

The background of the cover features a photograph of a white church with a brown roof and a tall, pointed steeple topped with a cross. The church is set against a dark, overcast sky. On the left side, there is a large, dark silhouette of a person's head in profile, facing right. The title text is overlaid on this background.

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David W. Cloud

Tongues Speaking

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Table of Contents

About Way of Life's eBooks	4
Powerful Publications for These Times.....	6
Introduction	13
Why We Reject the Pentecostal Doctrine of Tongues	16
Biblical Tongues Were Real Earthly Languages.....	17
Biblical Tongues Were A Sign to Israel.....	19
Biblical Tongues Were Not A Sign to Believers	25
Biblical Tongues Were Spoken to God	26
Biblical Tongues Were Accompanied by Interpretation.....	29
Biblical Tongues Were Bound by Apostolic Law	34
The Pentecostal Method of Tongues Speaking Is Unscriptural.....	38
Biblical Tongues Were Not Spoken By All.....	40
Tongues Speaking and Spirit Baptism.....	43
Tongues Speaking and Spirit Filling.....	45
Private Prayer Language.....	47
Concluding Questions	56

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testified: “You don’t have to agree with everything to greatly benefit from this helpful book.”

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Way of Life Literature

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Introduction

This book is excerpted from the larger illustrated book *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements: The History and the Error*, which is available in print and eBook editions from Way of Life Literature -- www.wayoflife.org.

The view that tongues is a gift for every believer and that it is to be exercised today has been an integral part of the Pentecostal movement from its inception.

Tongues speaking, according to most Pentecostals and Charismatics, has a three-fold purpose: First, it is a sign of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” In this capacity it is a sign both to the believer himself as well as to those who are observing. Second, it is a means whereby God communicates to the church. This allegedly occurs as the messages of tongues are interpreted. Third, it is a “private prayer language” whereby the user edifies himself. Under this category the private edification is said to produce a wide assortment of benefits, including encouragement during spiritual trials, physical healing, spiritual guidance, even a sleep aid!

Consider some quotes from Pentecostals and Charismatics:

“The distinctive doctrine of the Pentecostal churches is that speaking with tongues is the ‘initial evidence’ of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This article of belief is now incorporated in the official doctrinal schedules

of practically all Pentecostal denominations” (Donald Gee, *Now That You’ve Been Baptized in the Spirit*, 1972, p.

“God took the baptism in the Holy Spirit out of the theoretical by giving the believer an undeniable physical evidence when the believer was filled. That evidence is speaking with other tongues. ... The fact is those who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit *will* speak in tongues” (Charles Crabtree, “How Practical Is the Pentecostal Lifestyle?”, *Questions and Answers about the Holy Spirit*, 2001, p. 70; Crabtree is assistant general superintendent of the Assemblies of God). [Note that he uses the terms “baptism in the Holy Spirit” and “filling of the Holy Spirit” as synonyms.]

“Speaking in tongues is always manifested when people are baptized in the Holy Ghost” (Kenneth Hagin, Sr., *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, 1974, p. 89).

“Speaking in tongues is not the baptism in the Holy Spirit, but it is what happens when and as you are baptized in the Spirit, and it becomes an important resource to help you continue...” (Dennis Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You*, p. 71).

“I say to all those who have a problem of insomnia due to their thoughts and reasoning, ‘speaking in tongues and you will sleep’. ... If you speak in tongues in your bed, your reasoning will cease and you will soon be asleep. ... The remedy is infallible” (G. Ramseyer, *You Think Too Much*).

“Even your physical and cerebral fatigue will disappear [as you speak in tongues]” (Thomas Roberts, late French Pentecostal leader, cited from Fernand Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, 2001, p. 123).

In his autobiography, David DuPlessis said God showed him that tongues was a means for determining the divine will. “... the light clicked on. I was speaking to God in tongues, and He was

speaking back to me in my mind. I began to find beautiful revelation that way. ... Praying in tongues proved to be a wonderful step in working my way out of such an impasse [in not being able to discern God's will]. I would merely pray in tongues, and if the idea held firm, then I knew it was real" (*A Man Called Mr. Pentecost*, pp. 76-78).

We would note that some within the broader Charismatic movement today de-emphasize tongues as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. One former Charismatic wrote:

"James Robison and others came up with the idea that you can be baptized in the Holy Spirit (2nd experience after salvation) and demonstrate it by another sign gift or by the fruit of the Spirit (esp. by love). That was a much more commonly held belief in the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches we attended outside of the Assemblies of God. We attended Church of God of Cleveland, TN; Assemblies of God; the Foursquare denomination; Calvary Chapel; Vineyard; Open Bible denomination; various independent Charismatic churches and People of Destiny churches (now PDI Sovereign Grace Churches)" (Dave and Tami Lee, March 31, 2006).

Therefore, the sign aspect of tongues is less widely held today than it was before the onslaught of the Charismatic movement.

Thus while the following study is relevant to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement as a whole, not every part of it is applicable to every Pentecostal-Charismatic church.

Why We Reject the Pentecostal Doctrine of Tongues

Following is a summary of the Bible reasons why we reject the Pentecostal-Charismatic doctrine of tongues.

Let me say, first, that I am convinced that there are some details pertaining to tongues speaking that we cannot understand today, since the legitimate gift has not been practiced for almost 2,000 years. There are many things in Scripture like this.

We know almost nothing about the operation of the Urim and Thummim, for example, even though it is mentioned in seven passages in the Old Testament. We know that it was something that was kept in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:30) and it was a means whereby the priest ascertained God's will (Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 28:6). Beyond this we know nothing at all. We don't even know what the Urim and Thummim looked like and we don't know how they were used to determine divine direction. Since the Urim and Thummim are not in operation in our day, it is enough to believe what the Bible says and to draw general spiritual applications for our time. *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* (Rom. 15:4).

This is the situation that we face in regard to tongues speaking. Even by the late 4th century the preacher John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) made this comment on 1

Corinthians 12-14: “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to, and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place” (“Homilies on 1 Corinthians,” Vol. XII, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Hom. 29:2).

Thus while there are questions in regard to tongues that I cannot answer with complete confidence, I don't believe that I am obligated to answer every question. WE ARE OBLIGATED TO FORM OUR DOCTRINE ON THIS (OR ANY OTHER SUBJECT) UPON THE TEACHING OF THE CLEAREST SCRIPTURES, AND THE MORE OBSCURE ONES WILL TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES. The false teacher takes exactly the opposite approach. He builds his pet doctrines upon relatively obscure and difficult Scriptures while ignoring and overthrowing the clearest ones. The Charismatic will hang his doctrine of a “private prayer language” composed of unintelligible mutterings upon 1 Cor. 14:15, even though that is a doubtful interpretation at best, while ignoring the clear teaching of Scripture that tongues were languages that were supernaturally spoken as a sign to the nation Israel.

Biblical Tongues Were Real Earthly Languages

A foundational fact about biblical tongues is that they were real languages, not some sort of unintelligible mutterings.

The law of first mention is an important rule of Bible interpretation, and the first time we see the exercise of tongues in the New Testament is in Acts 2. Here we see that the gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak in a language that one had never learned.

“Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man IN OUR OWN TONGUE, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak IN OUR TONGUES the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:6-11).

At least 14 or 15 different languages are mentioned here. These were normal earthly languages spoken by men in that day, and the Jewish disciples were able to speak in these languages even though they were not their native tongues and they had never learned them and never before spoken in them.

