

## Speaking in Tongues in the Restoration Churches

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"WE BELIEVE IN THE GIFT OF TONGUES, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth" (Seventh Article of Faith). While over five million people in the United States today speak in tongues (Noll 1983, 336), very few, if any, are Latter-day Saints. However, during the mid-1800s, speaking in tongues was so commonplace in the LDS and RLDS churches that a person who had not spoken in tongues, or who had not heard others do so, was a rarity. Journals and life histories of that period are filled with instances of the exercise of this gift of the Spirit. In today's Church, the practice is almost totally unknown. This article summarizes the various views of tongues today, clarifies the origin of tongues within the restored Church, and details its rise and fall in the LDS and RLDS faiths.

There are two general categories of speaking in tongues: *glossolalia*, speaking in an unknown language, usually thought to be of heavenly, not human, origin; and *xenoglossia*, miraculously speaking in an ordinary human language unknown to the speaker. When no distinction is made between these two types of speech, both types are collectively referred to as glossolalia.

On the day of Pentecost, Christ's apostles were gathered together. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. . . . Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4, 6). The apostles were given the power to speak in languages they did not know, an example of xenoglossia. In contrast,

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the Saints in Corinth practiced glossolalia, speaking in unknown tongues (1 Cor. 14).

While speaking in tongues was accepted, practiced, and sometimes abused in New Testament times, modern researchers disagree about its validity as a religious experience. One group discounts the religious aspect of tongues and considers it aberrant human behavior. In the 1920s, psychologist Alexander Mackie concluded that glossolalists exhibit such symptoms as unstable nervous systems, disturbed sex lives, perversions, and exhibitionism. He claimed that speaking in tongues is a symptom of an emotionalism or a pathological dissociative process (in Mills 1986, 20–21). George Cutten, author of psychological and religious books, whose 1927 writings defined the standard view of glossolalia for many years, suggested that glossolalists experience a state of personal disintegration in which the verbo-motive centers of the brain become obedient to subconscious impulses. He linked glossolalia to hysteria, catalepsy, ecstasy, schizophrenia, and an underdeveloped capacity for rational thought (Cutten 1927).

A second group of investigators also discounts the religious aspect of tongues but considers it a normal, although uncommon, human behavior. L. Carlyle May has shown that glossolalia and xenoglossia are not limited to Christian churches but are almost universal in time and place. Glossolalia occurs frequently among the Eskimos of the Hudson Bay area. The priestesses of North Borneo speak incantations in a language known only to the spirits and themselves. The tribal doctors of the modern Quillancinga and Pasto groups of the Andes recite unintelligible prayers as they heal their patients. Glossolalia occurs during seances on the Japanese islands of Hokkaido and Honshu. Even Herodotus and Virgil wrote of priests speaking strange languages while possessed (May 1956).

Xenoglossia is also widespread. During the Later Han Dynasty in China (approximately 200 A.D.), the wife of Ting-in would suddenly become ill and speak in foreign languages she could not speak when normal. Today's Haida shaman of Alaska can speak Tlingit when inspired. East Africans who neither understand nor speak Swahili or English speak these languages when possessed by spirits (May 1956). Virginia Hine, another researcher of speaking in tongues, concluded, "Quite clearly, available evidence requires that an explanation of glossolalia as pathological must be discarded" (1969, 217).

A third group of investigators recognizes the religious aspect but accepts the legitimacy of tongues only in New Testament times. They argue, first, that speaking in tongues had no significant place in the post-apostolic church A.D. 100–400; second, that the Middle Ages offer no evidence that the apostolic gift of tongues was meant to be

perpetuated; third, that the reformation period gives no evidence of the continuance of speaking in tongues; and fourth, that the history of the church in modern times does not support the validity of tongues as a scriptural manifestation in today's church (Unger 1971, 136-45). According to these investigators, "the extensive evidence of church history and the effects of tongues on human experience—the emotional extremism, the unhealthy prophetism often manifest, the doctrinal ignorance and confusion, the divisive nature of the movements, the pride and empty conceit generated by erratic unscriptural 'experiences'—all these point to the truth of Paul's inspired Word, 'tongues shall cease' " (Unger 1971, 146).

A final group of researchers recognizes the religious aspect and accepts the legitimacy of tongues in modern times. Stressing the following points, they argue that speaking in tongues is a unique spiritual gift within the church of Jesus Christ:

- Speaking in tongues was ordained by God for the church (1 Cor. 12:28).
- Speaking in tongues is a specific fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 28:11; 1 Cor. 14:21; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16).
- Speaking in tongues is a sign *of* the believer (Mark 16:17).
- Speaking in tongues is a sign *to* the unbeliever (1 Cor. 14:22).
- Speaking in tongues is an evidence of baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 10:45, 46, 19:6).
- Speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift for self-edification (1 Cor. 14:4).
- The Apostle Paul desired that all would speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5) and that speaking in tongues should not be forbidden (1 Cor. 14:39; Jorstad 1973, 85-86).

