

# **The Charisma of Glossolalia**

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

Three years ago a middle-aged couple moved to Thiensville, Wisconsin in search of employment, and within a short time were successfully operating their own business. Three weeks after their arrival, the essayist called on them at their apartment. The ensuing discussion revealed that theirs was a religious life lacking a solid background in Christian doctrine. They were invited to attend church, and an adult course in Christian doctrine was recommended, which they welcomed and faithfully attended, that is, until we arrived at the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. The evening in which the doctrine of the Holy Ghost was to be studied, the couple did not attend. The following day, the husband phoned to say that his wife did not think that she should continue attending the adult Bible Class because, as she understood it, so far as the Lutheran Church was concerned, the Holy Ghost was the forgotten third person of God. And their private discussions on this subject had failed to alter her understanding.

At the husband's invitation, the essayist met with them that evening to hear exactly what it was that troubled his wife concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. She opened the discussion with the forthright question: "Does the Lutheran Church believe in speaking in tongues?" And she went on to say that if the Lutheran Church did not accept this supernatural power from God, she did not think that she could and should become a member of the Lutheran Church. It goes without saying that our discussion that evening involved an intensive Biblical study of glossolalia. And the essayist hastens to add that the Spirit of God, working through his infallible Word, led her to the Lord's altar to be confirmed and, together with her husband, to become a faithful communicant member of Trinity Congregation during the two years that they lived in the community.

It may be that some of you brethren have had similar, or more startling, experiences in your parish ministry. If so, what does it indicate but this that we Lutheran Christians of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod are, or may be, confronted with the subject of speaking in tongues. And it is safe to say that this will become increasingly the case in the future. For in this age of mass and almost instant communication via television, radio, newspapers, books, and magazines people are hearing and talking about glossolalia.

There are two reasons for this popular interest. The first is the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century, with its emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. So rapid has been the growth of this "ism" in recent years that *Time* magazine has called it "the fastest growing church in the hemisphere,"<sup>1</sup> and *Life* magazine has called it "the third force in Christendom,"<sup>2</sup> equal in significance to Roman Catholicism and historic Protestantism.

The second reason is that speaking in tongues has taken a new turn today. Whereas, as late as twenty years ago, it was associated almost exclusively with smaller denominations of a so-called "Pentecostal" character, glossolalia today has infiltrated the larger and more influential church bodies, and claims adherents among the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Dutch Reformed, and even Catholics. It would appear that everybody wants to get on the bandwagon of what is being labeled the New Penetration, the New Pentecostalism, Charismatic Renewal (or Revival), and the Modern Tongues Movement. The poet has said, "Be not the first by whom the new is tried, nor yet the last to lay the old aside." But it seems that clergy, as well as laity, are determined to be among the first to find, if possible,

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<sup>1</sup> "Fastest-Growing Church in the Hemisphere," *Time*, LXXX (Nov. 2, 1962), p. 56

<sup>2</sup> "The Third Force in Christendom," *Life*, XLIV (June 9, 1958), p. 113

what one of the prime movers of the glossolalic revival calls “a new dimension in life, a definite enrichment in spiritual life,” or “an added and rewarding method by which to praise and pray.”<sup>3</sup>

From the wide publicity already given it and the increasing acceptance of it among the major church bodies today, very few, if any, of us will disagree with the writer in the St. Paul, Minnesota *Sunday Pioneer Press*, who declares that “speaking in tongues cannot be ignored.”<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, appropriate and timely that an essay on this subject be heard at our pastoral conference, and that we, as faithful ministers of the mysteries of God, take time to study and discuss together “The Charisma of Glossolalia.”

The term “charisma” is a transliteration of the Greek word *χάρισμα* meaning “a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own.” In the New Testament Scriptures this term is used with reference to the gifts God gives. Hence charisma means “a gift of divine grace.” The term “glossolalia” is a combination of two Greek words *γλώσση λαλεῖν*, meaning “to speak with or in a tongue.” Statistically speaking, the Greek word *γλῶσσα* occurs fifty times in the New Testament with various usages.<sup>5</sup>

In half of these occurrences the word is used to describe the actual phenomenon of speaking in tongues. We could, accordingly, title our essay in these less high sounding, less theological, but perhaps more clearly understood, words: “The Divine Gift of Speaking in Tongues.”