There is no reason to believe that the gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14 is any different from that mentioned in the book of Acts. In both places the tongues involved speaking in earthly languages that one had never learned.

The same Greek word “glossa” is used for both. This word refers to the tongue itself (Mk. 7:33) or to a language spoken by the tongue.

Biblical Tongues Were A Sign to Israel

Another foundational truth about biblical tongues is that they were chiefly a sign to Israel that God was extending the gospel to all nations. Note the following teaching that Paul gave to the church at Corinth:

“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe” (1 Cor. 14:20-22).

The Corinthians were abusing the spiritual gifts and were particularly enamored with tongues. As spiritual infants (1 Cor. 3:1), they were “showing off” to one another. Paul tells them to stop being children and to be men, by understanding the true purpose of tongues. It was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 28:11-12 that was directed to the Jews.

“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to THIS PEOPLE. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear” (Isa. 28:11-12).

The miraculous tongues was a sign to the unbelieving Jews that God was speaking to all nations of men and

calling them into one new spiritual body composed of both Jews and Gentiles. “This people” refers to the Jewish nation to whom the prophet Isaiah was speaking.

Each time we see the gift of tongues exercised in the book of Acts Jews were present (Acts 2:6-11; 10:46; 19:6). On the day of Pentecost and in Acts 19 it was the Jews themselves that spoke in tongues. Fernand Legrand, a former Pentecostal, makes this important observation:

“It is worth noting that wherever the sign appears, it is always in the presence of JEWS, and where we do not find Jews, as in Athens or in Malta, neither do we find the sign. ... It is in the very nature of the sign that we find the nature of their unbelief. ... The sign denounced or corrected their lack of faith concerning the salvation of those who spoke languages that were foreign to their own, that is, the Gentiles. But this was precisely what the Jews did not want to believe. In fact, they were ‘contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved’ (1 Thess. 2:15-16). ... The idea of now being made one with foreigners was more than the first-century Jews could stand. The thought alone was enough to fire up their Hebrew atavism. Yet that was the first thing they had to understand and finally admit. So God gave them the best sign possible to make them understand what they could not or would not believe; HE MIRACULOUSLY MADE JEWS SPEAK IN THE LANGUAGES OF FOREIGNERS. IN SO DOING, GOD PUT JEWISH PRAISE INTO THESE PAGAN TONGUES. ...

“A simple but attentive reading of the Bible reveals the scenario of fierce Jewish opposition towards everything that was not specifically Jewish. We see Jonah who hates the men of Nineveh to the point of disobeying God. ... In his frustration he goes as far as asking for his own death. If Nineveh lives, may Jonah die! ... This spirit of opposition and unbelief

will only be reinforced over the centuries. The Jews belong to Yahveh and Yahveh to them, in a closed circle of bigotry; everyone else is cursed. ...

“Daring to suggest that people with a tongue different from their own could benefit from the goodness of God, was to risk one’s life. They led Jesus to the top of a hill to throw Him off because He had just said: ‘many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.’ Jesus added to their immense rage: ‘And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian’ (Luke 4:25-27). This was, in their eyes, more than enough to deserve death. ...

“What a narrative in Acts 22! The prisoner Paul stands on the steps of the fortress. He motions to the crowd with one hand and asks to speak. As he begins in Hebrew, silence falls upon the crowd. ... But at the very instant that he starts, ‘And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles,’ the sentence freezes in mid-air. They listened as far as that word Gentiles (or nations); and threw dust into the air, shouting, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.’ What made them explode like that? Simply the idea that God could also be the God of every man and every tongue. It is now easier to understand why speaking in tongues is the sign of this great truth and that for ‘this people’ it was the means of access to it. ...

“They alone had to be convinced to abandon this particular unbelief and to consider no longer impure the people and the languages that God considered pure, languages pure enough to be spoken by His Holy Spirit. ... This sign in foreign languages, like the triple vision of Peter, taught them that salvation was for ‘whosoever,’ for ‘all flesh,’ for ‘every tongue.’ ...

“But WHO in today’s Church composed of peoples, tribes, nations and languages, WHO still needs to be convinced by a repeated sign that the Spirit of God is poured out on all peoples, nations, tribes and languages?” (Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 24-27, 33).

It is impossible to have a correct doctrine of tongues without understanding that it was a sign to the nation Israel of the new thing that God was doing, which was extending the gospel to all men and bringing both Jews and Gentiles into one new spiritual body.

The need for such a sign ceased entirely in the first century. By 70 A.D. Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Roman armies led by Titus and the Jews had been scattered to the nations. By then, Gentiles had come to Jesus Christ by the tens of thousands and Gentile churches had been established throughout the Roman Empire. The purpose for the gift of tongues as a sign to the nation Israel had ended. Israel had rejected the sign and she had been judged just as the prophet foretold.

“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: YET THEY WOULD NOT HEAR. But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; THAT THEY MIGHT GO, AND FALL BACKWARD, AND BE BROKEN, AND SNARED, AND TAKEN” (Isaiah 28:11-13).

Isaiah not only prophesied that God would give the sign of tongues to Israel but he also prophesied that Israel

would reject it and be judged, which is exactly what happened.

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul taught the church at Corinth that the gift of tongues would cease:

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

This passage is talking about the revelatory gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. It is not knowledge itself that will cease; it is the gift of knowledge. It is not tongues that will cease; it is the gift of tongues.

When will these gifts cease? The passage indicates that they will cease in two stages. The gift of tongues is treated separately from the gifts of prophecy and knowledge. The gift of tongues is mentioned in verse 8 and then is not mentioned again, whereas the gifts of prophecy and knowledge are mentioned again in verses 9-10. I believe that this teaches that the gift of tongues would cease of its own accord prior to the cessation of the other two gifts. We can see this in the book of Acts. The final time that we see tongues speaking is in Acts 19. By that point in church history there was no question that God was calling the Gentiles by the gospel. That matter had been made crystal clear.

Once a sign has been fulfilled it is foolish to continue with it. If I were to tell someone who is meeting me at the airport that he will know me because I will be wearing a red hat, the red hat is the sign. Once we meet and he recognizes me by the sign of the hat the need for the sign has ceased. If I were to continue to wear a red hat for the rest of my life, that would be foolish.

Thus the gift of tongues ceased even before the events recorded in the book of Acts concluded, but the gifts of prophecy and knowledge continued to operate until “that which is perfect is come,” which was the completed canon of Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says the Scripture is able to make the man of God “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The gifts of prophecy and knowledge were used by the prophets and apostles for the completion of Scripture and then they vanished away. The final book of Scripture to be written was Revelation. John wrote it in his extreme old age in about A.D. 96 on the Isle of Patmos, and it concluded with a solemn divine warning not to add to or to take away from “*the words of the prophecy of this book*” (Rev. 22:18-19). This applies not only to the book of Revelation itself but also to the entire Book of which Revelation forms the final chapter.

