When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2.1-4).  

This essay can be considered as a schematic theology of glossolalia. It also is a specific kind of theological analysis focused on the question of truth. This issue has not been seriously taken up by scholars and theologians.  

1. All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.  
phenomena with an a priori bias against the transcendental dimension Pentecostals themselves attribute to their experience. Non-Pentecostal Christian researchers are usually at a loss as to how to assess the truth value of what has at times been claimed by tongues-speakers to be angelic language.

Pentecostal theologians, however, cannot continue to avoid confronting this important matter. The growth of the movement worldwide is intimately connected to the centrality of this experience—what Pentecostals have termed their 'distinctive testimony'. This demands that her theologians seriously reflect on this question of truth, not only for apologetic purposes, but also for a deeper understanding of its role and function within the emerging global Pentecostal community. This paper is an attempt to respond to this demand, and, in its concern for truth, is an essay in what David Tracy calls fundamental theology. While normative, it is also descriptive and interpretive for the Pentecostal community and therefore systematic, with important implications for her practical theology.

What does it mean to speak of 'the truth' of glossolalia? On the one hand, it may seem sound to begin by distinguishing between glossolalia (random verbal utterances) and xenolalia (utterances of actual languages unknown to the speaker), and then proceed to evaluate the truth claims of xenolalic tongues-speech. However, the evidence is not completely in, and scholars are divided as to the validity of the distinction. On the other hand, if William Samarin's conclusions regarding