Speaking in tongues, like everything else in this life, is essentially “a gift of divine grace,” a gift which God and God alone can bestow. And inasmuch as the primary source, yes, the only reputable record, man has of this gift and of God’s bestowal of it, is the inspired Word of God, we will begin our study of glossolalia with the sacred Scriptures.

For Bible believing Christians, for people who stand firm on the principle that the Bible is the sole source and norm for all faith and practice in life, this is as it should be. We want to know what the Word of God teaches concerning this subject, because we are well aware of the doctrinal errors which usually result when anything intrudes itself between the Bible and the believer. The age in which we live is one in which many people are experiencing a spiritual vacuum in their life caused, on the one hand, by a sense of material insecurity and, on the other hand, by a sense of spiritual insecurity that emanates from church bodies which have forsaken the revealed truth of God. And the deep desire to fill this spiritual vacuum has only served to lead many immortal souls deeper into error.

Now, as William Bellshaw writes,

“an experience which seems genuine has been thrust into the lives of many Christians causing them to misapprehend the message of God’s Word concerning the Holy Spirit’s ministry among men. In the last few years a number of Bible students have been bestowing the gift of tongues upon the church. Some even feel that the Holy Spirit has bestowed this gift upon them and that they have spoken in tongues. These events remind us that we must again search the Word of God so that neither our practices nor our desires will be outside of the limits of the Bible.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Jean Stone of Van Nuys, California, quoted in *The Dallas Times Herald*, January 30, 1963

<sup>4</sup> *Sunday Pioneer Press*, St. Paul, Minnesota, March 19, 1967 (cited by Pastor R. L. Weeks in his essay on Glossolalia)

<sup>5</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 97), p. 56

<sup>6</sup> William G. Bellshaw, “The Confusion of Tongues,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. 120 (April-June, 1963), p. 145

In the Bible there are only two books which specifically treat of this subject, and they are in the New Testament,—the book of the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostle Paul’s First Epistle to the Christians at Corinth. In the book of Acts there are three passages, primarily descriptive in nature, which mention the gift of glossolalia. They are: Acts 2:1-13; 10:1-11:18; and 18:24-19:7. In Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians there are three chapters, primarily expository in nature, which “indicate such things as the relationship of God’s gifts to the church, the atmosphere in which they are to be exercised, and the rules for the exercise of the gifts in the church.”<sup>7</sup> Beginning with the aforementioned Scripture references, we shall pursue the following outline:

1. References to Glossolalia in the Book of Acts
  - a. Acts 2 – Pentecost: The Gift of the Holy Ghost.
  - b. Acts 10 & 11 – Glossolalia in Caesarea.
  - c. Acts 19 – Glossolalia in Ephesus.
  - d. Acts 8 – Glossolalia in Samaria?
  - e. Conclusions Concerning Glossolalia in Acts.
2. References to Glossolalia in First Corinthians
  - a. The Situation at Corinth.
  - b. 1 Corinthians 12 – The Single Source of Spiritual Gifts.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 13 – The Atmosphere in Which All Gifts Must Function.
  - d. 1 Corinthians 14 – The Purpose of All Grace-Gifts.

Upon completion of the above Biblical study of glossolalia, we shall consider the validity of glossolalia today. We will briefly outline Pentecostalism since apostolic times, present some of their scriptural arguments for tongue speaking, and conclude with an evaluation of glossolalia today.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 46

## Chapter 2 – References to Glossolalia in the Book of Acts

### Acts 2 – Pentecost: The Gift of the Holy Ghost

Speaking in tongues is not new in the world, nor in the church. The history of glossolalia is long, dating all the way back to the birthday of the Holy Christian Church, the record of which we find in chapter two of the book of Acts. Here we have the account of the events on the first Christian Pentecost, when the church received the gift of the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of the risen Lord's pre-ascension promise: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1:8.

