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A CLOSER LOOK AT CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

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IT HAS NOW BEEN OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS SINCE THE CHARISMATIC RENEWAL took root in the Catholic Church. For many, beleaguered by the rampant secularization of the Church and the consequent eradication of the supernatural, it held out the hope of a genuine spiritual renaissance; one fostered by a renewed and ever more intimate relationship with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, confirmed in the abundance of supernatural “gifts.” Many did return. However, as with all renewals, not a few, caught up in the initial fervor and bedazzled by the promise, let subjective analyses of this phenomenon suffice, neglecting difficulties posed by a rational evaluative approach. Unfortunately, subjective perceptions can never be held as the standard of truth, if we are to make an honest assessment of the Renewal. This article proposes that a movement that has swept Protestantism over the past ninety odd years, and has made significant inroads into the Catholic Church throughout the last twenty-five, is deserving of more serious scrutiny by those who have fostered its growth and those responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Catholic Faith. It is hoped that this modest study will provide several useful approaches toward the evaluation of certain aspects of the Renewal, that a more refined theological understanding may evolve and present inconsistencies or difficulties be resolved.

PENTECOSTAL ORIGINS OF AMERICAN CHARISMATIC RENEWAL

Classical Pentecostalism, from which the “neo-Pentecostalism” of the Charismatic Renewal derives, is essentially a form of fundamentalist evangelical Protestantism and has derived much of its substance from the Methodist Revival Movement of the nineteenth century. The movement, dubbed the “Holiness” Movement, was an effort to revive the Wesleyen doctrine of “entire sanctification.” This took the form of a distinct second blessing, which conferred the gift of total interior conversion, enabling the recipient to lead a life of genuine moral perfection. This “second blessing” manifested itself at revivals as an often intensely emotional experience of a purely subjective nature. The term “baptism in the Holy Ghost” was used by some preachers to describe this experience, echoed in the contemporary analog, “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” A distinction should be made however, inasmuch as charisms did not accompany the “Holiness” experience.¹

The birth of Pentecostalism is attributable to one Charles F. Parham, a former “Holiness” preacher, master and founder of the Bethel Bible School, Topeka, Kansas. The presumed date of the birth of the movement is said to have been January 1, 1901, and was an outcome of Parham’s teaching methodology, which was quite simple. Using the Bible as sole textbook, an “appropriate” question would be introduced, to be answered through the study and researches of his students. As fate would have it, Parham posed the question: “What is the scriptural sign of a true baptism in the Holy Ghost?” Their conclusion, gleaned from the pages of Acts: speaking in tongues. Several days and

nights of prolonged prayer prepared the enthusiastic students for the coming of the Holy Ghost. On January 1, 1901, Agnes Oznam, a Bethel student, requested that Parham lay hands on her head, while the group of students fervently prayed. Agnes is recounted, as a result of this, to have spoken Bohemian as well as several other languages. Within days, this phenomenon had been experienced by all the students and the movement was truly born.²

It is essential to note from the aforementioned episode the dramatic theological shift in the concept of “baptism in the Holy Ghost” as originally understood within the context of the “Holiness Movement.” From this point on, most “classical” Pentecostals would subscribe to the notion that tongues must accompany the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” in order to authenticate the genuine bestowal of power given for effective witnessing to Christ.³

It is unnecessary to recount the phenomenal growth of the various Pentecostal denominations which arose from Parham’s modest experiment. By 1925 there were some thirty-eight denominations in the United States alone.⁴ In its recent expansion within the past few decades outside of the United States, it has outstripped all other denominations in its phenomenal rate of growth.⁵ What is necessary to note is that the “neo-Pentecostal” outbreak of the last few decades was the direct cause of the parallel phenomenon which attained to such gigantic strides within the Catholic Church that, “...Bishop McKinney (U.S.) expressed in the early days of the renewal, to attend at least half a dozen prayer meetings before making a decision either to reject it or participate in it.”⁶

That this direct causal relationship exists is evident in the inception of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. This occurred in the Spring of 1966, when Drs. William Storey and Ralph Keller, lay faculty members at Duquesne University, having been disappointed in their apostolic endeavors, and influenced by Keller’s reading of John Sherril’s, *They Speak in Other Tongues*, sought out a means whereby they might be filled with the gifts of the Holy

Spirit, after the manner of the early apostles.⁷ This led to participation in several neo-Pentecostal prayer meetings, held in a Pittsburgh suburb, in the hope that they might learn how to receive the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” After attendance at several meetings, two of the four attending Catholics requested that hands be laid on them and they then began to undergo the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues. The experience was shared with a group of Catholic students on retreat, in February, 1967, from which the first neo-Pentecostal prayer group was formed on a Catholic campus. From there the movement spread to Notre Dame and beyond.⁸

SOME THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES

This brief introduction to Charismatic roots in the Pentecostal tradition gives one sufficient fuel to anticipate some of the serious theological difficulties Charismatic groups have had to contend with; not the least of which is the “baptism in the Spirit,” so central to the entire Pentecostal and Charismatic experiences.

