

(3) Contrary to the somber ideas of earlier investigators, who saw it as a neurotic, psychotic, hysterical or hypnotic symptom, psychopathological or compensatory, a product of emotional starvation, repression or frustration, glossolalia argues no unbalance, mental disturbance or prior physical trauma. It can and does occur in folk so affected, for whom it is often, in effect, a support mechanism, but many if not most, glossolalics are persons of at least average psychological health, who have found that glossolalia is for them a kind of exalted fun before the Lord.

(4) Glossolalia is sought and used as part of a quest for closer communion with God and regularly proves beneficial at conscious level, bringing relief of tension, a certain inner exhilaration, and a strengthening sense of God's presence and blessing.

(5) Glossolalia represents, focuses, and intensifies such awareness of divine reality as is brought to it; thus it becomes a natural means of voicing the mood of adoration, and it is not surprising that charismatics should call it their "prayer language". As a voice of the heart, though not in the form of conceptual language, glossolalia, in Christianity as elsewhere, always "says" something -- namely, that one is consciously involved with and directly responding to what Rudolf Otto called the "holy" or "numinous", which sociologists and anthropologists now generally call "the sacred".

(6) Usually glossolalia is sought, found, and used by folk who see the tongues-speaking community as spiritually "special" and who want to be fully involved in its total group experience.

All this argues that for some people, at any rate, glossolalia is a good gift of God, just as for all of us power to express thought in language is a good gift of God. But since glossolalists see their tongues as mainly if not wholly for private use and do not claim to know what they are saying, while Paul speaks only of tongues that are for utterance and interpretation in public and perhaps thinks that the speaker will always have some idea of his own meaning, it is not possible to be as sure of the identity of the two phenomena as restorationism requires.

Uncertainty peaks, as it seems to me, in connection with the interpretation of tongues. By interpretation, I mean the announcing of the message content that (so it is claimed) a glossolalic utterance has expressed. Restorationism invites us to equate both tongues and interpretation with the charismata at Corinth. Paul's word for "interpret" is diemeneuo (1 Corinthians 12:30; 14:5, 13, 27), which can mean explaining anything not understood (so in Luke 24:27) and in connection with language naturally implies translating the sense that is "there" in the words (as in Acts 9:36). Paul certainly speaks as if the Corinthian sounds carried translatable meaning (14:9-13), and present-day interpreters assume the same about present-day tongues, offering their interpretations as translation, in effect.