This is the important point about the first Christian Pentecost, namely, the gift of the Holy Ghost. As the Apostle Peter informs us in Acts 2:38, the gift of the Holy Ghost is for *all believers in Christ*. "Then Peter said unto them: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and *ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*." In contrast to this great gift, which is given to every believer in Jesus Christ, the supernatural signs of Pentecost were gifts of God which were bestowed upon but a few believers. We wish to emphasize this contrast, because it is in this connection that the Pentecostal Churches and the Glossolalists today do err. Their emphasis upon the external, supernatural signs of Pentecost is such that the important gift of that important day, namely, the gift of the Holy Ghost, is either overlooked or downgraded as being of secondary importance.

On Pentecost, after "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and the appearance of "cloven tongues like as of fire," "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance," Acts 2:2-4. The key words in verse four are *λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαῖς*, "to speak with other tongues." This remarkable event was the fulfillment of Christ's promise to his disciples, recorded in the Gospel according to St. Mark, chapter 16, verse 17: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall *speak with new tongues*," *γλώσσαις λαλήσουσιν καιναῖς*.

What do these two similar expressions mean? In his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Thayer presents two definitions for ἡ γλῶσσα.<sup>8</sup> The first definition is: "the tongue, a member of the body, the organ of speech." Under this definition Thayer cites no less than twelve passages where this meaning of tongues appears in the New Testament, none of them, however, being the two references above. The second definition is: "a tongue, that is, the *language* used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations." Under this definition reference is made to Acts 2:4, *λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαῖς*, "to speak with other than their native, that is, in foreign tongues," and to Mark 16:17, *γλώσσαις λαλήσουσιν καιναῖς*, "to speak with new tongues which the speaker has not learned previously." A brief study of Acts 2 supports this latter definition and interpretation of ἡ γλῶσσα.

In Acts 2:6 we read: "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." The important word here in the Greek text is the emphatic adjective *ἰδίᾳ*, "his own." Each foreign-born Jew heard his own language, that is, his own native dialect, spoken, not once or

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<sup>8</sup> J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburg: T. & T. Clark, 1953), p. 1

twice, but for a long length of time, the continuousness of the action being indicated by the imperfect *λαλούντων*.

In Acts 2:8 these foreign-born Jews raise the question: “And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?” Again the emphatic adjective *ἴδια*, “our own,” is used. We also note the fact that verse nine, which lists the languages and the nations represented by the foreign-born Jews, is in apposition to verse eight.

In Acts 2:11, where St. Luke, for the purpose of emphasis, records the words: “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God,” we mark the emphatic possessive adjective *ἡμετέραις*, “our own.” We also call attention to the word order of verse 11, which connects the tongues with the speaking of the disciples and not with the hearing of those present. This is significant because there are those who misinterpret Acts 2 to mean that the disciples spoke in their native Galilean Aramaic and that the foreign-born Jews heard their own language instead.

Of greatest importance to us and our understanding of *ἡ γλῶσσα* in the book of Acts, however, is this that the hearers on Pentecost heard in their own language “the wonderful works of God.” For here we have the divine purpose for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Concerning this purpose, it is clear that the Holy Spirit was not poured out on the disciples in order to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The apostles and the others in the house were already believers. As followers of Jesus they were assembled together in patient anticipation of receiving the fulfillment of his promise. Nor was the Spirit poured out on the disciples as if for the first time in their lives, as if they had not had the Holy Spirit prior to Pentecost. They certainly had the Spirit before Pentecost, because saving faith is not possible without the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3), and, as just noted, they already had the true faith. This is further evidenced by the compelling confession of Christ made by the Apostle Peter, as spokesman for the disciples, in his Pentecost sermon. The chief work of the Holy Ghost being to bring the immortal souls of men to saving faith in Jesus Christ, which work is wrought only through the Word and sacraments of God (Matthew 28:19-20 & Romans 10:17), and since the Lord’s clear command to his disciples on earth is to preach that Word to every creature (Mark 16:15), in order that all men might be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), God the Holy Ghost used the festival of Pentecost as the first formal opportunity for the followers of Christ to preach the gospel by giving them the ability to “speak with other tongues” “the wonderful works of God.”