One can clearly discern the problem the Catholic faces when he confronts the fact that he has received the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism; but further, he has received another indelible character upon his soul, that of the Christian soldier, receiving “the seven-fold gift of the Holy Ghost”⁹ by which is imparted “full growth and perfect spiritual strength.”¹⁰ It becomes quite evident that the intention of the original Holiness and Pentecostal evangelists was to “create” an experience which would beg God to provide these very gifts (recall Wesley’s “second blessing”). The superfluity of such an experience could not be doubted by any faithful and reasoning Catholic. To do so would be to call into question the validity of the Sacrament of Confirmation and implicitly the teaching authority of the Church. Further-

more, the Pentecostal implication that it is necessary that some visible sign such as was manifest in the diversity of tongues at Pentecost is clearly refuted by the authority of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The problem is further compounded by the verifiable fact that the form of tongue speaking accompanying this frequently and



almost universally expected imparting of this gift, bears no resemblance to the specific form of tongue speaking manifest through the Apostles at Pentecost. This will be more fully discussed.

How then is the Charismatic to justify the centrality of the “baptism in the Spirit”? Unfortunately, any explanation must be relegated to the realm of speculative theology, which must ultimately submit to the authority of Rome. As a preliminary, Francis A. Sullivan, S.J. and Simon Tugwell, O.P. agree that the term “baptism in the Spirit,” from a Catholic viewpoint, is “exegetically unsound, theologically confusing and risky pastorally.”¹¹ Fr. Sullivan finds no evidence that there was the expectation on the part of the Christians in the early Church to receive a “second blessing” by which they would receive the fullness of Spirit, in the Wesleyen sense.¹² This is a clear refutation of Pentecostal theology. However, the experience of this “baptism in the Spirit” must somehow be explained. Two interesting explanations have been proposed.

The first is extracted from the Malines Documents¹³ drawn up by a number of theologians and leaders of the Charismatic Renewal, at Malines, Belgium, in 1974. The documents distinguish between the “theological” sense and the “experiential” sense of the term “baptism in the Spirit.”¹⁴ The first refers to the Sacrament of Initiation (baptism); the second refers to “the breaking forth into conscious experience of the Spirit, who was given during the celebration of initiation.”¹⁵ As these documents are preliminary in defining and resolving some of the difficulties raised by the renewal, they are not exhaustive. Regrettably, the specific relationship between the Sacrament of Confirmation and the highly problematic “baptism in the Spirit” is not specifically analyzed or developed. This appears to be of central import to the discernment of the full theological implications. But as the matter stands we must rely primarily upon the “experiential” definition in our analysis, leaving us with a major problem. That is, the “conscious experience of Spirit’s power already given in baptism” leaves us an unfortunate void due to its intangible nature. One can readily see why some Charismatics would insist upon the experience of the charisms, especially tongues, an immediate and verifiable sign of the Spirit’s breaking forth into consciousness. For this reason Fr. Sullivan attempts another approach.

Fr. Sullivan attempts to integrate the experien-

tial with the theological sense by saying that Catholic Charismatics are “baptized in the Spirit” in the Biblical sense, which includes both “the theological and experiential senses.”¹⁶ He believes that the reality is a new “outpouring of the Spirit” that is working in their lives.¹⁷ The “outpouring” refers to the theological sense, while “working” refers to the experiential sense.

Sullivan finds no difficulty with the experiential sense, as “everyone” agrees that the “baptism in the Spirit” is a heightened awareness of the workings of the Holy Spirit. He makes sure he stays clear of Pentecostal contamination by making clear that the Malines Documents allow that this experience is not necessarily immediate, but rather, that it may take place by way of a “growth process.” (Keep this in mind, as it appears to refute Fr. Sullivan’s theological argument formulated below.) Unfortunately, this view makes it more and more difficult to see the significance of an increasingly indeterminate experience.