This clear biblical doctrine about tongues single-handedly refutes all modern tongues speaking. When Charles Parham’s Bible School students began speaking in “tongues” in 1901 or when “tongues” broke out on Azusa Street in 1906, what Jews were present? Had Jews been present, in what way could the tongues speaking

have been a sign that God was extending the gospel to all nations and creating a new body through the Gospel? That sign had already been given 1,900 years earlier. In what way was that sign not entirely fulfilled in the first century? These are the hard questions that every Pentecostal and Charismatic must answer. If someone would rejoin that the Jews still need the sign of tongues, we would ask, “Why, then, has the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements almost entirely ignored this aspect of tongues?” Parham in Topeka and Seymour in Los Angeles did not seek for tongues as a sign to Israel but as a sign of the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The same is true for the Assemblies of God and the Church of God of Prophecy and the Foursquare Pentecostal Churches and you name it.

“Someone, after reading my book, said to me, ‘For you it all boils down to being a sign.’ Of course it does! Take a sign-post for instance; you may discourse at length on its height, its shape, the colour, the phosphorescence and size of its letters, but however accurate your remarks may be, it is impossible to get around the fact that its sole and ultimate purpose is to be a sign-post. And so is it with speaking in tongues. However you may look at it, the Holy Spirit said it was a SIGN for incredulous Israel. In this matter as in others, it can be seen that the rules of the game are not being followed” (Fernand Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, p. 67).

Biblical Tongues Were Not A Sign to Believers

“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the

Lord. WHEREFORE TONGUES ARE FOR A SIGN, NOT TO THEM THAT BELIEVE, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (1 Cor. 14:20-22).

The Bible plainly states that tongues are *not* a sign to believers. This is a far-reaching doctrine, because in the context of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements tongues are commonly said to be a sign to believers. Tongues speaking is considered a sign of faith and a sign of God's blessing and a sign of the indwelling Holy Spirit and a sign of power. In all these cases, tongues speaking is looked upon as a sign to believers. In 1 Cor. 14:20-22 Paul refutes this error in the clearest of words.

Biblical Tongues Were Spoken to God

"For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue SPEAKETH NOT UNTO MEN, BUT UNTO GOD: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries" (1 Cor. 14:2).

Paul says that biblical tongues were not spoken unto men but unto God. This is what we see on the day of Pentecost. Those that heard the disciples speak in tongues on that day said, "*We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God*" (Acts 2:11). The tongues messages were addressed to God but were understood by those who heard them in the various languages. The Jewish tongues speakers might even have been quoting from the Psalms that day. The Jews that heard them were amazed to hear their own Jewish brethren speaking the praises of God in the "unclean"

pagan languages. When it came time for God to speak directly to men that day, He used the preaching of Peter and it was not in tongues. No one was saved through hearing a message in tongues; they were saved by hearing and believing the gospel.

Paul said that the tongues speaking in the churches was for the same purpose. The tongues were addressed to God, and if they were translated men could understand what was being said to God and thus be edified. But tongues speaking was not a message addressed directly to men, as prophesying was.

In contrast to this clear biblical teaching, Pentecostals and Charismatics everywhere claim that tongues are messages directed to men. Consider the following by former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand:

“After more than thirty years of close contact with these churches, and after having accepted some of their ideas, I have been forced to admit that there is a glaring discordance with the Word of God on this point. I, first of all, capitulated before the authority of the Scriptures; I then proceeded to verify for myself what was being taught and practised. On several occasions, talking to people who were deeply anchored in their convictions, I asked the question, ‘When tongues are interpreted in your assembly, what is the context of the message?’ I did not enquire because I did not know the answer, but I wanted to hear it straight from the horse’s mouth, so leaving no place for ambiguity. Without exception, the replies always confirmed what I had already observed. It was a word of encouragement, or prophecy, or exhortation, or even of evangelization. Quite clearly, these were addressed to those present, that is, to men and was therefore in

complete contradiction with the Holy Spirit who said just the opposite, 'he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God.' ... One of my friends, an enthusiastic pastor, invited me for a Gospel campaign in his church. He told me about a lady who, in a private talk with him, had spoken in tongues. 'In what she said,' he explained, 'I discerned a message for myself.' The opportunity was ideal. I simply asked him, 'How do you reconcile the idea of a message addressed to you personally with the biblical statement that "he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God"? You are not God!' It was like hitting him over the head. He was totally speechless. He had just discovered a text that he had never seen before, or that he had not taken the time to examine. ...

"Thirty years later, nothing seems to have changed. The last interview previously mentioned, finished in the same way as the first. After having once more pointed out that the speaking in tongues in his Church, as corroborated by his personal experience and observations, was obviously addressed to men, and that it was contrary to what the Bible says, I asked him, 'What will you put aside, the Word of God or your experiences; you must make a choice between the two; which will it be?' Without hesitation and twice in succession, his reply was, 'I choose experience!' Understandable but wretched obstinacy that is explained by the terrible confession of a pastor who said to me on this particular point of doctrine, 'When this word of Paul began to circulate in our assemblies, it had the effect of a bomb. We could not allow it to continue, because we WOULD HAVE HAD TO ADMIT THAT EVERYTHING DONE UP UNTIL THEN WAS FALSE!'" (*All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 12-14).

Biblical Tongues Were Accompanied by Interpretation

Biblical tongues were accompanied by the miraculous gift of interpretation.

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:8-10).

“If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God” (1 Cor. 14:27-28).

The gift of interpretation was a supernatural enablement whereby a believer could give an exact interpretation of a message that had been delivered to God in tongues. No tongues speaking was allowed in the church without interpretation, because it is God’s will that everyone present in the church services understand everything that is said and done and thus be edified thereby. Thus, even though one or two people might be present in the service who understood the tongue’s message because it was given in their native language, this was not sufficient because everyone needed to understand. On the day of Pentecost, no interpretation was needed because there were men present from many locations who spoke the languages that were given by tongues.

When we come to the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements, the “interpretation of tongues” is a very strange thing, because there is little semblance between the “tongues” and the “interpretation.” I have oftentimes heard short tongues messages given long interpretations, and I have heard tongues messages composed of three or four words (i.e., shalalama, shalabama, shalanoona, shalalama, shalabama, shalanoona) interpreted as a complex spiritual message.

Former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand of France describes the Pentecostal “interpretation dilemma”--

“IN ALL THE CASES OF INTERPRETATION THAT I HAVE CHECKED PERSONALLY WITH THE GREATEST CARE AND WITH AN OPEN MIND, I HAVE DISCOVERED NOTHING OTHER THAN HUMAN FABRICATION AND DELIBERATE TRICKERY. What surprised me was the unacceptable difference between the brevity of the tongues and the disproportionate length of the interpretation. ... Having taken offence at such deceit, I was candidly told that the interpretation was not a real translation but a heart-felt translation!! So it was just any odd thing left to the fantasy of a pseudo-interpreter. ... Someone else, to try to get himself out of this embarrassing situation, told me that the interpretation was not the translation of what was said in tongues, but the response from heaven to what had just been said! Here we are completely rambling. Scripture is deliberately trampled underfoot, that very Word that points out (v. 16) that giving thanks in tongues must be interpreted so that we may understand ‘what thou sayest,’ so the congregation can show their agreement and join in the thanksgiving by saying, Amen’!

“Another Pentecostal leader dared even to tell me that the same case of speaking in tongues could

very well have several interpretations!! ... Do you expect that a cat can give birth at the same time to kittens, puppies, and chicks? But no one gets upset when, in the spiritual realm, we are asked to believe that ONE kind of speaking in tongues brings forth several kinds of interpretation? Does Pentecostal Darwinism exist? Are we witnessing a sort of mutation of the species? Am I just supposed to accept all this passively without pointing out the fraud? ...