Although speaking in tongues is the subject of intense and highly emotional discussion among Christians today, these differing viewpoints did not influence the early Latter-day Saints. There was no question in their minds about the legitimacy of speaking in tongues. Their leaders spoke in tongues, their scriptures approved of the practice, and a great many of them exercised this gift.

## THE BEGINNINGS

Each of the numerous sources describing the origin of speaking in tongues in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints credits Brigham Young with introducing the practice to Joseph Smith in Kirtland (HC; Watson 1968; Esplin 1981; Gibbons 1981; Newell 1987; Bushman 1976).

Brigham Young recalled these events in his journal:

In September, 1832, brother Heber C. Kimball took his horse and wagon, brother Joseph Young and myself accompanying him and started for Kirtland to see the Prophet Joseph. We visited many friends on the way, and some Branches of the Church. We exhorted them and prayed with them, and I spoke in tongues.

We proceeded to Kirtland . . . to see the Prophet. We went to his father's house and learned that he was in the woods, chopping. We immediately repaired to the woods, where we found the Prophet. . . . We soon returned to his house, he accompanying us.

In the evening a few of the brethren came in, and we conversed together upon the things of the kingdom. He called upon me to pray; in my prayer I spoke in tongues. As soon as we arose from our knees the brethren flocked around him, and asked his opinion concerning the gift of tongues that was upon me. He told them it was the pure Adamic language. Some said to him they expected he would condemn the gift brother Brigham had, but he said, "No, it is of God." (in Watson 1968, 2-4)

Joseph Smith described an evening in November 1832: "At one of our interviews, Brother Brigham Young and John P. Greene spoke in tongues, which was the first time I [Joseph Smith] had heard this gift among the brethren; others also spoke, and I received the gift myself" (HC 1:296-97). Even though these records seem reliable, there is ample evidence that speaking in tongues had already been preached and practiced openly by the Saints in Ohio for two years before Young arrived there late in 1832.

To understand the actual introduction of tongues into the Church, we must first become familiar with the background of its chief advocate, Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon moved to the Kirtland area from Pittsburgh in the fall of 1826, taking a position as a Campbellite preacher. The Campbellites were dedicated to restoring Christianity to its "primitive" New Testament state. The movement's founder, Alexander Campbell, called for a restoration of "the ancient order of things" emphasizing a lay ministry, baptism by immersion, and blessings of the Spirit. Campbell and Rigdon disagreed over the manifestation of these spiritual blessings. Rigdon claimed that "along with the primitive gospel, supernatural gifts and miracles ought to be restored" (Campbell 1868, 2:346). These gifts included speaking in tongues, prophecy, visions, and revelation. Campbell argued that these gifts belonged only to the apostolic period (*Public Discussion* 1913, 11).

In June 1830, Rigdon attended the annual meeting of the Mahoning Association, a loose confederation of Campbellite congregations organized to "protect their groups against heresy, to devise better ways to spread the gospel, and to provide fellowship among the ministers" (McKiernan 1971, 18). The Association rejected Rigdon's views about the restoration of spiritual gifts, most likely because Campbell opposed them and controlled a large part of the audience. Rigdon left the

meeting a bitter man; later that year, he and his congregation withdrew from the Campbellite movement.

In the fall of 1830, Joseph Smith received revelations that would change the course of the fledgling Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through Joseph the Lord said to Oliver Cowdery, "And now, behold, I say unto you that you shall go unto the Lamanites and preach my gospel unto them" (D&C 28:8). On 26 September, while the Saints were assembled in conference, Peter Whitmer received a charge to join Oliver in this mission to the American Indians (D&C 20:5); and a few days later, Parley P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson were called to go with them (D&C 32). In mid-October these four "commenced their journey, preaching by the way, and leaving a sealing testimony behind them, lifting up their voice like a trump in the different villages through which they passed" (HC 1:120).

Rigdon and Pratt were not strangers to each other. In the fall of 1829, a curious Pratt had heard Sidney Rigdon preach near Pratt's farm. "I found he preached faith in Jesus Christ, repentance towards God, and baptism for remission of sins, with the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who would come forward" (Pratt 1961, 31). Pratt accepted Rigdon's gospel and a year later sold his farm to take up the life of an itinerant preacher. During his travels, he was introduced to the Book of Mormon and subsequently joined the Church. Sidney Rigdon had inspired Pratt to seek for the "ancient gospel." Now Pratt could repay his friend by sharing his newly found knowledge, the miraculous restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Arriving in Kirtland, Pratt first called on Rigdon, who though initially skeptical, became converted and was baptized on 14 November 1830. Before the four missionaries left the area, they had converted approximately 130 people, most from Rigdon's flock. By the summer of 1831, one thousand new members from the Kirtland area had united with the Church (Pratt 1961, 48).