Regarding the theological sense, Fr. Sullivan sees justification for speaking about a “new sending of Spirit” in light of the Angelic Doctor. He feels such a concept conforms to Thomistic theology, if we are, in fact, dealing with “a decisively new work of grace, such as can be described as ‘moving into a new act or state of grace.’”¹⁸ He argues that in keeping with Thomas’ concept of *innovatio*, that is, there must be a real innovation in the person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells in a new way, we should find new acts or states consonant with such a sending.¹⁹ These were exemplified in the writings of St. Thomas, by the graces distinctly charismatic and not sacramental. However, Fr. Sullivan emphasizes that in keeping with St. Thomas’ concept of *innovatio*, we could not speak merely of the conferring of a charism as this “sending,” but rather, there must be a new way of the Spirit’s indwelling, implying a new personal relationship with the Spirit, bringing a new work of grace in their life.²⁰

Unfortunately, having eliminated the necessity of some concrete manifestation of the charismatic gifts in conjunction with the “baptism in the Spirit,” it becomes evident that Fr. Sullivan’s argument loses its validity. He

does, however, attempt to deal with the problem of “gradual growth in awareness,” by arguing that we need not limit ourselves in this life to but one “sending” of the Spirit, but, in the sense in which he has argued, there may be many “sendings.” The basic problem with this approach lies in finding some norm for identifying “states of grace” indicative of such experiences. One can see the obvious difficulties encountered when the criteria of “tongues” is eliminated. Finding Catholic explanations for Protestant innovations is an arduous task.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

The manifestation of speaking in tongues is central to the theology of many of the Pentecostal denominations, though by no means universal. Today many modern Pentecostals have adopted a position that the accompanying manifestation, one considered essential, is no longer so. However, when all is said and done, two things truly stand out to distinguish Charismatic prayer groups from all others. These are the “charisms” of “tongues” and healing. Both are intriguing and to a great extent perplexing. But of these two, we must admit that speaking in tongues is by far the more enigmatic. Confusion reigns when we enter into this area, and for very good reasons.

First, the manifestation of the phenomenon of tongues, as observed from the turn of the century up to the present, has been primarily within the Protestant theological context. One will recall that the original movement initiated by Charles Parham, rested upon the foundation of a so-called inspired meditation upon Scripture, unsubstantiated by any authoritative pronouncement or exegetical support of his conclusion. He readily assumed that the appropriate sign of “baptism in the Spirit” was a manifestation of the speaking in strange tongues, which he interpreted to mean foreign languages not known to the one manifesting the phenomenon. This approach, obviously problematic from the Catholic vantage point, raises many serious questions: What precisely constitutes the charism of tongues as manifested by the Apostles with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2)? Is this the same charism as spoken of by Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14)? If we can precisely identify what this gift is, is it still bestowed in this era? What precisely is the phenomenon of tongues as manifested within the Pentecostal and more importantly Catholic Charismatic movements? What is the criterion by which we may judge a true manifestation of the gift of tongues? Based upon

this criterion, what can we say about the authenticity of present day manifestations? This is but a partial list.

The first of these questions poses some difficulties. Regrettably, there is scant evidence within the body of Patristic writings dealing with the phenomenon of Acts 2. The general opinion regarding the nature of the manifestation at Pentecost is found in several passages of Irenaeus’, *Against Heresies*, in which he describes the Pentecost event “. . . from whence also, with one accord in all languages, they uttered praise to God.”²¹ From that point on this seems to have been the accepted position of the Church.²²

And what of 1 Cor. 14? We are left only with an admittance by St. John Chrysostom that the passages involved were obscure.²³ Indeed, they remain so. As Fr. Sullivan points out, today two schools of thought are divided on the matter. The first holds to the position that Corinthian *glossolalia* was the speaking in foreign languages. The second holds that the gift spoken of by St. Paul was that of ecstatic utterance.²⁴ It is not within my competence to judge as to the merits of either exegetical proof. That burden lies with the Church. Nevertheless, both sides garner support experientially.

The first position rests upon the common opinion of the Church Fathers and the renderings from the lives of the Saints. It is evident from these that the speaking of foreign tongues has manifested itself not only at Pentecost, but in the lives of such saints as St. Hildegarde, St. Vincent Ferrer, and St. Francis Xavier.²⁵

The second position infers that the phenomenon known as “tongues of jubilation” was known among such saints as St. Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross.²⁶ It seems that St. Isidore of Seville expressed the meaning of “jubilation” as effusive exultation which “erupts by means of a voice.”²⁷ “It is an effusion of the soul.”²⁸ An attempt is made to demonstrate the similarities between “jubilation” and the modern “singing in tongues”; however, a question arises, when one regards the fact that the Fathers and other Christian writers who spoke of “jubilation” never identified the phenomenon with the “gift of tongues.”²⁹ Fr. Sullivan admits that this is so, and makes the simple observation that this was probably so because tongues had always been understood to mean the “miraculous ability to preach the Gospel in foreign languages that one has never learned.”³⁰

However, by about 1000 A.D., the *Rituale Romanum* expressed the view of the Church which has remained to this day: that the facility in strange tongues or the mysterious ability to understand such as spoken by another can be seen as a sign to be weighed with other evidence in cases of demonic possession.³¹