"I personally noted that this counterfeiting was a known thing in the circles concerned. I was present in a meeting when a Christian from the Cape Verde Islands had just prayed in his own language, a Portuguese dialect. Scarcely had he said, 'Amen,' than an elder who was wiser than the others interrupted the word of interpretation by saying, 'Our brother has just given thanks in his native tongue.' This means that without this intervention, there would have been the 'miracle' of an interpretation, evangelical in terms of the vocabulary used, but in the spirit as false as the words of the young fortune teller of Acts 16:17. ...

"One can imagine how attentively I listened to one incident of speaking in tongues that was as jerky, staccato and incomprehensible as all the others, in the middle of which suddenly stood out a thrice-repeated 'spiriti santi' [Holy Spirits, plural] in Italian. Having grasped this triple repetition, I watched for its reappearance in the interpretation. I waited for it in vain....

"Profoundly saddened by this newly discovered dishonesty, I made up my mind to move on to a more advanced verification. I asked a Scottish brother who had the typical broad accent of his country, to put 'The Lord's Prayer' twice in a row onto cassette. Armed with this recording and that of two other 'genuine' tongues followed by their interpretations taped 'on location,' I went to see some very moderate Pentecostal friends, for whom exaggerations and digressions were only found

amongst others. No one in the community doubted their conversions, or their sincerity, or the reality of their 'charisma.' After praying together, I asked them to interpret the pseudo and 'real' tongues. This was done without objection or reticence. Alas, and alas again, the 'Lord's Prayer' in English transformed itself into a message of encouragement in French! As to the rest, it was as different from the first as the Rhone is different from the Rhine and flows in the opposite direction. ...

"Indeed can we still call ourselves Christians when we team up so closely with him who disguises himself as an angel of light?

"In order to get out of this sticky situation, many people claim, without really believing it, that one does not submit a gift of the Spirit to an electronic test. But it must be pointed out that it is not the test that created the trickery, it only confirmed it and it demonstrated moreover that these so-called gifts are not among those good and perfect gifts that come down from above (James 1:17).

"In addition, what more than sufficiently demonstrates that everything is purely human and subjective in today's gift of tongues and that the Holy Spirit has nothing whatsoever to do with it, is that the interpretation is always the reflection of particular tendencies and feelings. The Roman Catholic charismatics show their allegiance to the doctrines of their Church. The spiritualists find occult revelations. The Pentecostals, being evangelicals, adopt an evangelical language, as well as phraseology and convictions specific to their group" (Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 47-51).

Legrand devised a simple test for the interpretation of tongues, but no Pentecostal or Charismatic has offered to submit to it. Here is his proposal:

“Prepare a meeting where one of you will speak in tongues and three others will make a recorded interpretation in isolation. The interpretations that ought to say more or less the same thing will then be compared. ... HERE IN WRITING I STAND BY THIS YET UNANSWERED PROPOSITION AS A CHALLENGE TO ANY CHARISMATIC TONGUES SPEAKING COMMUNITY. Why has there not yet been, and will there never be, an answer to this offer, which is, nevertheless, an honest one?” (*All about Speaking in Tongues*, p. 52).

If Pentecostals and Charismatics have the genuine miraculous gift of speaking in languages and of interpreting the same, let them step forward and prove it. Otherwise, their very refusal is sufficient refutation of their practice.

In light of the Bible’s warnings about the very real danger of spiritual deception, we would be foolish to accept these things at face value without testing them. God has commanded us to “try the spirits” and “to prove all things” and to “search the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.” We are warned that there will be false christs, FALSE SPIRITS, and false gospels (2 Cor. 11:4). The Spirit of God Himself has warned us that in the last days there will be an onslaught of deception.

“The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

We are warned that “*in the last days perilous times shall come*” (2 Tim. 4:1) because professing believers will have “*a form of godliness, but denying the power*

thereof” and “*evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Tim. 3:5, 13). We are warned that “*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Could false tongues and false interpretations not be among these fables? Of course, so we must be exceedingly careful.

The fact that the Pentecostals and Charismatics typically do not want their “gifts” to be analyzed carefully is evidence of fraud.

Biblical Tongues Were Bound by Apostolic Law

Paul said, “*Forbid not to speak in tongues,*” but he also gave many serious restrictions on how tongues could be used. I have never seen the practice of “tongues” in modern times restrained in the following manner.

* Tongues are to be spoken only by course, one by one (“*If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course...*” 1 Cor. 14:27). In most of the Pentecostal-Charismatic meetings I have attended the “tongues” were spoken by many people at once.

* Tongues must be interpreted (“*If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret*” 1 Cor. 14:27).

Rarely are the tongues messages interpreted in modern Pentecostalism, and when they are it is often obvious that the “interpretation” is something different than the “tongue.”

* There is to be no confusion or lack of peace (“*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints*” 1 Cor. 14:33). Every time I have been in a Pentecostal-Charismatic service where “the Spirit was moving” I have thought to myself, “This is confusing.” Disorder reigns. The “tongues” cannot be understood. Things happen that make no sense and that are not found in the Bible. But we are told that God is not the author of confusion, and that covers a lot of territory.

* Women are not allowed to speak in tongues (“*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law*” 1 Cor. 14:34). Paul refers to the Law of Moses, which also said the woman is under the man’s authority (Gen. 3:16; Num. 30:3-13).

Women have been at the forefront of “tongues” speaking since the inception of Pentecostalism. A woman was the first to speak in tongues at Parham’s Topeka Bible School. A woman was the first to speak in tongues at Seymour’s Azusa Street Mission. A reporter with the *Los Angeles Times* who visited the Mission on April 17, 1906, observed, “The old exhorter [Seymour] urged the ‘sisters’ to let the ‘tongues come forth’ and the women gave themselves over to a riot of religious fervor.”

If you could remove the women from the modern tongues speaking movement it would collapse, but the Spirit of God plainly forbids them to speak in tongues or to prophecy in the meetings where the saints are gathered together and men are present. Women are allowed to teach women (Titus 2:3-4) and children (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) but are forbidden to teach or usurp authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12).

* Those who are truly spiritual will acknowledge Paul's authority ("*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" 1 Cor. 14:37). Many times when I have shown these restrictions to Pentecostals and Charismatics they have argued against them and given various reasons why they don't feel obligated to obey them. This only proves that they are not truly spiritual and are not truly attuned to and obedient to the voice of Almighty God. They are self-deceived, and the evidence is that they will not acknowledge that the things Paul wrote are the commandments of God.

* Everything is to be decent ("*Let all things be done decently*" 1 Cor. 14:40). The Greek word translated decent is "euschemonos," which is also translated "honestly" (Rom. 13:13; 1 Thes. 4:12). It carries the idea of moral decency and sincerity and integrity, of adorning the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church of Jesus Christ in such a manner that no reproach is brought upon it by our actions. When we think about the deception and

fraud that is so prevalent in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement and when we think about the many times that women are allegedly overcome by the Spirit and fall in an indecent manner and have to be covered, it is obvious that all things are not done decently.

* Everything is to be orderly (“*Let all things be done decently and in order*” 1 Cor. 14:40). The God of creation is the God of order. He is not the God of confusion and disorder.