As may be seen from all of Scripture, when God decides the time is ripe to alter the course of human history, when God ushers in a new era in his dealing with man, he does so with supernatural means.<sup>9</sup> And so here in Acts 2. The Day of Pentecost was that point in time when the Old Covenant was concluded and the New Covenant begun. It was the official inauguration of the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. And to the end that the disciples should not suffer the slightest doubt or misgiving concerning this historic event, the Lord poured out his Spirit upon them, accompanied by supernatural signs which included speaking with other tongues, to convince the disciples that the Holy Ghost had indeed come according to the Lord’s promise. Needless to say, we find here no choice of interpretation of the Pentecostal charisma of glossolalia, as Philip Schaff would have us believe. He writes that we must suppose *either* that the disciples were temporarily endowed with the gift of foreign languages for the particular purpose of proving their divine mission, *or* that the Holy Ghost, who gave them the gift of

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<sup>9</sup> H. J. Stolee, *Speaking in Tongues* (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1963), pp. 31-32

tongues, also acted as interpreter and applied the utterances of the disciples to the susceptible among the hearers. He admits that “the former is the most natural interpretation of Luke’s language,” but that he prefers the latter interpretation, which he then seeks to support with six reasons.<sup>10</sup> The text of Acts 2 is clear, so clear that we are bound to accept what Schaff calls “the most natural interpretation of Luke’s language.”

We might go on at length to treat of the reactions of those who mocked the miracle (Acts 2:13), as well as the Apostle Peter’s reply,—his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14-36). Suffice it to say that everything which has already been said concerning Acts 2, particularly the expression “the wonderful works of God” in verse 11, proves that what the disciples spoke on Pentecost was not incoherent, unintelligible babble or gibberish, but was intelligible, able to be understood by those who heard them speak. Our conclusion, therefore, is that “speaking with other tongues” in Acts 2:4 can only mean speaking in foreign languages and dialects which were hitherto unknown to the disciples. Nor was it the disciples who were speaking, but the Holy Ghost who moved them to speak,—“as the Spirit gave them utterance,” we are told in verse four, and which Peter correctly declared to be a fulfillment of God’s Old Testament prophecy in Joel 2:28, “I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy,” Acts 2:18.

### **Acts 10 & 11 – Glossolalia in Caesarea**

The second specific reference to speaking in tongues occurred at the conversion of Cornelius and his household, recorded in Acts 10 and 11. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, had a vision in which the Lord instructed him to send men to the city of Joppa and bring back a man named Simon Peter, Acts 10:1-8. In the meantime, Peter also had a vision in which he was told: “What God hath cleansed (viz. the Gentiles), that call not thou common,” Acts 10:15. The servants of Cornelius eventually come for the apostle, and he goes with them, together with six fellow Jewish Christians, and preaches the Word of God in Cornelius’ house.

The content of Peter’s sermon is that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all and that he was anointed by the Holy Ghost with power and went about doing good. Peter also spoke of Christ’s death on the cross, but that God raised him from the dead, . . . and commanded that Christ be preached as the One ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead, and that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name, Acts 10: 34-43.

Then, “while Peter yet spake these words,” we are told, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word,” Acts 10:44. “And they of the circumcision which believed,” that is, Peter’s six companions, were astonished because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out also on the Gentiles, “for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God,” Acts 10:46.

Knowing that God does not employ supernatural signs unless he has a special purpose for doing so, we ask: Why was a special sign of the Holy Ghost’s work given here at Caesarea? Why was Cornelius and his household given the gift of glossolalia? Our answer is found in Acts 11.

Peter, as you recall, was called to give an account of his actions in this case,—of his entering the home of a Gentile, of preaching the Word of God there, and of baptizing the entire Gentile household. After all, such action was unheard of. Indeed, to a faithful Jew it was absolutely unthinkable that God would save a Gentile without that Gentile first becoming a proselyte by observing the Old Testament Rite of Circumcision and other ordinances. That this is not overstating the situation is evidenced by Peter’s concern as he entered Cornelius’ home. He had let it be known at the outset: “Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a

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<sup>10</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950) vol. 1, chap. 4, pp. 231-233

Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation,” Acts 10:28. And that Peter’s concern was well founded is clear from what followed later at Jerusalem, where we are told that “they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying: Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them,” Acts 11:2-3.