The second question, regarding the manifestation of tongues beyond the close of the Apostolic age, can be briefly dealt with. St. Thomas, relying on the authority of Augustine, judged the manifestation at Pentecost to be a special sign specific to the Apostolic age, and one which ceased thereafter.³² Augustine, in the Epistle to St. John, concluded that the charism of tongues manifested at Pentecost was intended as a sign for the ages which followed, that the Gospels were to be preached “through all tongues over the whole earth.”³³ It follows from this that the particular significance of tongues in this light would make future repetitions superfluous. It is true, however, that the ability to converse in an unknown foreign tongue has been known to have occurred in the lives of a number of saints, as cited above. However, these manifestations have occurred in the cases of individuals of extraordinary sanctity, and with a lower frequency than many of the other gifts, such as healing and prophecy. What is the precise nature of the phenomenon prevalent amongst members of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements? To begin with, it will simplify matters if we limit ourselves to phenomena specific to the aforementioned groups. If we do, we may, on the basis of existing empirical evidence, safely conclude that modern *glossolalia* bears no resemblance to *xenoglossia*, the phenomenon of speaking a foreign language unknown to the speaker and known to another present.³⁴ In other words, the phenomenon bears no resemblance to the event of Pentecost. Undoubtedly, this fact might have sent shock waves through the original Pentecostal movement, considering the literal fundamentalist framework of Parham, its inadvertent founder. Evidently, there has either been a significant change in the species of sign manifested since the early days at Topeka or observations and impressions of

the original phenomenon were erroneous.

Then what precisely is this modern phenomenon? Fr. Sullivan has described some of the linguistic research done in the field of *glossolalia*, which have yielded some interesting results. Most significant is the research of Professor William G. Samarin, Professor of Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of Toronto. A linguistic analysis of contemporary *glossolalia* revealed that there were no systematically organized linguistic patterns to such vocalizations, basic elements essential to any comprehensible human language.” What then is *glossolalia*? Fr. Sullivan sums it up nicely when he writes, “. . . *glossolalia* is human speech that sounds like human language.”³⁶ That apparently is the reason *glossolalia* has been frequently mistaken for *xenoglossia*. It is hardly distinguishable from actual language and can easily be thought to be an ancient or “exotic” language. Samarin’s results are supported by the researches of James R. Jaquith, who recognizes the superficial resemblance to language in certain aspects of its structure.³⁷ Fr. Sullivan admits that, though *xenoglossia* might occur, he has no knowledge of a single scientifically verifiable case of this phenomenon.³⁸

With the scientific dismissal of *xenoglossia*, the foundation of Pentecostalism has evaporated. Yet Pentecostals have found justification for their contention that the phenomenon they experience is in fact the “gift of tongues” spoken of by Paul in his admonitions to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14). This presupposes that the use of the Greek word *glossa*, used in the text, was in fact referring to language, and not an obscure, archaic, obsolete or foreign word or expression.³⁹ Fr. Sullivan tries to demonstrate that the first usage, language, is the only sound one. Once this contention is exegetically established, an interesting argument (from Paul) follows:⁴⁰

According to 1 Cor. 14:2, “Anybody with the gift of tongues speaks to God, but not to other people because nobody understands him when he talks in spirit about mysterious things.”⁴¹ Therefore *glossolalia* is a heav-



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only language, intelligible to God and not others. It is an utterance in spirit (from the soul?) about mysteries (spiritual?)⁴²

The contention is also made that *glossolalia* is a personal gift for self-edification (1 Cor. 14:4):⁴³ “The one with the gift of tongues talks for his own benefit, but the man who prophecies does so for the benefit of the community.”⁴⁴

Furthermore, the tongue speaker does not intellectually comprehend the meaning of what he is saying and must therefore receive the “gift of interpretation” to understand (1 Cor. 14:13, 14)⁴⁵: “That is why anyone who has the gift of tongues must pray for the power of interpreting them. For if I use this gift in my prayers, my spirit may be praying but my mind left barren.”⁴⁶ This seems to indicate that tongues are a gift useful in praying,⁴⁷ and interviews with tongue speakers seem to yield that this is precisely its primary function, whether in private or group prayer.

Paul goes on to explain the possible scandal which might occur if the uninitiated view a potential chorus of tongue speakers and deem them mad (1 Cor. 14:23, 24). He therefore admonishes them to avoid such an occurrence by allowing that only two or three tongue speakers speak at most, one at a time, and only if there is an interpreter. Otherwise, they must speak to God and themselves in silence (1 Cor. 14:27-29).⁴⁸ This is a most interesting passage, as it clearly refutes the wild and uncontrolled speaking in tongues often justified by practitioners in a number of Pentecostal and Charismatic group settings.

