here that *no living person* could understand what was spoken in a tongue—that it was incoherent ecstatic utterance—else he would not have identified

the phenomenon, as he does, with the declaration of the mysteries of God. What he does mean, evidently, is that in the ordinary or regular assembly of the saints, speaking in foreign tongues was profitable only when those foreign languages were native languages to persons who were present. He was not belittling the gift on the ground that it was orgiastic jargon; he was censuring only the *abuse*, not the proper *use*, of it. It was useful only under such circumstances that its exercise would result in the spread of the Gospel. To the evangelist, of course, it was a helpful addition to the gift of prophecy, but to those Corinthian preachers, teachers and exhorters, it was a poor substitute for that gift, if not actually a subtraction from it; for the fruit of the Spirit as manifested in the Christian life is certainly far from being "orgiastic" in character. "Now I would have you all speak wth tongues," that is, if circumstances were such that by so doing your exercise of the gift would contribute to the dissemination of the Gospel, "but rather that ye should prophesy," for under the circumstances prophecy is more fruitful in the edification of the church, for which reason "greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying" (v. 5). From this point on, throughout the chapter, the Apostle makes it very clear that, far from commending, or even talking about, such a thing as the ecstatic "utterance of incoherent and meaningless sounds," he is inveighing against any form of speech that is unintelligible and for that reason spiritually profitless. He goes on: "But now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you either by way of revelation, or of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching?" (v. 6). Here we have an enumeration of the four means or methods by which the saints were edified by language: (1) revelation, or the unveiling of Divine truth to a prophet; (2) knowledge, or the Divine illumination of the human mind to grasp the import of truth already communicated; (3) prophecy, the impartation to others of a truth directly revealed; and (4) teaching, the communication to others of the significance of a truth grasped by illumination. The Apostle now enunciates, and illustrates, the fact that the profit to be derived from sounds of any kind consists in the *meaning* which they convey to our minds; that *sound without sense or meaning (such as orgiastic jargon would be) is*

utterly unprofitable to anyone. Even the sounds produced by musical instruments, he says, as those sounds impinge upon our senses, have their distinctive tones with distinctive meanings. The pipe, for example, or the harp—each has its own tone-language, so to speak; and it is well known that the trumpet, depending upon the respective combinations of notes sounded, may “voice” the call to arms, the charge, or the retreat.

[There are many sounds in the world, but they become voices, only when they convey meaning to our minds; meaning is the essence of vocalization, that which distinguishes voice from mere sound. Now this fact applies equally to sounds produced by the human voice; if they have not meaning, they are useless and profitless. Hence, all those zealous for the gift of tongues, or for any other spiritual gift for that matter, should take care to exercise it only for the edifying of the church.] Even things without life, giving a voice, whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? So also ye, unless ye utter by the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye will be speaking into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices [languages] in the world, and no kind is without signification. If then I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian [foreigner], and he that speaketh will be a barbarian to me. So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound unto the edifying of the church [vv. 7-12]. Wherefore let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret [v. 13]; [that is, in order that he may make his speech intelligible to his hearers. At this point, the Apostle lays down a principle which, he affirms, should characterize every act performed in the public assembly of the saints, namely, that it should be done *with the spirit* and *with the understanding*; that is, in the performance of the act, not only must the spirit of the one performing it be *en rapport* with the Spirit of God, but the act also itself must be meaningful both to the worshiper and to the whole congregation in whose presence it is performed.] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else if thou bless with the spirit, how shall he that filleth the place of the unlearned say the Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest? For thou verily giveth thanks well, but the other is not edified [vv. 14-17.] [God Himself has appointed that Christian worship shall be both internal and external. External worship is of exemplary value chiefly: it works both to the edification of saints and to the conversion of sinners, if it truly performed *with the understanding*.] [Hence the Apostle goes on to say]: I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all; howbeit in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue [vv. 18-19]. [Note that the Apostle is thankful for the gift of tongues in himself, because of its utility,

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH; REVELATION

of course, to his work as an evangelist; he insists again, however, that within the local congregation the gift is valueless unless it works to the edification of the brethren.] Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving; but prophesying is for a sign, not to the unbelieving, but to them that believe [v. 22].

Tongues were signs that God was speaking through the Spirit, not to the saints, but to those who had never heard or accepted the doctrine of the Gospel; prophecy, on the other hand, was a sign that God was communicating truth, through the Spirit, primarily to the saints, to build them up in the most holy faith.