Kirtland was not the final destination of these missionaries, however; and after spending some time with Rigdon, Pratt was ready to resume his journey westward. He looked forward not only to converting the Indians, but to the gift of xenoglossia. Pratt "knew, for his Heavenly Father had told him, that when they got among the scattered tribes, there would be as great miracles wrought, as there was at the day of Pentecost" (*Painesville [Ohio] Telegraph*, 14 Dec. 1830).

John Corrill, who, although not a Campbellite, held Rigdon in high regard, heard of Sidney's leanings toward Mormonism and planned to go to Kirtland "to persuade Elder Rigdon to go home with me, on a preaching visit; for I thought, if I could get him away from them until

his mind became settled, he might be saved from their imposition” (1839, 8). But before he arrived, Corrill learned of Rigdon’s baptism. Now even more anxious to see his friend, he continued on to Kirtland, arriving in December 1830. “I attended several meetings,” he later noted, “one of which was the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which, I thought, would give me a good opportunity to detect their hypocrisy. The meeting lasted all night, and such a meeting I never attended before. They administered the sacrament, and laid on hands, after which I heard them prophecy [*sic*] and speak in tongues unknown to me” (Corrill 1839, 9).

The 15 February 1831 *Painesville Telegraph* describes the speaking in tongues among the Saints the previous December: “At other times they are taken with a fit of jabbering that which they neither understand themselves nor anybody else, and this they call speaking foreign languages by divine inspiration.”

In February 1831, Thomas Campbell, Alexander’s father, announced his plans to expose Mormonism’s “feigned pretensions to miraculous gifts, the gift of tongues, &c.” proposing to “afford them an opportunity of exhibiting in three or four foreign languages” their supposed supernatural abilities (*Painesville Telegraph*, 15 Feb. 1831; Hayden 1876, 219). Campbell did not press the issue, nor did the Saints respond to his challenge.

Sidney Rigdon had now learned all he could from the missionaries and decided to go to New York to meet the Prophet Joseph Smith. In December 1830, he traveled there with Edward Partridge, another young man interested in the Church, and they found the Prophet at Waterloo, New York. During the next six weeks, Joseph, Sidney, and Edward discussed the restoration of the gospel. Surely Sidney asked about “the ancient order of things” and the gifts of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues.

The Church was growing slowly in New York but rapidly in Ohio. The successes there, coupled with the persecutions in New York, made the Kirtland area very attractive. In December 1830, Joseph received a revelation that the Saints “should assemble together at the Ohio” (D&C 37:3). Obediently Joseph and Sidney left New York, arriving in Kirtland on 1 February 1831. On 8 March 1831, Joseph received the only revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants dealing specifically with gifts of the Spirit: “And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues, And to another is given the interpretation of tongues. And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God” (D&C 46:24–26). Given the instances of speaking in tongues before this time, this revelation did not reveal a new practice, but rather legitimized an already existing one.

In Kirtland, Alpheus Gifford heard Joseph Smith teach the doctrines of the restored Church and was baptized in June 1831. Returning to his home in Pennsylvania, he taught these new doctrines to his friends and neighbors and so impressed them that Elial Strong, Eleazar Miller, Enos Curtis, Abraham Brown, and his brother Levi Gifford traveled with him to Kirtland to meet the Prophet. There they were baptized, and Alpheus was ordained an elder (HC 1:109-10fn). Back home in Pennsylvania, they preached and baptized many, including Brigham Young in 1832. It was only after their visit to Kirtland that this group spoke in tongues, and it was from them that Brigham Young first heard this phenomenon (HC 4:110). Describing their missionary labors in 1831, Strong and Miller noted that “signs followed them that believed, . . . some spoke with tongues and glorified God” (*Evening and Morning Star*, May 1833).

On 19 June 1831, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and others left Kirtland for Missouri to begin the settlement of Zion. Ezra Booth, an early convert who later left the Church, recalled that “those who were ordained to the gift of tongues, would have an opportunity to display their supernatural talent, in communicating to the Indians, in their own dialect” ([Ravenna] *Ohio Star*, 10 Nov. 1831).

Reporting on the Saints’ activities in Missouri in 1831, Reverend Benton Pixley, previously “sent by the Missionary Society to civilize and Christianize the heathen of the west” (HC 1:372-73), noted that “they declare there can be no true church where the gift of miracles, of tongues, of healing, &c. are not exhibited and continued” (*The [Cincinnati] Standard*, 30 Nov. 1832).

Wilford Woodruff recorded in his autobiography that in the spring of 1832 he had read of a new sect called Mormons “that professed the ancient gifts of the gospel they healed the sick cast out devils and spoke in tongues” (Woodruff, 15).