This can be summed up by saying that St. Paul’s description of tongues appears to be one of language-like speech, unintelligible to both speaker and hearer, and useful primarily in the context of prayer.⁴⁹ A parallel between these attributes of Pauline “tongues” and the modern phenomenon can be drawn, lending some support to the contention that modern *glossolalia* is indeed some form of Biblically recognizable phenomena.

This argument is interesting, and raises once more the question as to whether the actual Pauline sense of “tongues” is closer to that of foreign languages, or some form of “ecstatic utterance.” Fr. Sullivan cites exegetical and psychological evidence in the hope of resolving the issue, but the issue is far from resolution.⁵⁰

Once more, however, we must reiterate that we are on very shaky ground when Biblical exegesis remains unsupported by Tradition. The unalterable fact remains that the contemporary phenomenon can in no way be equated to the Church’s understanding of the “gift of tongues” as manifested at Pentecost.

There are still two other important aspects of the modern phenomenon which need be described, if a complete understanding of *glossolalia* is to be acquired. These are, first, the subjective characteristics which appear to be universal to the phenomenon, and second, the actual context in which the experience occurs.

Regarding the subjective aspects of modern *glossolalia*, several important universals can be derived, from an analysis of the testimonies and evaluations of testimonies cited by Sullivan, Dearn, and Kelsey:

- 1) Glossolalia is effortless speech, requiring no rational formulation of speech sounds.
- 2) The individual can control the facility of speaking in tongues consciously at will.
- 3) There is the feeling that one can communicate with God with perfect expressiveness (in a way that is unsuitably achieved by ordinary language).
- 4) There is the feeling of emotional release.
- 5) The experience does not appear to involve an altered mental state, or induction of trance, except during the initial acquisition of the “gift,” and then not always.
- 6) The communication is a joyful experience.
- 7) Many adherents perceive an increase in religious fervor and psychological integrity.
- 8) The laying on of hands is not a necessary procedure in the acquisition of tongues, but may enhance the process.

How then is modern *glossolalia* acquired? I am familiar with two alleged cases of individuals who have acquired the “gift of tongues” within the context of private prayer.⁵¹ However, for the vast majority of practitioners, acquisition occurs within the context of group prayer, sometimes accompanied by the laying on of hands. For Catholic Charismatics, the context is specifically “baptism in the Spirit”; and this requires a certain amount of preparation, theological, as well as psychological. For our purposes it will suffice to restrict ourselves to an examination of one of the more popular schools of Charismatic preparation, the Life in the Spirit Seminars, developed by the Word of God Community out of Ann Arbor, Michi-

gan. Its popularity and prevalence in the field is demonstrated by the fact that as of March, 1991, the guidebook given to all seminar participants, had entered its thirtieth printing, with 1,690,000 copies in print.⁵²

That preparation for the “baptism in the Spirit” appears to have a significant role in the actual acquisition of “tongues” is clearly attested to by Fr. Sullivan, who does not hesitate to admit that there appears to be a high correlation between the stress laid on the attainment of this “gift,” with the “baptism in the Spirit” and the actual acquisition.⁵³ One need only read the Seminar’s Team Manual to see how much stress is laid upon the acquisition of this “gift.”⁵⁴ Fr. Sullivan readily admits this.⁵⁵ Other emphases cited by Dearn, include “upbuilding and encouragement, and openness to the reception of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁶ The actual “baptism in the Spirit” involves the praying of the group for those participating in the seminars, that they might receive deeper awareness or release of the Holy Spirit. Being open to the “new life in the Spirit” is the attitude that is cultivated.⁵⁷

This preparation is of paramount importance, for it is essential to enable the candidate for “baptism in the Spirit” to let go of the natural resistance (and for some, repugnance) that one has for the surrendering of one’s vocal chords to the Spirit.⁵⁸ As Fr. Sullivan explains, “The motive which the Manual presents is that speaking in tongues will give the person ‘a clear experience of what it means to have the Holy Spirit work through him’”^{59,60}

In essence, the seminars enable one to take this “leap,” by creating an intense desire for the “gift.” Here is an excerpt from the guidebook which demonstrates this process:

When you live in the spirit, the Spirit prays in you. Let him pray in you often during the day, sometimes in English, sometimes in the new tongue he has given you. Even if you have only a few syllables in a new tongue, or if you are not sure of it, pray in that tongue every day and it will grow. God’s word encourages you.⁶¹