[Tongues, unless understood, were profitless; unintelligible babbling could never, in the very nature of the case, produce the conversion of a single human soul.] If therefore the whole church be assembled together and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned [i.e., men not having the gift to interpret tongues, and not knowing the foreign languages being spoken] or unbelieving [i.e., having no understanding of, no faith in, the works of the Spirit], will they not say [because of the queer and unintelligible sounds which you are giving forth] that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reported by all, he is judged by all; the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed [vv. 23-25]. [If the gift of tongues was exercised in the presence of hearers who were unfamiliar with the languages which were being spoken, naturally those hearers jumped to the conclusion that those who were speaking were mad. What else could they have thought? Prophecy, on the other hand, was the communication of the Word of God in a manner intelligible to the hearer; the communication of that Word which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). As such it cleaved the souls of men, and laid bare the secret thoughts and intents of their hearts, and by so doing brought them to self-abasement, and to repentance, and to submission to the Divine Will. Prophecy did this, moreover, because it was the communication of the Word in intelligible terms. Hence, prophecy as a spiritual gift was of a superior order to the gift of tongues in the local assemblies of the saints, *quod erat demonstrandum*. It was superior in the fact that, within the local church, it was more profitable for edification, exhortation and consolation. Hear, then, the Apostle's conclusion of the whole matter]: When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. *Let all things be done unto edifying*. If any man speaketh in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, and that in turn; and let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God [vv. 26-28]. [That is, to eliminate confusion, and to make it possible for others to enrich the service with such contributions as psalms (a form of *prophecy*, as we have already noted), teachings, revelations, etc., let no more than three persons speak with tongues in one exercise, and let them speak, moreover, not all three at once, but *in turn*; and let someone with the gift of interpretation translate, for the edification of the whole church, what they had to say. If no persons with the gift of interpretation were present, then let those gifted with tongues

keep silence and worship within themselves to the edification and strengthening of their own souls. *In no case was there to be any profitless incoherent and meaningless babbling.*] And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern. But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence. For ye all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted; and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for *God is not a God of confusion, but of peace* [vv. 29-33]. [That is, not more than three prophets should speak at a single service, and the other prophets must give heed, especially those gifted with discerning of spirits [cf. 1 Cor. 12:10] or the ability to distinguish between true and false communications [cf. Jer. 14:14; Matt. 24:11; 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 John 2:18, 4:1].] [If any prophet should receive a fresh revelation while another prophet was speaking, the one speaking should immediately resort to silence. The reception of the second revelation would indicate authoritatively that the first revelation had been sufficiently declared; therefore, the first speaker should desist, lest two should be speaking at the same time and thus defeat the ends of edification and exhortation. Prophets could control their own spirits, declares Paul, even while under the prophetic influence; hence there could be no justification for any speaker to pretend to be so carried away by his own inspiration as to be unable to stop speaking. The Spirit of God does not so overcome men by His gift or inspiration as to cause them to produce confusion and disorder, for God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace.]

Thus it is apparent that there is absolutely nothing in this entire chapter to justify the notion that glossolalia, in the early Church, was the utterance of incoherent and meaningless sounds. On the contrary, every affirmation made by the Apostle, throughout his entire presentation here, confirms the view that speaking with tongues throughout the apostolic age was precisely what it was on the Day of Pentecost, namely, speaking with *other*, but always *living*, tongues. The whole argument, in fact, is a repudiation of vain and meaningless babbling.

Moreover, glossolalia, like all the other extraordinary spiritual gifts (*charismata*) which accompanied the possession of the evidential measure of Spirit-power, passed out of the Church at the end of the apostolic age, or within a generation or two thereafter (probably with the last generation of those upon whom the Apostles personally could have laid their hands). That this would be the case is clearly indicated by Paul himself, I Cor. 13:8—"Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; *whether there be tongues, they shall cease*; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." Those sincere but deluded sects who, in our own times, claim to "speak with tongues," but whose utterances are never in-

telligible either to themselves or to others present at their meetings, would do well to re-study this fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Our God, we are told, is the same yesterday, today, and for ever (Heb. 13:8); with Him there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning (Jas. 1:17). He is still the God, not of confusion, but of order and peace. 1 Cor. 14:40—"Let all things be done decently and in order." Therefore, even though hysteria and frenzy do crop out in some of His congregations today, even as in the church at Corinth in apostolic times, such things are not of the Spirit's inspiration, neither are they according to His Will.

(Isn't it significant that the Corinthian church which was boastful of its special "spiritual gifts" is the one congregation of the apostolic period which the Apostle Paul accuses of being "carnal" and just "babes in Christ"? Is this not further proof that the function of these "gifts" was essentially *evidential*? (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:2, 3:1-3, 12:4). (Please note that this subject is treated fully in Part XIII. *infra*).

9. Modes of Revelation

A prophet, as it has been made clear previously, is a person who acts as the instrument of Divine communication with men. (The prophet differs from the priest in the fact that the former represents the Divine side of this mediation, whereas the latter acts rather from the *human side*). The term "prophet" is an Anglicized word, and denotes literally one who speaks for, or in the name of, another. The Hebrew term for "prophet" signified one who was imbued with the Spirit of God and thus inspired to pour forth living oracles from God. Strictly speaking, a prophet, in Scripture, is one to whom knowledge of the secret things of God is revealed, and by whom it turn that knowledge is communicated to mankind. This knowledge may be of things *past*, things *present*, or things *future*. Cf. Rev. 1:19 (words of the reigning Christ to John the Beloved, introducing the latter's account of his series of visions on the isle of Patmos): "Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." (Cf. also John 4:17-19, 2 Kings, 5:25-27, Luke 1:76-79, etc.)

Now the term *revelation* has reference primarily to the