Peter’s defense of his action was simply to reiterate all of the events from the beginning, so that the contenders had a complete picture of the situation, Acts 11:4-17. The significant thing, which confirmed Peter in his action and clinched his defense, was that “the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning,” Acts 11:15. Thus does Peter relate what happened in the home of Cornelius in Caesarea to what had occurred ten years earlier on Pentecost in Jerusalem. We conclude from this that the speaking with other tongues in Acts 2 and in Acts 10 and 11 are one and the same, namely, speaking in a foreign language, with but two slight differences. The first is that in Acts 2 there were many foreigners present, who heard the disciples preach in their native tongue, while in Acts 10 and 11 there apparently were no foreigners present. The second difference is that in Acts 2 the disciples prophesied, that is, declared “the wonderful works of God,” while in Acts 10 and 11 these Gentile Christians praise, “magnify God.”

Peter recognized this charisma of the Holy Spirit as proof positive that the Gentiles were also to be included in “the household of faith,” as members of Christ’s church. His words, upon hearing these Gentiles speak in tongues, showed that had this remarkable event not taken place, Peter would not have dared to baptize them. But because it did happen, Peter says to those of the circumcision: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?” Acts 10:45.

The astounding truth set forth in the conversion of Cornelius and his household at Caesarea is that God himself, by giving these Gentiles the gift of the Holy Ghost, that is, faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, was here for the first time placing all Gentile converts on a par with all believers from Judaism. So earnestly, in fact, did God desire to establish this truth that he preferred to dispense with the laying on of hands as in other instances. Indeed, God did not even wait until these Gentiles had first been baptized to demonstrate that they had received the Holy Ghost with the supernatural sign of speaking with other tongues. The Holy Christian Church had now begun among the Gentiles. From henceforth the work of the church would be world-wide, the scope of the church all-embracing, and every believer led to see that in God’s sight “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,” Galatians 3:28.

### **Acts 19 – Glossolalia in Ephesus**

The third reference to speaking in tongues in the book of Acts is chapter 19, verses 1 to 7. It relates of a quick trip to Ephesus made by the Apostle Paul on his Third Missionary Journey, during which he encountered a group of disciples, Acts 19:1, a group of twelve men, Acts 19:7.

Paul’s natural reaction was to get better acquainted with them, much as we do today when we meet people who profess to be Christians, inquiring about their past spiritual life. He asks them whether they had received the Holy Ghost when they came to faith. We note that Paul’s question makes no reference to baptism. Since people who came to faith would naturally also be baptized in keeping with Christ’s clear command, Matthew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15-16, the use of this sacrament upon these men did not concern the apostle. We may say that Paul took



for granted that they were baptized. What he inquires about, therefore, is “whether any charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit occurred when they came to faith.”<sup>11</sup>

Strange as it may seem to us, Paul’s question was not out of place. In the case of Cornelius and his household these manifestations came before they were baptized; in other instances they took place after baptism; and in the majority of instances they did not occur at all. The apostle, therefore, was merely trying to ascertain exactly what had happened in their particular case. And his question evoked from these men the surprising reply: “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit,” Acts 19:2.

Paul had simply asked, and they just as simply confess that they had not up to that time ever heard of the existence of the Holy Ghost. Their forthright confession at once clarified their spiritual situation for Paul. Knowing that people who have no knowledge of the Holy Spirit cannot have received a genuine and valid baptism, Paul touches the heart of their situation when he asks: “Unto what then were ye baptized?” Acts 19:3. Wasn’t the name of the Holy Ghost used at their baptism? Wasn’t the sacrament of baptism explained clearly enough to them so as to indicate the Holy Spirit’s connection with the sacrament? And it is evident from their previous reply that the Spirit’s name had at no time been mentioned to them. All that the twelve men can say in answer to Paul’s second question is: “Unto John’s baptism,”—the baptism of John the Baptist.