Kelsey cites a parallel procedure used to “encourage” reception of “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” taken from a booklet entitled, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit*, by J. E. Stiles, a former member of the Assemblies of God, one of the largest Pentecostal denomination.⁶² The salient characteristics include: encouragement that the “gift” is already given; instruction that he will receive the Holy Spirit when hands are laid on him; instruction that he is to expect the Spirit to move on his vocal chords; admonition that he need cooperate in this “movement”; encouragement to release all fears that the experience may be false; use of deep breathing, coordinated with telling self one is receiving the Spirit.⁶³



It is clear that there is a method of induction used to foster the acquisition of tongues, in the aforementioned instances. My observations of the process of induction lend themselves to the following outline of the technique:

- 1) Frequently, though not always, there is a period of group training, during which are achieved the following: a) desire to receive the experience, fostered by exegetical and theological explanation and exhortation and b) encouraged reduction of inhibitions, enabling the surrender of conscious control of one’s vocal chords.
- 2) The induction of the experience within the group’s prayer service or “experience.” This is sometimes accompanied by the laying on of hands.
- 3) Continual exhortations and suggestions related to remaining open to the “gift,” sometimes including recommendations for habitual reinforcement of the use of this gift, or practice to acquire it fully.

Though the above discussion is in no way exhaustive, it is applicable to vast numbers of individuals who have, within recent decades received the “gift of tongues.” The implications of a “formula” for producing such a desired effect strike most obviously at the very heart of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements. A gift acquired by skillful planned effort, or at worst, subterfuge, can hardly be gratuitous.

We must finally deal with the last two questions posed, regarding the criteria for evaluations and ultimately our judgment upon the phenomenon.

First, it has become quite evident from our discussion that although it may be admitted by numbers of Pentecostals and Charismatics that the phenomenon of tongues need not necessarily accompany the “baptism in the Spirit,” nevertheless it is a much coveted and sought after confirmation of the event, so much so, that extraordinary pains are taken to maximize the possibility that the novice might readily receive the manifestation of “tongues.” I believe that I have sufficiently demonstrated that there are not sufficient theological grounds to support the Pentecostal notion of “baptism of Spirit” which has its origin in questionable theological speculation. It is clear that the phenomenon was an attempt to produce what can be termed from the Catholic perspective as a pseudo-sacrament, paralleling confirmation. Attempts by Catholics to redefine this experience as a “release of Spirit” already given in baptism and confirmation appear weak when held up to closer scrutiny. But more importantly, the signs of this “second blessing” have been shown to bear no resemblance to the scriptural event of Pentecost, upon which the original notion of “baptism of the Holy Spirit” supposedly rests. Remarkably, some Catholic proponents of Charismatic Renewal do continue to propagate this patently false conception of Biblical parallels. The guidebook for the Life in the Spirit Seminars incorporates meditations which suggest that this “baptism” is essentially the experience of the Apostles at Pentecost, an allegation which clearly demands refutation.⁶⁴ Though the Team Manual recognizes the problem with such an approach⁶⁵ it is surprising that such an erroneous notion should be allowed to be propagated. Further, the phenomenon of tongues which accompanies this “baptism in Spirit,” when subjected to empirical studies, admits of no actual manifestation of *xenoglossia*. However, cases of *xenoglossia* occurring outside the lives of exemplary Catholics of proven sanctity, have been judged by the Church to be a possible manifestation of the demonic, indicating that any manifestation of “tongues” occurring in significant numbers of individuals be open to rigorous examination by the Church.

But what of *glossolalia* in and of itself? How does this stand up to the criteria of the Church, regulating the acceptance of miraculous phenomena as authentic? Can *glossolalia* in any sense constitute a visible sign from God, in confirmation of this outpouring of Spirit? The criteria of Pope Benedict XIV admits that a miracle need only be above the powers of corporeal nature (i.e., angelic intervention).⁶⁶ If we allow for even a wider sense, some have argued that a miracle “need not even be strictly beyond the powers of corporeal nature, provided it be a

truly prodigious event, one at least highly unlikely even to result from natural forces alone.”⁶⁷ Admittedly, *glossolalia* does occur in some religious context and during the experience of prayer, an essential element, if we are to discuss the matter at all. But is this manifestation truly prodigious; unlikely to occur from natural forces alone? Further, is this religious context one which provides for the proof of authentic Revelation, the essential element of all truly miraculous phenomena, according to the First Vatican Council.⁶⁸

From our brief study we can readily conclude that the phenomena “appears” at first to be supernatural in character, as it is essentially precipitated in the context of prayer. However, a deeper examination reveals some interesting elements, namely:

a) There is well-founded evidence to indicate that the phenomenon is produced through a systematic method of induction. This involves on occasion self-suggestion (telling oneself) and other methods of psychological manipulation. A correlation can be drawn between the use of such techniques and the favorable results obtained (i.e., ability to speak in tongues).