Only then did Brigham Young enter this sequence of events. In September 1832, he first spoke in tongues; and on 8 November 1832, he met with Joseph Smith in Kirtland and spoke in tongues. On 14 November 1832, Zebedee Coltrin recorded in his journal that he “came to Kirtland to Brother Joseph Smith and heard him speak with Tongues and sing in Tongues also.” Within a matter of days, others in Kirtland were also speaking in tongues. Statements by Campbell, Pratt, Howe, Corrill, Gifford, Booth, and various newspaper articles in 1830 and 1831 make it clear that speaking in tongues was an accepted part of the LDS experience long before Brigham Young “introduced” it into the Church.

## THE GLOSSOLALIC PERIOD

1833-36

From 1833 to 1836, speaking in tongues became a church-wide phenomenon. The "language" spoken was often identified as the language of Adam. Because speaking in tongues was generally regarded as a sign of the truthfulness of the restored gospel rather than as a tool to be used in spreading the gospel in foreign lands, it generally took the form of glossolalia rather than xenoglossia.

During a conference on 22 January 1833, Joseph Smith, Zebedee Coltrin, and William Smith spoke in tongues "after which the Lord poured out His Spirit in a miraculous manner, until all the Elders spake in tongues, and several members, both male and female, exercised the same gift" (*Kirtland High Council Minutebook*, 22-23). The conference continued late into the evening. The next day, when the conference reconvened, these gifts were again manifested. On 17 January 1836, while the First Presidency, the Twelve, the Seventy, and the [High] Councilors of Kirtland and Zion were gathered together in conference, "the gift of tongues came on us also, like the rushing of a mighty wind" (HC 2:376). Five days later the gift of tongues again came to this group "in mighty power" (HC 2:383).

In May 1833, Gideon Carter reported to the Saints in Missouri that "the church at Kirtland is sharing bountifully in the blessings of the Lord, and many have the gift of tongues and some the interpretation thereof" (*Evening and Morning Star*, July 1833). Many exercised this gift in their homes (Gates 1883, 21-22; "Early Scenes" 1882, 11; Stevenson 1894, 523).

At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in March 1836, speaking in tongues was abundant. Joseph Smith pled in his dedicatory prayer, "Let it be fulfilled upon them, as upon those on the day of Pentecost; that the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof" (D&C 109:36). "Hundreds of Elders spoke in tongues, but, many of them being young in the Church, and never having witnessed the manifestation of this gift before, some felt a little alarmed" ("Gems" 1881, 65). Joseph prayed to the Lord to withhold the Spirit and then instructed the congregation on the nature of the gift of tongues. Later, Brigham Young gave an address in tongues which David W. Patten interpreted. Patten then gave a short exhortation in tongues himself (HC 2:428). That day many others spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Adults were not the only ones to speak in tongues. According to David Pettigrew, "The gift of tongues, I think, was the cause of the excitement of the opponents of the Church in Missouri. When they



heard little children speaking tongues that they did not themselves understand," the people became alarmed at the Saints' presence (Pettigrew n.d., 15).

Along with the gift of tongues came excesses and abuses. Some members of the Church "would speak in a muttering, unnatural voice and their bodies be distorted" (*Times and Seasons*, 1 April 1842). In a July 1833 letter to the Saints, Sidney Rigdon counseled: "Satan will no doubt trouble you about the gift of tongues, unless you are careful" (HC 1:369). Fredrick G. Williams wrote in the 15 April 1845 *Times and Seasons*, "Many who pretend to have the gift of interpretation are liable to be mistaken, and do not give the true interpretation of what is spoken; therefore, great care should be had, as respects this thing."

In September 1834, Joseph Smith redefined the legitimate use of this gift—"It was particularly instituted for the preaching of the Gospel to other nations and languages, but it was not given for the government of the Church"—and advised that "we speak our own language in all such matters" (*Kirtland High Council Minutebook*, 40). Until this time, the Saints had viewed speaking in tongues (glossolalia) as a sign from God of the truthfulness of the restoration. Joseph's statement now emphasized only its utilitarian value (xenoglossia).

The gift of tongues and the problems encountered by the Saints in exercising it provided ample fodder for anti-Mormon writers. E. D. Howe's *Mormonism Unveiled* was the first to take aim at this spiritual gift, and other writers quickly followed. "It appears," wrote one such individual, "that by 1833, the numerous failures at guessing right, in the shape of prophecies, had become so disheartening to the faithful, and so disgusting to the Gentiles, as to render some new device necessary. Hence the gift of tongues, which, on a previous occasion, had been denounced as a work of the devil, was now officially resumed" (Kidder 1842, 85). At the same time, the 15 August 1833 *Western Courier* in Ravenna, Ohio, wrote that, "the 'unknown tongues' are getting out of fashion. Their prophecies, like signs of rain, fail in dry weather."