George Gardiner was a Pentecostal for many years, and he said that his journey out of Pentecostalism “began with nagging questions about the gulf between Charismatic practices and Scriptural statements--a very wide gulf!” (Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe*, p. 8). He determined to study the book of Acts. “I reread the book of Acts, slowly and carefully, praying as I did, ‘Lord, let me see what it says, and only what the Word says. Give me grace to accept it if I have been wrong and grace to apologize if I have been unduly critical. The journey through Acts was an eye opener! The actions and experiences of the early churches were far removed from the actions and ‘experiences’ of the modern movement. In some ways they were completely opposite!”

I discovered the same thing as a young Christian. One thing that convinced me that Pentecostalism is not scriptural was that their “tongues” were not practiced in a biblical manner. I have attended Pentecostal and Charismatic meetings dozens of times in various parts of

the world and I have never witnessed tongues operated in a biblical manner.

The Pentecostal Method of Tongues Speaking Is Unscriptural

The Pentecostal-Charismatic method of “speaking in tongues” is unscriptural and dangerous. Biblical tongues were not sought after or learned but were sovereignly and miraculously given by God.

If we were to agree that there is such a thing today as “tongues speaking” or a “private prayer language” and that it would help us live better Christian lives and if we were to accept the Charismatic’s challenge to “try it and see,” the next question is, “How do I begin to speak in this ‘tongue’ or ‘prayer language’?”

The first step, we are told, is to stop analyzing things carefully by the Scriptures and to open up to new experiences. A chapter in the book *These Wonderful Gifts* by Michael Harper is entitled “Letting Go and Letting God,” in which the believer is instructed to stop analyzing experiences so carefully and strictly, to stop “setting up alarm systems” and “squatting nervously behind protective walls.” He says the believer should step out from behind his “walls and infallible systems” and just open up to God. That is a necessary but unscriptural and exceedingly dangerous step toward receiving the Charismatic experiences.

Having stopped analyzing with Scripture, the standard method of experiencing the “gift of tongues” or a “private prayer language” is to open one’s mouth and to start speaking words but not words that one understands and allegedly “God will take control.” Dennis Bennett says:

“Open your mouth and show that you believe the Lord has baptized you in the Spirit by beginning to speak. Don’t speak English, or any other language you know, for God can’t guide you to speak in tongues if you are speaking in a language known to you. ... Just like a child learning to talk for the first time, open your mouth and speak out the first syllables and expressions that come to your lips. ... You may begin to speak, but only get out a few halting sounds. That’s wonderful! You’ve broken the ‘sound barrier’! Keep in with those sounds. Offer them to God. Tell Jesus you love Him in those ‘joyful noises’! In a very real sense, any sound you make, offering your tongue to God in simple faith, may be the beginning of speaking in tongues” (*The Holy Spirit and You*, pp. 76, 77, 79).

This is so grossly unscriptural and nonsensical it would seem unnecessary to refute it. There is absolutely nothing like this in the New Testament. To ignore the Bible and to seek something that the Bible never says to seek in ways the Bible does not support and to open oneself uncritically to religious experiences like this puts one in danger of receiving “another spirit” (2 Cor. 11:4). The Bible warns Christians that there are deceiving spirits that attempt to influence Christians and that can appear as angels of light and ministers of God (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Mt. 24:24). Paul warned the Corinthians that they were in danger of receiving false spirits because of their carnal,

tolerant, undiscerning condition (2 Cor. 11:3-4). The true Christian cannot be possessed by evil spirits, but he can certainly be influenced by them.

The Bible plainly teaches that tongues speaking was a divine miracle and that it was sovereignly given. *“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will”* (1 Cor. 12:11). The disciples did not seek to speak in tongues on the day of Pentecost nor did they take a class on “letting go and letting God.” There is no evidence, in fact, that they even expected to speak in tongues. In every instance in which Christians spoke in tongues in the book of Acts the tongues were sovereignly given. In no instance were the recipients trying to speak in tongues.

Biblical Tongues Were Not Spoken By All

Biblical tongues were not spoken by all Christians even in the first century.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of

miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" (1 Cor. 12:28-30).

Paul asks, "Do all speak with tongues?" The question is rhetorical and the answer is no.

The United Pentecostal Church tries to get around this by making a distinction between tongues as "the initial evidence of Spirit baptism" and tongues as a gift of the Spirit.

"Some people quote I Corinthians 12:30 in an attempt to prove that not all speak in tongues when they are filled with the Spirit: 'Do all speak with tongues?' However, this verse refers to the gift of tongues, that is, speaking a public message in tongues to be interpreted for the congregation, which is a spiritual gift that a person may exercise subsequent to the infilling of the Spirit. Though both tongues as the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and tongues as a later spiritual gift are the same in essence, they are different in administration and operation" ("Why Did God Choose Tongues?" United Pentecostal Church's web site).

This teaching does not hold up in light of Scripture. A simple survey of the book of Acts proves conclusively that not all believers in the early churches spoke in tongues. Even on the day of Pentecost, while the disciples that were in the upper room spoke in tongues (Acts 2:4), those that were saved that day through Peter's preaching did not speak in tongues (Acts 2:40-42). The Jews that believed in Acts 4:4 and 6:7 did not speak in tongues. The Ethiopian Eunuch that was saved in Acts 8:35-39 did not speak in tongues. The first people who were saved at Antioch in Acts 11:20-21 did not speak in

tongues. Lydia and her household who were saved in Acts 16:13-15 and the Philippian jailer and his family who were saved in Acts 16:30-33 did not speak in tongues. Those who were saved in Thessalonica and Berea and Athens in Acts 17:4, 12, and 34 did not speak in tongues. Crispus and others who were saved at Corinth in Acts 18:8 did not speak in tongues. Those who believed in Ephesus in Acts 19:17-19 did not speak in tongues.

There is no emphasis whatsoever on tongues speaking in the New Testament. It was exercised only three times in all the book of Acts and the vast majority of the believers did not use it. To create the sort of emphasis upon tongues speaking that one finds in the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement one must read many things into the Bible that are not there, and this is not the way that honest brethren use the Scriptures.

Tongues Speaking and Spirit Baptism

As for the doctrine that tongues speaking is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, consider the following facts:

First, the baptism of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and tongues were only one of the demonstrations. There were also the tongues like as of fire and the mighty rushing wind. If tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so are the other demonstrations and we should demand all three.

Second, even on the day of Pentecost only the 120 gathered in the upper room spoke in tongues. Those that were saved under Peter's preaching did not speak in tongues.

Third, the Samaritans did not speak in tongues after they received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of apostolic hands (Acts 8:14-17).

Fourth, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the New Testament epistles only one time, in 1 Cor. 12:13, and it is described in the past tense and tongues are not mentioned as the evidence. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Fifth, since the Bible teaches that not every believer spoke in tongues even in the apostolic age this gift cannot be the evidence of Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:30).

Tongues Speaking and Spirit Filling

As for the doctrine that tongues speaking is the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit, consider the following facts:

Whereas the baptism of the Holy Spirit was an historical event that occurred only once on the day of Pentecost, the filling of the Holy Spirit was repeated many times in Acts and is something that each believer is instructed to experience on a continual basis. “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). To be filled with the Spirit is to be controlled and led by the Spirit; it is to submit to the Spirit’s direction and power and wisdom.