Paul’s preaching to these men clearly sets forth the distinct difference between Christian baptism and John’s baptism, as well as the spiritual stance of these men. “Then said Paul: John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus,” Acts 19:4. These men were disciples of John the Baptist. As such, they were looking for the promised Messiah to come in the flesh, as the Savior of the world. And they had prepared for the Messiah’s advent by confessing their sins and being baptized with a baptism of genuine repentance. Their faith in the forgiveness of sins, however, was grounded in a Redeemer who was still to come. They did not know of faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, who had already come and accomplished the redemption of mankind long years before, with the shedding of his holy blood and his innocent death on Calvary’s cross. “Nor did they know of regeneration by that faith, its seal of baptism in Christ’s Name, or the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>12</sup> In short, these twelve men were, spiritually speaking, still living in the Old Testament. They were still under the Old Covenant of the Law instead of the New Covenant of Grace. To switch from the former to the latter, they needed the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost and his New Testament ministry.

Upon instructing these men in “the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and so bringing them up-to-date, as it were, in their faith and life, Paul then baptized them “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” Acts 19:5. And now, as the final act and as a customary form of blessing at a baptism, the apostle “laid his hands upon them,” and “the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied,” *ἐλάλουν τε γλώσσαις και ἐπροφήτεμον*, Acts 19:6.

Again the charisma of glossolalia, this supernatural sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence, is bestowed, and we ask: Why? For what purpose did God give this gift to these twelve men? Our study of this event leads us to three conclusions.

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<sup>11</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (The Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1944), p. 780

<sup>12</sup> Stolee, *op. cit.*, p. 42

The first is that these men needed a special New Testament truth impressed upon them, namely, that their being baptized “unto John’s baptism” was invalid, because it was based upon faith in a Redeemer who was still future, while the truth is that the Redeemer had long since come in the person of Jesus Christ and had accomplished his work of universal redemption. As a result these men had not been baptized with the baptism commanded by Christ, which replaced John’s baptism.

The second conclusion is that these men needed a special sign from God to make it clear to them, as well as to all future generations of man, that baptism as performed by the Apostle Paul “in the name of the Lord Jesus” was not “just another baptism, more or less like any other and of little consequence.”<sup>13</sup> They were to see that the difference between Christian baptism and any other baptism is so great that the apostle dealt with them as if they had never been baptized.

Finally, had the gift of glossolalia been given by God *before* they were baptized by Paul, it would have meant that the baptism of John was a Christian baptism which lacked merely the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>14</sup> The fact that the gift was given *after* Paul’s baptism indicates that the new Christian baptism had been administered.

Perhaps one of the best summaries of the account of glossolalia in Acts 19 is the following quotation from H. J. Stolee. He writes:

“Three important doctrines were established. These Ephesians were made to see that *now they received the Holy Spirit*, which they had not in their former discipleship. Further this clarified to them that they were now in *a new position* in the Kingdom of God. Finally it was an object lesson to them what the apostle later writes of to the believers in this same city of Ephesus, namely that *in the Church there is one baptism*.”<sup>15</sup>

### Acts 8 – Glossolalia in Samaria?

Most of the sources which the essayist has read do not mention Acts 8:5-25, and that for the obvious reason that the events here do not deal directly with the gift of glossolalia. The essayist includes this reference, however, for two reasons. First, because it is related to Pentecost and treats of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. And two, because this is a passage to which the Pentecostals like to refer as proof positive that it is necessary to receive “the spirit baptism” as a distinct experience, subsequent to coming to faith.

The Evangelist Philip had gone to the city of Samaria to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Samaritans,—a nation of people who were despised by the Jews with a centuries’ old hatred, stemming among other things, if not primarily, from the fact that the Samaritan religion was a perversion, a mixture of truth and error. Philip preached among these people and performed many miracles, Acts 8:6-7. The result was that some believed and were baptized. Later the apostles, Peter and John, were sent to Samaria. When they arrived, we are told in verses 15-17, that Peter and John “prayed for them (for the Samaritan believers), that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” And St. Luke adds the parenthetical reason for their prayer: “For as yet he (the Holy Ghost) was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,” Acts 8:16.