In spite of these problems, however, speaking in tongues played a vital role in the faith of the Saints. Orson Pratt noted:

The members of the church were confirmed and strengthened in their faith by the enjoyment of this gift. . . . They would have had reason to doubt whether they were true believers; but when they received tongues, together with all other promised blessings, they were no longer in doubt, but were assured, not only of the truth of the doctrine, but that they themselves were accepted of God. (Pratt 1884, 100)

## THE XENOGLOSSIC PERIOD

1837-99

Between 1837 and 1899, though the Saints continued to speak in the Adamic language, Church leaders emphasized the utility of speaking in foreign languages, or xenoglossia. In June 1837, Joseph Smith called Heber C. Kimball to preside over the Church's first foreign missionary efforts in England. The announcement of this mission met with enthusiastic support; and within a year, fifteen hundred converts had been made in England. William Clayton's 1840 missionary journal is filled with instances of speaking in tongues (Allen and Alexander 1974, see entries for 7 Feb., 29 May, 12, 13, 14, 27 June, and 6 Oct. 1840).

In the mid-1840s, as the Church sent missionaries for the first time into non-English-speaking lands, the utilitarian value of speaking in tongues was underlined. The following statement by Orson Pratt is characteristic: "If a servant of God were under the necessity of acquiring in the ordinary way a knowledge of languages, a large portion of his time would be unprofitably occupied. While he was spending years to learn the language of a people sufficiently accurate to preach the glad tidings of salvation unto them, thousands would be perishing for the want of knowledge" (1884, 99).

In 1847 in Merthyr, Wales, Elder Dan Jones reported that a Hindu from Bengal, India, called at his door "seeking charity." Jones taught him the gospel and took him to church the following Sunday. There the gift of tongues was manifest, and the Saints taught the Indian in "eight different languages of the east," astonishing him by singing in Malabar and Malay. On 21 July 1847, Jones baptized this man, probably the first Indian convert (*Millennial Star*, 1 Aug. 1847). Brigham Young often used this gift to speak with the American Indians in their own language (Hardy 1934, 432-33). In 1888 Elder Gearsen S. Bastian was sent on a mission to Denmark. Shortly after he arrived there, without an adequate understanding of the Danish language, he "arose, and under the influence and power of God he preached the gospel with much plainness in the Danish language for an hour and twenty minutes" (Lambert 1914, 93).

In addition to speaking in tongues, the phenomenon of singing in tongues became quite common in England and the United States. Louisa Barnes Pratt recalled: "One afternoon I attended a prayer meeting. The sisters laid their hands upon my head and blessed me in a strange language. It was a prophetic song. Mrs. E. B. Whitney was interpreter. She said that I should have health, and go to the valleys of the mountains, and there meet my companion and be joyful" (in Carter 1947, 243).

In a 5 May 1842 British Mission conference in Manchester, Lorenzo Snow sang a hymn in tongues (Romney 1955, 59). Wilford Woodruff, writing about a visit from Eliza R. Snow and Elizabeth Ann Whitney in 1854, recalled: "We passed a pleasant evening together, and before they left they sang in tongues in the pure language which Adam and Eve spoke in the Garden of Eden" (Cowley 1909, 355). Whitney sang in the Adamic language throughout her life, the last time on her eighty-first birthday, two months before she died in 1882 (Jenson 1920, 3:563). In 1867, Matilda Robinson King pacified several marauding Indians by singing "O Stop and Tell Me, Red Man" in the Indians' own language (Hartshorn 1975, 2:147). Previously, Jane Grover had saved her own and others' lives by chastising a roving band of Indians in their own tongue (Tullidge 1877, 475-77). In 1898 at a conference of the Davis Stake, one of the stake patriarchs first spoke in tongues and then began to sing in an unknown tongue. When he concluded, another patriarch rose and gave the interpretation. Others at the conference also experienced this gift (Cowley 1899, 447).

Throughout this period, the spontaneous and uncontrollable nature of tongues caused difficulties. Parley P. Pratt warned the Saints: "Never give out appointments for speaking in tongues, . . . neither speak in tongues to an assembly who have come together for the purpose of hearing you thus speak; neither speak to *any one* for a sign, on *any occasion*, for this is not pleasing in the sight of heaven" (*Millennial Star*, Sept. 1840). Speaking in tongues was to be used for the benefit of the Saints in preaching the gospel, not as a sign to unbelievers. Pratt emphasized the utilitarian nature of this gift. "This is the great and important use of tongues, that the Elders of Israel may preach the gospel to the nations of the earth, so that all men may hear in their own tongue or language of the wonderful works of God" (*Millennial Star*, Sept. 1840).

When the Relief Society was founded, Joseph Smith warned the sisters in April 1842: "If any have a matter to reveal, let it be in your own tongue. Do not indulge too much in the gift of tongues, or the devil will take advantage of the innocent. You may speak in tongues for your own comfort but I lay this down for a rule that if any thing is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine" (in Ehat and Cook 1980, 119).