b) To say that the experience could be in any way interpreted as prodigious in any sense, is absurd. It is a very common phenomenon that occurs with great frequency in the widest variety of assemblages. It is interesting to note that Manuel Pittson, of the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Washington, has defined *glossolalia* as “a stereotyped pattern of unconsciously controlled vocal behavior.”⁶⁹

c) It has never been fully determined that the phenomenon cannot occur (be learned) outside of the context of prayer. Are there persons outside of Christianity who can produce the identical effect? Can anyone learn to speak in tongues? This must be resolved before any merit can be given to the subject. I believe that the key lies in the passive surrender of vocal control to either unconscious or perhaps preternatural forces. Even if we could admit that St. Paul spoke of a second form of tongues to the Corinthians, we must admit a distribution of gifts. It certainly appears that more than a few receive it. It is possible that anyone and everyone willing to surrender may receive this “gift.”

Is *glossolalia* a proof of Revealed Truth? An authentic miracle can never occur as divine confirmation of another religion as a whole, or of a truth or teaching

contrary to Catholic doctrine. If occurring outside of Catholicism the miracle could never be construed as confirming an erroneous religion or truth, but only confirm the truth of the Catholic Faith unmistakably. Obviously, serious problems arise in this context:

1) The phenomenon of Pentecostalism has demonstrated that it appears independent of Catholic Truth and has been used to confirm a host of denominations which must by their existence outside the Catholic Church contain error. And what can one say of unity, considering the number of denominations that have arisen from the original experiment of Parham. In 1964, Kelsey listed some twenty-six bodies that were formed between 1919 and 1960.⁷⁰ I do not have recent statistics, but the growth of Pentecostalism has outstripped that of all other Christian denominations, and this has become of no small concern for the Church, whose base in traditionally Catholic nations has steadily eroded.

2) The theological grounds from which the movement blossomed forth were erroneous. From the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, to the dubious theology of the “second blessing,” Pentecostalism appears to be an experience seeking a theology. Catholic theologians find they must abandon Protestant speculation and create a new theology, quite speculative and quite shaky.

3) I am uncomfortable with the methods used by the Life in the Spirit Seminars, particularly the suggestion implied by the guidebook that there is a parallel between the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and at Ephesus, and the reception of the “baptism in the Spirit.”⁷¹ Furthermore, despite the creation of a Catholic Team Manual, the guidebook is used both by Protestants and Catholics, and for this probable reason, conspicuously omits Catholic doctrinal statements. Scripture is emphasized as one’s guide, in the absence of any positive reference to Tradition. Does this effect a danger to the integrity of the Catholic Faith? I am wary. In my opinion there also seems to be a subtle form of coercion in such admonitions as “If you are unwilling to receive the gift of tongues, you are putting a block on the Lord’s work and the Holy Spirit will not be free to work in you.”⁷² It seems strange that acceptance of this “gift” should be a requisite for the free operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual. It might be countered that there is only suggested an openness to any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that rejection of any of these would be resistance to God’s grace, hampering the operation of the Holy Spirit.

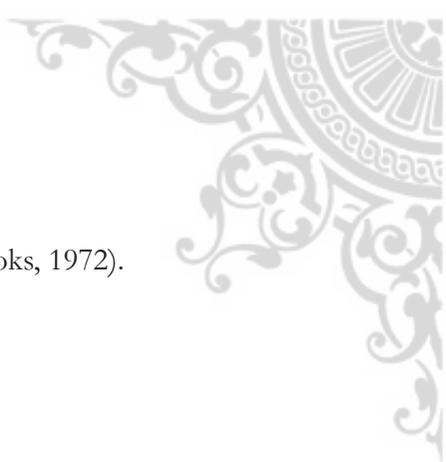
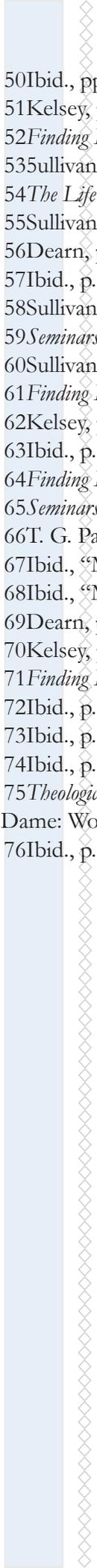
But then why the undue emphasis on tongues? It is also interesting to note that the candidate, during the third week of the seminars, is prepared to answer three questions to be posed during the fourth seminar, pertaining to his commitment to Christ. These are to be proposed just prior to his being prayed over to receive the “baptism in the Spirit,”⁷³ and are followed by a prayer to be meditated upon, which specifically states, “I ask you to baptize me in the Holy Spirit and give me the gift of tongues.”⁷⁴ I await the thorough examination of the program by competent ecclesiastical experts to evaluate what appear to be glaring defects which have gone unchecked for too many years.