In this reason for the apostles’ prayer we detect a direct connection to Pentecost. Lenski states that ἐπιπεπτωκός, the periphrastic pluperfect of ἐπι—πίπτω, “recalls what had happened at

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<sup>13</sup> Stolee, op. cit., p. 43

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 44

the time of Pentecost.”<sup>16</sup> He goes on to say that “the Samaritan believers had not yet been distinguished by this sign of the Spirit’s presence; it had been delayed until this time,” that is, until the arrival of Peter and John. By relating this account of the charismatic gifts of the Spirit in Samaria to the Pentecostal outpouring in Jerusalem, it would appear that the believing Samaritans also received the gift of glossolalia, that they did speak in tongues, in other languages than their own. We are quick to note, however, that St. Luke does not specifically say that the Samaritans received this special sign. There is no direct declaration that the Samaritan Christians spoke in tongues. All we know for certain is that when Peter and John “laid their hands on them, . . . they received the Holy Ghost,” Acts 8:17. And that there must have been some external evidence of the Spirit’s presence among these Samaritans is seen from the fact that Simon the sorcerer made a vain attempt to purchase from Peter and John the power to bestow the gifts of the Holy Ghost, imagining that the apostles possessed some kind of magical ability which could be had for a price.

As for the Pentecostals and their reference to this passage as proof for “a spirit baptism” as a distinct experience, subsequent to coming to faith, Acts 8 does not support their claim. This event, like that of Pentecost and the events in Caesarea and Ephesus, was simply a singular occasion in the early years of the church’s history when the Spirit of the Lord moved in a miraculous manner to inaugurate and to spread the Kingdom of his Grace throughout the world.

At best, and of primary importance, Acts 8 is part of the fulfillment of Christ’s pre-ascension command in Acts 2:8: “And ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, *and in Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” In this light, Acts 8 is the first recorded extension of Christ’s Kingdom into the world outside the boundaries of Judea, the first record of people who were not pure-blood descendants of father Abraham being brought into the Holy Christian Church by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Means of Grace, the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Being baptized believers in Jesus Christ, these Samaritans had, indeed, received the Holy Spirit and all his supreme gifts: forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. So that from this standpoint they did not lack any spiritual gift, nor need any additional outpouring, gift, or “baptism” of the Holy Ghost. And when we ask why God in his grace deemed it necessary to grant still other and visible signs of the Spirit’s presence to the Samaritan Christians, we can conclude only two sensible reasons: one, to confirm the truth that Christ came to redeem all nations, kindreds and tongues, and that God wants all men to be saved; and two, to assure both Jews and Gentiles that there is not more than one church, nor several compartments within the church—one for Jews, one for Samaritans, and one for Gentiles, but that the church of Jesus Christ is altogether one, united by faith in him.

### **Conclusions Concerning Glossolalia in Acts**

As stated in the Introduction of our essay, there are only three passages in the book of the Acts of the Apostles which specifically mention the supernatural sign of speaking with other tongues. In our study of these references we have seen what is the nature and the purpose of this gift of God to his church. Let us briefly catalog the conclusions which were stated in our study of each reference.

Concerning the *nature* of the gift of glossolalia, it is the God-given ability to speak in other languages which were hitherto unknown to and never learned by those who spoke them.

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<sup>16</sup> Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 324

The language was not incoherent or unintelligible, but was coherent and clear, able to be understood by the hearers. They heard and understood “the wonderful works of God” in Acts 2; they recognized the magnification of God in Acts 10, as well as the prophesying or preaching in Acts 19.

Concerning the *purpose* of the gift of glossolalia, it was a threefold purpose. The first purpose, in Acts 2, was to assure the apostles and all other disciples (as well as we and all generations of believers to the end of time) that the ascended Savior’s promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled, and that the third person of God was come to abide in the church. The New Covenant Kingdom of God was now formally and officially inaugurated on earth. The second purpose, in Acts 10 and 11, was to declare once and forever the universality, the all-embracing scope of Christ’s Kingdom, both in its membership and in its work. Although we do not know for certain that they received the gift of glossolalia, the record of the Samaritans receiving the Holy Ghost in Acts 8 would be included under this second purpose. For it showed the Jewish Christians that the Samaritans, whom they once despised as an inferior race, were to be recipients of the Gospel of salvation in accord with Christ’s command: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,” Mark 16:15. The third purpose, in Acts 19, was to confirm the existence of the Holy Spirit to the disciples at Ephesus and to set forth the divine truth that the only baptism by which the Holy Spirit effects membership in Christ’s Kingdom is the baptism instituted and commanded by the Lord himself, Matthew 28:19-20.