As for tongues, though the book of Acts mentions Christians being filled with the Spirit many times, tongues is mentioned only once in this context. In Acts 2:4 the disciples were filled with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, but elsewhere they were filled with the Spirit and did not speak in tongues. It is ridiculous, then, to try to make tongues speaking the evidence of Holy Spirit filling. A survey of Acts shows the following things occurred when believers were filled with the Spirit:

- * They praised God in supernaturally-given foreign languages (Acts 2:4-11).
- * They witnessed of Christ with boldness (Acts 4:8-12, 31-33).
- * They were willing to serve God’s people (Acts 6:3-5).

- * They were Christ-like in their attitude towards their enemies (Acts 7:55-60).
- * They were ready to obey God (Acts 9:17-20).
- * They won souls to Christ (Acts 11:24).
- * They resisted false teachers (Acts 13:8-10).
- * They had joy in the Lord (Acts 13:52).

Further, the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5-6 does not mention tongues. There, the marks of Spirit filling are said to be spiritual relationships among brethren (Eph. 5:19, 21-33; 6:1-9), worship of God (Eph. 5:19), resisting Satan (Eph. 6:11-18), and an effectual prayer life (Eph. 6:18-20). Tongues speaking is not mentioned.

Private Prayer Language

Pentecostals and Charismatics often teach that there are two types of tongues described in the New Testament: the “public language” tongues of Pentecost and the “private prayer language” tongues of 1 Corinthians 14. Some call this distinction “ministry tongues” and “devotional tongues.”

As we have seen in the history section of this book, early Pentecostal leaders understood that biblical tongues were real earthly languages. They even thought they would be able to go to foreign mission fields and witness through miraculous tongues without having to learn the languages. Eventually the “heavenly language” and “private prayer language” doctrine was developed. Those are the terms we have heard frequently at Charismatic conferences, such as in New Orleans in 1987, Indianapolis in 1990, and St. Louis in 2000.

The only actual record we have of one of the “tongues” spoken by Charles Parham’s Bible School students in 1901 was written by a reporter of the *Topeka State Journal*, and he described mere gibberish:

“Mr. Parham called Miss Lilian Thistlethrate [Thistlethwaite] into the room and asked her if she could talk some. She at first answered that the Lord had not inspired her to say anything but soon began to utter strange words which sounded like this: ‘Euossa, Euossa, use rela sema calah mala kanah leulla ssage nalan. Ligle logle lazie logle. Ene mine mo, sah rah el me sah rah me.’ These sentences were translated as meaning, ‘Jesus is mighty to

save,' 'Jesus is ready to hear,' 'and 'God is love'" ("Hindoo and Zulu Both Are Represented at Bethel School," *Topeka State Journal*, Jan. 9, 1901).

One newspaper reporting on William Seymour's meetings called the gibberish "Glibby Bluk" (Larry Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour*, p. 302).

"Gliggy Bluk" and "Ligle logle lazie logle" is the same type of "tongues" that I have heard in Charismatic conferences. They are not languages of any sort but mere repetitious mutterings that anyone could imitate. Larry Lea's "tongues" at Indianapolis in 1990 went like this: "Bubblyida bubblyida hallelujah bubblyida hallabubbly shallabubblyida kolabubblyida gloooooory hallelujah bubblyida." I wrote that down as he was saying it and later checked it against the tape. Nancy Kellar, a Roman Catholic nun who was on the executive committee of the St. Louis meeting in 2000, spoke in "tongues" on Thursday evening of the conference. Her tongues were a repetition of "shananaa leea, shananaa higha, shananaa nanaa, shananaa lea..."

This is taken directly from the audiotapes of the messages. If these are languages, they certainly have a simple vocabulary!

Michael Harper says: "In the short history of the Charismatic Renewal speaking in tongues has become rare in public, but continues to be a vital expression of prayer in private (*These Wonderful Gifts*, 1989, p. 97). He says this type of "tongues" is "a prayer language: a way

of communicating more effectively with God” (p. 92). He claims that this experience “edifies” apart from the understanding: “Modern Western man finds it hard to believe that speaking unknown words to God can possibly be edifying. ... All one can say is ‘try it and see’. I can still remember today the moments when I first used this gift, and the immediate awareness I had that I was being edified. This is one of the most important reasons why the gift needs to be used regularly in private prayer” (*These Wonderful Gifts*, p. 93).

Harper says he is mystically aware of being edified even though he does not know what he is saying. He also says this “gift needs to be used regularly” and is therefore something important for the Christian life.

To prove his point he simply invites the skeptical observer to “try it and see,” reminding us that experience is the Charismatic’s greatest authority. (The “try it and see” approach creates a new problem, though, for the Bible never says to “try tongues” or to seek after tongues and never describes how one could learn how to speak in tongues. In the Bible, tongues speaking is always a supernatural activity that is sovereignly given by God.)

For the following reasons we are convinced that the Bible does not support the doctrine of a “private prayer language.”

First, Paul said the tongues speaker edifies himself (1 Cor. 14:4). That would not be possible unless the words could be understood, because throughout the fourteenth

chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul says that understanding is necessary for edification. In verse 3 he says that prophesying edifies because it comforts and exhorts men, obviously referring to things that are understood to the hearer. In verse 4 he says that tongues speaking does not edify unless it is interpreted. In verses 16-17 he says that if someone does not understand something he is not edified. Words could not be plainer. If there is no edification of the church without understanding, how is it that the individual believer could be edified without understanding? This is confusion. The word “edify” means to build up in the faith. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defined it as “to instruct and improve the mind in knowledge generally, and particularly in moral and religious knowledge, in faith and holiness.” The words “edify,” “edification,” “edified,” and “edifying” are used in 18 verses in the New Testament and always refer to building up in the faith by means of instruction and godly living. For example, in Ephesians 4 the body of Christ is edified through the ministry of God-given preachers (Eph. 4:11-12).

Second, if the tongues speaking of 1 Corinthians 14 is different from that of Acts 2, the Bible never explains the difference. We leave “tongues” in the book of Acts (the last mention is in Acts 19:6) and we do not see them again until 1 Corinthians 12-14. If the “tongues” in this epistle is a different type of thing than the “tongues” in Acts, why doesn’t the Bible say so?

Third, Paul says that tongues are an earthly language (1 Cor. 14:20-22). If the tongues speaking in 1

Corinthians 14 were some sort of “private prayer language,” why would Paul give this prophetic explanation of it and state dogmatically that it is an earthly language? He does not say that only some “types of tongues” are languages.

Fourth, in 1 Corinthians 14:28 Paul says the tongues speaker speaks both to himself and to God. *“But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.”* This means that he can understand what he is speaking. Otherwise, how could he speak to himself? Does anyone speak to himself in “unknown gibberish”?

Fifth, there is no example in 1 Corinthians 14 of a believer speaking in tongues privately and there is no encouragement to do so. What about verse 28? *“But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God”* (1 Cor. 14:27-28). This says nothing about praying in tongues privately. It is talking about the exercise of gifts in a public meeting. Paul says that if there is no interpretation, the individual tongues speaker should keep silent and pray to God, but he says nothing about getting off by oneself and praying privately in tongues. One must read all of that into the passage.