It must be added that there is a school of thought which does attempt to reconcile the seeming universality of “tongues” and its supernatural actuality, within the context of renewal.⁷⁵ This is done by defining the charisms as supernatural in mode rather than in a radical essential way. What would distinguish the charisms within the context of the Christian community as opposed to identical phenomena outside the Christian context would be the fact that “these acts are performed in the power of the Spirit, glorify Christ, and are directed in some manner toward the building up of the Christian community.”⁷⁶

At this juncture we are left with a fundamental problem, that of the discernment of spirits. Clearly this analysis has raised questions which can only ultimately be answered by the careful reflection and pronouncement of those to whom Our Lord has entrusted the deposit of the Faith. There is a clear and immediate need to have a more precise standard whereby authenticity might be judged, and greater supervision by competent authorities to insure that the faithful are free from the kinds of false and suspect theologizing we have demonstrated exists. There is also the matter of a kind of psychological conversion prevalent, as regards the phenomenon of “tongues” which calls for serious scrutiny of the motives behind this, and greater discernment in evaluating the phenomenon in its varied contexts. Finally many have spoken of the genuine benefits of the renewal, particularly a greater awareness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, however one of the prevalent notions, which has freely circulated over the years is that there is a tendency toward indifferentism, which can lead to an abdication of the Faith, perhaps the most serious issue which needs to be addressed.

NOTES

- 1Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., *Charisms and Charismatic Renewal* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1982), pp. 50-52.
- 2Edward Dearn, *Christ and Charism* (Sydney, Australia: Renda Publications, 1982), pp. 112-113.
- 3Sullivan, pp. 52-53.
- 4Ibid., p. 54.
- 5Ibid., p. 55.
- 6Dearn, p. 4.
- 7Ibid., p. 114.
- 8Sullivan, p. 56.
- 9*Catechism of the Council of Trent* (Hawthorn, CA: Christian Book Club, 1975), p. 194.
- 10Ibid., p. 195.
- 11Dearn, pp. 41-42.
- 12Ibid., p. 41.
- 13Sullivan, pp. 62-63.
- 14Ibid., p. 63.
- 15Ibid., p. 63.
- 16Ibid., p. 63.
- 17Ibid., p.63.
- 18Ibid., p.71.
- 19Ibid., p.71.
- 20Ibid., pp. 70-72.
- 21Morton Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 35.
- 22Ibid., pp. 33-49.
- 23Ibid., p. 40.
- 24Sullivan, p. 123.
- 25Kelsey, pp. 47-50.
- 26Sullivan, p. 148.
- 27 Dearn, p. 73.
- 28Ibid., p. 73.
- 29Sullivan, p. 148.
- 30Ibid., p. 148.
- 31Kelsey, p. 46.
- 32Ibid., p. 48. 3
- 3Ibid., p. 40.
- 34Sullivan, p. 134
- 35Ibid., p. 132.
- 36Ibid., pp. 132-133.
- 37Ibid., p. 134.
- 38Ibid., p. 134.
- 39Ibid., pp. 123-124.
- 40Ibid., pp. 122-131.
- 41Jerusalem Bible. 4
- 2Sullivan, p. 129.
- 43Sullivan, p. 126.
- 44Jerusalem Bible.
- 45Sullivan, pp. 124-125.
- 46Jerusalem Bible.
- 47Sullivan, pp. 125-126.
- 48Ibid., p. 126.
- 49 Ibid., p. 127.

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- 50Ibid., pp. 127-131.
51Kelsey, pp. 13-14.
52*Finding New Life in the Spirit* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1972).
53Sullivan, p. 141.
54*The Life in the Spirit Seminars Team Manual* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1972).
55Sullivan, p. 141.
56Dearn, p. 46.
57Ibid., p. 46.
58Sullivan, p. 141.
59*Seminars Team Manual*, p. 147.
60Sullivan, p. 142.
61*Finding New Life in the Spirit*, pp. 32.
62Kelsey, p. 50.
63Ibid., p. 80.
64*Finding New Life in the Spirit*, pp. 19-22.
65*Seminars Team Manual*, pp. 116-122.
66T. G. Pater, "Miracles," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967 ed.
67Ibid., "Miracles."
68Ibid., "Miracles."
69Dearn, p. 70.
70Kelsey, pp. 242-243.
71*Finding New Life in the Spirit*, p. 20
72Ibid., p. 24.
73Ibid., p. 25.
74Ibid., p. 25.
75*Theological and Pastoral Orientations on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, prepared at Malines Belgium, May 21-26,1974*
(Notre Dame: Word of Life, 1974), pp. 50-51.
76Ibid., p. 51.