## THE REVISIONIST PERIOD

1900-57

The new century brought a change in the acceptability of speaking in tongues. Before 1900, both glossolalia and xenoglossia were

common, but these extremely personal experiences did not fit into an evolving church which emphasized order, authority, permission, and control. Speaking in tongues could be done by anyone, at any time, privately or publicly, without the approval of priesthood authority. Tongues simply did not fit into the “corporate worship experience” twentieth-century Latter-day Saint leaders were trying to establish. In the April 1900 general conference, President Joseph F. Smith warned:

There is perhaps no gift of the spirit of God more easily imitated by the devil than the gift of tongues. When two men or women exercise the gift of tongues by the inspiration of the spirit of God, there are a dozen perhaps that do it by the inspiration of the devil.

So far as I am concerned, if the Lord will give me the ability to teach the people in my native tongue, or in their own language to the understanding of those who hear me, that will be sufficient gift of tongues to me. (CR April 1900, 41)

In this address, Smith began the process of redefining speaking in tongues. No longer were tongues an acceptable “sign of the believer” or “sign to the unbeliever”; now speaking in tongues was legitimate only for missionary work. The following year, the *Juvenile Instructor* printed an article by Benjamin Goddard on the gift of tongues that echoed this position: “This gift has probably, been most beneficial when exercised by humble Elders in the missionary fields” (1901, 489). Speaking in Blackburn, England, five years later, Joseph F. Smith continued to de-emphasize speaking in tongues as a spiritual manifestation and blessing: “I also want to say to you who are in the habit of desiring to hear the gift of tongues and the interpretation thereof, to seek better things.” Instead, he emphasized tongues as a legitimate gift only for missionaries. “There is where the gift of tongues comes in, and where it is very useful” (*Millennial Star*, 15 Nov. 1906).

This attack on speaking in tongues caught some Church members by surprise. James X. Allen, an early Utah physician, expressed his concerns in an *Improvement Era* article entitled “Passing of the Gift of Tongues”:

I was somewhat startled a few days ago, while in conversation with a young brother who had just returned from a mission to Scandinavia, by hearing him remark that he had never in his life heard anyone speak in tongues. . . . He has filled an honorable mission, and is today strong in the faith, and yet, he has never heard and experienced one of the most common gifts of the gospel, as enjoyed years ago.

The remark was somewhat of a shock to me; because in the early days of the Church—where I was reared—there were so many of the Saints who enjoyed the gifts, and there were none among my acquaintances who had not heard the sweet sound of the gift of tongues. Many times there would be both speaking and singing in tongues, in the same sacrament meeting. The interpretation of tongues

was equally as common as the tongues themselves. In fact, we were wont to regard the speaking in tongues, the interpretation of tongues, the relating of dreams and prophesying, as an essential part of the latter-day gospel.

Dr. Allen then asked a most important question:

If men now think they can get along without the gifts of the gospel, may not the time come when they may believe they can get along without its ordinances? (Allen 1904, 109, 111)

Curiously, in the same conference in which Joseph F. Smith first redefined the role of tongues, Anthon H. Lund voiced his concern about losing the gifts of the Spirit: "If there ever came a time when these gifts were not in the Church it would be on account of unbelief. . . . The Church whenever it is upon the earth must have the Holy Spirit within it; the members of the Church must have this Spirit, and the spiritual gifts must be manifested; otherwise it would be a dead church (CR April 1900, 32). Orson Pratt also believed that if the Latter-day Saints were not in possession of the gifts of the Spirit, they were not in possession of the gospel and were "no better off then the Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians" (JD 14:185).

However, these brethren were not effective in altering the new direction defined by Joseph F. Smith. Problems with order and control helped justify the change. Apostle Rudger Clawson recorded the following incident in his journal on 11 February 1901:

I arrived at Idaho Falls, and put up at Bp. Thomas'. Before going to meeting Bp. Thomas, informed that a peculiar and somewhat serious condition prevailed in the ward, and he wanted counsel regarding it. He said that one of the sisters had been speaking in tongues at their fast meetings, and he feared that it was not done by the Spirit of the Lord. A very unpleasant and unsatisfactory feeling prevailed in the meeting whenever she spoke or sang in tongues.

As further evidence that the tongue was not from the Lord one of the sisters in the congregation immediately upon hearing the tongue was visibly affected and went into spasms.

The bishop took occasion to point out to the saints the evil resulting from the exercise of this strange tongue, and warned them against it. This greatly angered a young man, who was related to the sister who had spoken in tongues, and who had just returned from a mission to the world, and he arose in the meeting and cursed the bishop in the name of the Lord.

While opposition to the practice grew, speaking in tongues continued in the Church, although at a substantially reduced level. Thomas Briggs attended a meeting of patriarchs in Farmington, Utah, in December 1905 where Edwin Pace spoke in tongues (Stevenson 1968, 149). In 1916, a young American missionary spoke in tongues for over an hour to a group of German Saints (Hahn 1983, 30-31). Pace's speech

was apparently an example of glossolalia while the young missionary's was xenoglossia.