Sixth, if there were a “private prayer language” that edified the Christian’s life it would be very important and the Bible would explain it clearly and circumscribe its usage as it does the use of tongues in the church. Further, a “private prayer language” that

helped the Christian to be stronger in his walk with Christ would doubtless be mentioned in other places in the New Testament in the context of sanctification and Christian living. In fact, though, it is never mentioned in such a context. The apostles and prophets addressed many situations in the New Testament epistles and gave all things necessary for holy Christian living, but they never taught that the believer needs to speak in a “private prayer language” in order to have spiritual victory or to find God’s guidance or to be healed or to be able to fall asleep or any other such thing.

Seventh, it is not possible that tongues speaking could be a necessary part of the Christian life, because Paul plainly states that not all speak in tongues (1 Cor. 14:29-20). Some will ask, “Why, then, does Paul say, ‘I would that ye all spake with tongues’” (1 Cor. 14:5)? The answer is that Paul was not saying that all *did* speak with tongues or that all *could* speak with tongues; he was merely expressing a desire that the exercise of spiritual gifts be done and that it be done right. In 1 Cor. 7:7, Paul uses exactly the same expression in the context of celibacy. He said, “*For I would that all men were even as I myself...*” We do not know of any Pentecostals or Charismatics who take this statement literally by teaching that it is God’s will for every believer to remain unmarried, but they take the same expression in 1 Cor. 14:5 as a law. There is a strange inconsistency here.

Eighth, all of the New Testament’s instruction about prayer takes for granted that prayer is a conscious,

understandable act on the part of the believer and that he is speaking to God in understandable terms.

We see this in Jesus' instructions about prayer. *“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”* (Matt. 6:5-13).

This is a conscious, understandable prayer.

“When Jesus' disciples approached Him quietly one day and begged for His secret to powerful prayer, He gave them what we call the Lord's Prayer. In His perfect pattern for personal prayer, we find praise, supplication, pleading for forgiveness and mercy, and more praise. However, mysteriously missing is any mention of, or reference to, tongues. Why, pray tell, if tongues is so important, didn't Jesus teach His disciples to use a heavenly prayer language? The answer is simple and sweet: He never used one! He spoke, while in communion with His glorious heavenly Father, in His plain ordinary language. In public and private, Jesus never used tongues. Some might argue, saying, 'He never spoke in tongues because the Holy Spirit's fullness and indwelling had not come yet.' ... [But] The Spirit was given to Him without measure all during His earthly ministry. ... Jesus Christ was the perfect example of the Spirit-filled believer! He did not have to tarry and wait in Jerusalem to be endued. He lived every moment of His life in the wonderful thrilling fullness of the Holy Spirit. Yet, there is not one record of Him ever speaking in tongues, publicly or privately” (Dan Kaighen, *I Was A Teenage Charismatic: The*

Journey for Truth Concerning the Charismatic 'Gifts,' p. 14).

We see the same thing in Paul's instructions about prayer (i.e., Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-3; Heb. 13:18-19). There is not one example of a prayer recorded in Scripture that is anything other than an individual speaking to God in conscious, understandable terms. In fact, Christ forbade the repetitious type of "prayers" that are commonly heard among those that practice a "private prayer language." *"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"* (Mat. 6:7). Yet I have oftentimes heard "prayer tongues" that sound like this: "Shalalama, balalama, shalalama, balalama, bubalama, shalalama, bugalala, shalalama...." Whatever that is, it is not New Testament "tongues" and it is not New Testament prayer.

Ninth, even if we were to agree that 1 Corinthians 14 refers to a "private prayer language," it would not be something that could be learned or imitated. Whatever is described in 1 Corinthians 14 is a divine miracle, but this is contrary to the Pentecostal-Charismatic practice whereby people are taught to speak in a "prayer language." We discuss this under a later point in our study on tongues.

Tenth, to use the gift of tongues as a "private prayer language" would be to destroy its chief purpose, which is a sign to unbelieving Israel. Former Pentecostal Fernand Legrand wisely observes: "By using this sign in private, some think they can profit from ONE

of its aspects, while ignoring the others, but you cannot dismantle a gift and retain only one of its components. A car is a complex mechanical object that is driven as an entity or is not driven at all. You cannot take the wheels for a run and leave the body and the engine in the garage. When a car is running it is the whole car that moves. In the same way, TONGUES WERE NOT TO BE SLICED UP LIKE A SAUSAGE. They were to edify the speaker AND the others AND be a sign for the Jewish unbelievers AND be understandable or be so rendered by interpretation. They had to be all that at the same time. The gift was inseparable from its one and only unchanging purpose: to be a sign for non-believing Jews of the universal offer of salvation (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor. 14:20-22)” (*All about Speaking in Tongues*, p. 67).

The fact is that biblical tongues were real earthly languages, and this is a foundational truth. Any doctrine of tongues that reduces this practice to mere gibberish of any sort that is not a real language is unscriptural.

Concluding Questions

We have already dealt with some of the following questions, but for the sake of convenience and to have several of the most common questions and their answers in one place we will repeat them here:

QUESTION: Why does Paul say, “... forbid not to speak with tongues” (1 Cor. 14:39)?

ANSWER: While it is wrong to forbid biblical tongues, it is certainly not wrong to forbid unbiblical “tongues” or tongues practiced in an unscriptural manner. Paul himself did this. “The answer is to place the text in the context of the day for which tongues were given. While the reason for tongues had not been fulfilled the gift of tongues must not be forbidden. However, if we find in the Scriptures a basis for believing that biblical tongues have ceased, then we are at perfect liberty to forbid what is not a biblical gift but an un-biblical aberration and extra-biblical phenomenon” (Ronald Baxter, *Gifts of the Spirit*, 1983, p. 156).

QUESTION: If the believer is not to seek after spiritual gifts and if they are sovereignly given, why did Paul say, “But covet earnestly the best gifts...” (1 Cor. 12:31)?

ANSWER: This exhortation is not addressed to an individual but to the church. Individual believers cannot covet spiritual gifts because they are sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11), but a church can desire

that God will grant it all necessary gifts. As missionaries, we have always had this desire for the churches we have planted.

QUESTION: If all believers did not speak in tongues, why did Paul say, “I would that ye all spake with tongues...” (1 Cor. 12:5)?

ANSWER: Paul was not saying that all *did* speak with tongues or that all *could* speak with tongues; he was merely expressing a desire that the exercise of spiritual gifts be done and that it be done right. He said, “*I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*” Note that the apostle exalted prophesying above tongues, but the Charismatic movement focuses on tongues more than prophesying. In 1 Cor. 7:7, Paul used the same terminology when he said, “*I would that all men were even as I myself;*” meaning that he would have all men remain unmarried. Does this mean that it is God’s will for every believer to be unmarried? Of course not. Paul went on to say, “*But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.*” We have never heard of a Pentecostal or Charismatic who used 1 Cor. 7:7 as a statement that all believers should remain unmarried, but they use the same terminology in 1 Cor. 12:5 because it suits their purposes.

QUESTION: If tongues can be understood by the speaker, why does Paul say, “For if I pray in an

unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Cor. 14:14)?

ANSWER: The Pentecostal-Charismatic movements find justification in this verse for their doctrine that tongues speaking is some sort of communication that bypasses the intellect and understanding. Pastor Bill Williams of San Jose, California, says that the awareness one has through tongues is “beyond emotion, beyond intellect. It transcends human understanding” (“Speaking in Tongues--Believers Relish the Experience,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 19, 1987, p. B2). Charles Hunter says, “The reason some of you don’t speak [in tongues] fluently is that you tried to think of the sounds. ... You don’t even have to think in order to pray in the Spirit” (Hunter, “Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit,” *Charisma*, July 1989, p. 54).