Heber J. Grant told of an experience with tongues in 1919 between Karl G. Maeser, a German convert, and Franklin D. Richards, president of the European Mission. While returning home from his baptism, Maeser asked Richards a question about the resurrection. William Budge, acting as Richards' interpreter, proceeded to translate. "Brother Budge," Maeser responded, "you do not need to interpret those answers to me; I understand them perfectly." As the men walked on, Maeser spoke in German and Richards replied in English, each understanding the other completely without a knowledge of the other's language (Grant 1920, 329).

While his audiences were often blessed with the interpretation of tongues, David O. McKay followed the course set by Joseph F. Smith and did not encourage speaking in tongues, although on one occasion he desired the gift himself. "I have never been much of an advocate of the necessity of tongues in our Church, but today I wish I had that gift. But I haven't" (McKay 1953, 552). In February 1921 in Hawaii (Cox 1967, 7-8) and April 1921 in New Zealand (Middlemiss 1976, 73-74), President McKay's audience received the gift of interpretation of tongues; and in June 1922 in Rotterdam (Morrell 1966, 110-11), President McKay temporarily received this same gift.

To minimize glossolalia, Church leaders redefined speaking in tongues to mean the ability to quickly learn a foreign language. In this way, speaking in tongues could again be made legitimate, but only under this new definition. In an October 1948 general conference address, Matthew Cowley said: "They do speak with new tongues, those who accept the call to the ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have seen young missionaries in New Zealand and in Hawaii who, within six months' time could deliver sermons in the languages of the people among whom they were laboring" (CR October 1948, 156). Joseph Fielding Smith solidified this revisionist position in 1957 with an article entitled "The Gift of Tongues" in the *Improvement Era*:

Question: In the early period of the Church the gift of tongues was practiced, but for many years we have heard nothing of this gift. Has it ceased to be in the Church, and if so, why?

Answer: There has been no cessation of the gift of tongues. . . . The true gift of tongues is made manifest in the Church more abundantly, perhaps, than any other spiritual gift. Every missionary who goes forth to teach the gospel in a foreign language, if he is prayerful and faithful, receives this gift. (1957, 622-23)

Speaking at a Munich Area Conference in 1973, Joseph Anderson, an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, reminisced about his missionary service in Germany in 1937. He described how he had

memorized one new sentence each day for over four months and felt that he "was given the gift of tongues, so to speak, in that it came to me not suddenly, as sometimes happens, but it came to me after sincere and fervent prayer and determined work and effort" (p. 31). As recently as March 1975, the *New Era* reiterated Joseph Fielding Smith's views, stating that speaking in tongues is manifest in the ability of missionaries to learn foreign languages quickly (Carr 1975, 48). This is the "speaking in tongues" that most Church members know today.

#### THE RLDS POSITION 1844-1987

The history of speaking in tongues in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) is similar to that of the LDS Church. On several occasions during the difficult days following the death of Joseph Smith, manifestations of spiritual power confirmed and directed the work of the Reorganization. Zenos H. Gurley wrote that in 1851, while he and others were concerned about who was the legal successor of Joseph Smith, Reuben Newkirk "arose and spoke in tongues." Shortly thereafter, Newkirk's wife received the same gift and blessing (RHC 1967, 3:207). A few days later, Gurley's daughter spoke in tongues; and as the Reorganization proceeded, many others spoke and sang in tongues. At a conference in Zarahemla, Wisconsin, on 7 April 1853, those present united in prayer seeking divine guidance. "It was at this meeting that [there was] an exhibition of power, light, and unity of spirit, above any ever before witnessed among us. Tongues were spoken and interpreted; hymns sung in tongues and the interpretation sung; . . . Many sang in tongues in perfect harmony at once, as though they constituted a well practiced choir" (Draper 1969, 100).

Unlike LDS leaders who attempted to minimize tongues because of the potential for impropriety or abuse, RLDS leaders believed that the benefits outweighed any associated problems: "But notwithstanding the possibility of unwise and unfaithful Saints being led astray by Satanic power, it nevertheless remains a privilege, nay, a duty for the Saints to seek for spiritual gifts" ("Tongues" 1885, 446). RLDS leaders shared the vision that "without such evidences of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Church would be lifeless and dead to Christ" ("Question" 1951, 1070). Joseph Smith III remarked that "by such remarkable manifestations in the early days of the Reorganized Church was our faith in the ministering of the Holy Spirit fed and kept alive, and our hearts comforted and encouraged" (in Anderson 1935, 1008).

RLDS missionary experiences with xenoglossia were similar to their LDS counterparts. Emma Burton recalled that "the gift of tongues

rested upon me again, and I exercised it freely and joyously. Many of the Saints present knew that it was a Polynesian tongue, but only one understood it. A man by the name of Taiai after the meeting said, "That was the language of my island'" (1908, 539). In 1919, Hubert Case wrote of an event in which he preached to the natives on the island of Rarotonga in their own language for five consecutive nights, but after each night's service was over, he could not speak the language (Draper 1969, 105).