But if 1 Corinthians 14:14 means that the tongues speaker is speaking “beyond his intellect” or something of that sort, it would be the only place in Scripture where such a doctrine is found. Nowhere else does the Scripture say that man’s spirit can operate properly without the understanding or that God operates on man’s spirit in such a manner that he does not understand the communication or that there is some sort of spiritual level of communication that bypasses the understanding. In this same epistle, Paul said, “*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?*” (1 Cor. 2:11). Thus man’s spirit is that part of him that knows and understands. Ephesians 4:23 says the believer is to “*be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*”

Obviously this involves understanding, because Romans 12:2 says we are “*transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God...*”

What, then, is Paul talking about in 1 Corinthians 14:14? Most commentaries say that he is referring to the tongues speaker’s understanding *in relation to others* rather than to his own understanding.

Barnes: “Produces nothing that will be of advantage to them. It is like a barren tree; a tree that bears nothing that can be of benefit to others. They cannot understand what I say, and, of course, they cannot be profited by what I utter.”

Adam Clarke: “... my understanding is unfruitful to all others, because they do not understand my prayers, and I either do not or cannot interpret them.”

The Family Bible Notes: “... according to another and preferable view, it bears no fruit to others, since it communicates nothing to them in an intelligible way.”

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: “... understanding, the active instrument of thought and reasoning; which in this case must be ‘unfruitful’ in edifying others, since the vehicle of expression is unintelligible to them.”

John Wesley: “‘My spirit prayeth’--By the power of the Spirit I understand the words myself. ‘But my

understanding is unfruitful’--The knowledge I have is no benefit to others.”

Matthew Henry: “... but his understanding would be unfruitful (1 Cor. 14:14), that is, the sense and meaning of his words would be unfruitful, he would not be understood, nor therefore would others join with him in his devotions.”

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: “That is, ‘not productive of any benefit to others.’”

The context of 1 Corinthians 14:14 supports this interpretation:

“Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” (1 Cor. 14:13-17).

Paul says the tongues speaker should pray both with the spirit and with the understanding, and it is obvious that he is talking about the understanding of those who are listening, because he says, “*Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?*” In 1 Corinthians

14:13-17 Paul is saying that the tongues speaker should give an interpretation of his tongue so that he is not the only one that understands what is being said, because if he prays in a tongue that is not interpreted, those who are listening cannot understand and cannot therefore be edified.

QUESTION: If tongues speaking is not a “private prayer language,” why did Paul say, “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself..”?

ANSWER: The gift of tongues did edify the user, but this was not its chief purpose and there is not a hint anywhere else in the New Testament that the gift of tongues involved any sort of “private prayer language” whereby the user exclusively edified himself. The chief purpose of tongues was a sign to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor. 14:20-22), and this is what we see in the book of Acts. Every instance of tongues speaking was public and in every instance Jews were present. Every spiritual gift edifies the user but that is never its chief purpose. Its purpose is for the edification of others. “*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Pet. 4:10). How ridiculous it would be for someone to preach to himself or to work miracles for himself or to give himself a word of wisdom.

“Now we come to the expression so often cited, ‘He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself’ (1 Cor. 14:4). It would therefore be a gift for one’s personal edification and, since we all need edification, everyone should have this gift. Taken out of its context this is what this half-sentence seems to

mean. However, do we have the right to extract the two words 'edifies himself' from chapters 12, 13, and 14 and to give them a sense contrary to their context? What is the central idea, the common thread running through these three chapters? Others, the common good, the church assembly. What is continually emphasized is the good of others, the edification of others. ... All of chapter 13 deals with love which is, par excellence, a fruit for others, since a tree does not bear fruit for itself. Here, right in the middle of this altruism expressed everywhere as the PURPOSE of all the gifts of the Spirit, comes the best specimen of self-centredness ever imagined: the case of someone who was no longer edifying others but just himself, something Paul condemns in 1 Cor. 13:5, [love] seeketh not her own.' How petty! Giving a sign to oneself. Taking back to oneself a gift that God was giving as a blessing to others. How childish, as Paul tells them in verse 20 of the following chapter! For it is certainly in a tone of reproach that Paul writes that he who speaks in tongues edifies only himself. ... There is no gift that does not carry within itself, its own source of edification. The pastor edifies himself too when he cares for the Lord's flock, but he is not feeding only himself, he is feeding others" (Fernand Legrand, *All about Speaking in Tongues*, pp. 64, 65).

QUESTION: Why did Paul say, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all.."? Since Paul did not speak in tongues in the church, does this not mean that Paul oftentimes spoke in tongues to himself and to God privately?

ANSWER: Paul answered this question in the very next three verses: "*Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this*

people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe” (1 Cor. 14:20-21). Paul spoke in tongues in his missionary journeys in the presence of Jews as a sign to them that God was reaching out to all tribes and tongues.

QUESTION: Could it be that the tongues speaker is speaking in the tongues of angels (1 Cor. 13:1)?

ANSWER: There are many examples of angels speaking in the Bible, but in every instance they spoke in a language readily understood by men. If they have a special language of their own, the Bible does not identify it, and there is not one hint anywhere in the rest of the Bible that tongues speaking involves speaking in angelic languages. The claim by some that they speak in the tongues of angels is a desperate attempt to justify an unbiblical practice of speaking in unintelligible mutterings that they have mislabeled the gift of tongues.

QUESTION: What about Mark 16:17-18, which says “these signs shall follow them that believe”?

ANSWER: *First, these signs were fulfilled by the apostles.* It was to the apostles that the Lord gave special sign gifts (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:43; 4:33; 5:12, 15; 19:12). The apostles cast out devils (Acts 16:18) and spoke in new tongues (Acts 2:1-4) and took up serpents (Acts 28:3-6) and laid hands on the sick and they recovered (Acts 3:6-8; 9:40-41; 28:7-9). *Second, the gift of tongues*

was chiefly a sign to the nation Israel that God was doing a new thing by extending the gospel to all people and creating a new spiritual body composed both of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 14:20-22; Isa. 28:11-13). It was a temporary sign (1 Cor. 13:8) that ceased when the nation Israel rejected it and was judged (Isa. 28:13). Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the Jews were scattered to the nations. *Third, no one can do the specific apostolic signs today.* Those who claim to do them do not work after the fashion that we see in Acts. No one is raising the dead like Peter did in Acts 9. No one is healing after the fashion of Acts 3:6-8. There are no “healing services” or “signs and wonders crusades” in the book of Acts. There were no spirit slayings or spiritual drunkenness. The apostles did not have signs of healing such as fire or vibrations or electricity in their hands. Not once did the apostles attempt to heal someone and fail. The wondrous miracles recorded in the book of Acts are simply not being reproduced in churches today. *Fourth, though the apostolic sign gifts ceased, the Lord has continued to do miracles throughout the church age.* He has redeemed countless souls from the power of Satan and has supernaturally answered countless prayers and has supernaturally supplied countless needs and has given supernatural strength and encouragement and wisdom to countless men and women in every conceivable situation and difficulty and has healed countless people in answer to prayer in accordance with James 5 and has miraculously established countless churches in the devil’s own territory and many other things.

Thus we reject the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement because of its unscriptural doctrine of the gift of tongues.

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Tongues Speaking
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