In 1908 Apostle J. W. Wight spoke in tongues and gave the interpretation in an RLDS general conference. Fifty years later, RLDS leaders continued to encourage, rather than discourage, speaking in tongues (Reid 1958, 438). Apostle Evan Fry's 1962 book, *Restoration Faith* answered the question "Do Latter Day Saints speak in tongues?":

The gift of tongues is a spiritual gift. It is given not by the will of men, but by the Spirit of God and the will of God. That gift is not a mere emotional upheaval or ecstatic excitement within the person speaking but is a definite manifestation of power from outside himself.

There is still a place in the church for the gift of tongues, for the edifying of the church, for the conviction of the unbeliever, for the warning, encouragement, and strengthening of the members of the body of Christ. (p. 147)

Opposing the LDS position that limited speaking in tongues to the ability to quickly learn a foreign language, Fry wrote that tongues was more than mere fluency or facility in speaking unknown languages; it was literally a supernatural gift. In 1968, F. Henry Edwards, member of the RLDS Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency, reiterated this idea: "The gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues are specific gifts made to meet emergencies, and to demonstrate the power of God. When the emergency passes, the gift is withdrawn" (1968, 249).

During the next ten years, major changes occurred in RLDS doctrine that further separated it from its origins and from the Latter-day Saint position (Booth 1980). Throughout the first hundred years of its history, the RLDS Church had framed its message in terms of its differences from the LDS Church. As the RLDS Church became an international denomination, attempting to convert those who had never heard of either LDS or RLDS, they were forced to reevaluate the content of their message and the foundations of their faith. In doing so, RLDS doctrines took on a mainstream Protestant orientation ("Identity" 1979). In 1979 Alan Tyree, writing in the *Saints Herald*, abandoned the 1962 position regarding the source of speaking in tongues. Rather than a spiritual gift given through the will of God, he defined speaking in tongues as "an emotional experience of ecstasy, by which a person



gives vent to pent-up tension in the voicing of nonsense syllables that do not represent a genuine language" (1979, 29).

In 1987 Tyree, then a member of the RLDS First Presidency and editor of *Exploring the Faith*, a study of RLDS beliefs commissioned by the Committee on Basic Beliefs, abandoned the original Church position and brought the RLDS view in line with the LDS position regarding tongues as the ability to quickly learn foreign languages. "Some persons are found to possess more than an ordinary facility in language. This too is a gift although it seems to be more developmental than spontaneous. Although it may not seem so dramatic, it is in fact a very real assistance in carrying the revelation of God to other cultures" (Tyree 1987, 73-74). Although it had taken a few years longer, the RLDS hierarchy had now redefined speaking in tongues as had their LDS brethren.

## CONCLUSION

Speaking in tongues confirmed to the early Saints that they were an important part of the actual restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They wanted to know that God approved of their actions. They wanted to commune with him and to feel his power in their lives. Speaking in tongues, both glossolalia and xenoglossia, was part of that communion.

Armand Mauss, referencing Ernst Troeltsch (1931), notes that new religions "tend to be characterized at the beginning by many mystical and spiritual experiences, and by much 'charismatic' fervor" but that they tend to become "tamed" with the passage of time (1987, 81). Describing these institutionalizing trends in his own church, the Assemblies of God, David Womack provided a description that could easily be applied to today's Latter-day Saint church:

An increasing formality, a decreasing emphasis on the spontaneous moving of the Spirit, a growing emphasis on pulpit-centered rather than congregation-centered worship, the development of the audience-performer complex of church services, a gradual de-emphasis on personal experience in prayer, the limitation of religious activities to within the walls of the church building, a shift in purpose from evangelism to serving the movement, . . . all these and many other such problems are symptoms of . . . [the] separation of the Church from its apostolic sources. (1968, 90)

Speaking in tongues succumbed to the forces that Womack describes—decreasing spontaneity in worship, de-emphasis of personal spiritual experiences, and strong pressures toward activities only within the framework defined by Church leaders. In addition, tongues simply became irrelevant to the vast majority of the Saints. By the turn of the

century, most Church members were second, third, and fourth-generation members whose faith did not require the spiritual confirmation that speaking in tongues provided to their parents and grandparents.

Today, the relevancy of the gifts of the Spirit is returning. An increasing number of Church members are troubled by the sterility of their own personal worship. Lacking fulfillment within the Church, they are searching for the spiritual experiences that were common in previous generations. Philosophies like the New Age movement with its crystals, channels, and seances are attracting many Church members. These groups promise a link to the spiritual world that block-scheduled meetings, correlated lesson manuals, and ward dinners cannot. It is unfortunate that so many must seek spiritual experiences outside the Church when these experiences were once legitimately available within it.

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