An additional point to remember as one studies the book of Acts is that the gift of glossolalia was bestowed by God very sparingly. These three occasions in Acts and the singular occasion in the Corinthian congregation are the only times that the Scriptures speak of this phenomenon. Moreover, not all who came to faith received this special sign of the Holy Ghost. We do not read, for example, that the gift of tongues was bestowed upon the three thousand souls who were converted and baptized on Pentecost, but only that they received *the gift*—the Holy Ghost. Neither do we hear that the Jews who were baptized at Lydda or Joppa received the gift of tongues. Nor do we read that Lydia or even the jailer at Philippi received this gift. Hence they are sorely mistaken who conclude that every Christian should seek a similar experience subsequent to coming to faith. The glossolalists of today are treading on dangerous ground when they attempt to “make that commonplace which God never intended to be commonplace.”

We have spent some time on the study of glossolalia in the book of Acts because it does have a bearing on one’s understanding of the gift as recorded in St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians. Here, in the book of Acts, there is very little disagreement as to what *λαλεῖν γλώσσα* means. When we begin to interpret the gift of tongues in First Corinthians, however, we run into many and varied interpretations, which, the essayist believes, would not be the case if the right understanding of glossolalia in the book of Acts was always borne in mind.

## Chapter 3 - References to Glossolalia in First Corinthians

### The Situation at Corinth

By way of introduction to “The Charisma of Glossolalia” as it occurred in the church at Corinth, a brief look into the historical setting of this congregation will be helpful, for even a cursory reading of Paul’s first epistle to them reveals a sharp contrast between the church at Corinth and the congregations or groups in the book of Acts relative to the gift of tongues.

So far as we are able to determine, the supernatural sign of speaking in tongues did not cause any problems within the groups or churches where it occurred in the book of Acts, but was merely recognized and accepted for what it was, namely, a special sign for special purposes.<sup>17</sup> Whereas the gift of tongues presented a serious congregational problem at Corinth, as evidenced by the fact that the Apostle Paul devotes three chapters of his first epistle to a thorough discussion of this special gift of the Spirit.

Following his salutation to “the church of God which is at Corinth,” 1:2, Paul begins his epistle by expressing his gratitude to God for the rich grace which God had bestowed upon the church at Corinth. He writes: “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1:4-8. The congregation at Corinth had been richly blessed by Christ with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit had not left them lacking in anything, as Paul mentions the gifts of speech and knowledge here in the first chapter, and later enumerates the other gifts God had given them in chapter 12, verses 8 to 10 and verses 28 to 30.

But though the congregation at Corinth had “come behind in no gift;” though they did not lack any of the gifts needed for the life and growth of a Christian congregation; though it was, in short, an exceptionally gifted church, it was not a spiritually strong church, but rather spiritually immature. For, despite its many spiritual gifts and gifted membership, the congregation was comprised of problems which stagger the human imagination.

Paul had founded this congregation during his Second Missionary Journey, cf. Acts 18:1-8. In the year and a half that he labored at Corinth, he met with much opposition from the Jewish citizenry. Nevertheless, God blessed his efforts with a church composed largely of Gentiles.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the good beginning did not last. After Paul left the city many moral and spiritual problems took root in the church, which were brought to his attention.<sup>19</sup> To correct the situation, Paul wrote this first epistle to the Corinthians from Ephesus, during his Third Missionary Journey.

What were the many problems which confronted “the church of God at Corinth”? To begin with, there were divisions, 1:11, followed by carnality, 3:3, and misconceptions concerning the Gospel ministry, 3:5-4:21. There was gross fornication, 5:1. There were lawsuits between Christians, 6:1, and moral abuses of the believers’ bodies, 6:15. Coupled with the latter, there was ignorance of the marriage relationship, 7:1, and the purpose of virginity, 7:25. There was violation of Christian liberty, 8:1; the insubordination of women, 11:2; abuse of the Lord’s

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<sup>17</sup> Stolee, op. cit., p. 49

<sup>18</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 109

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 1:11: Members of Chloe’s household contacted Paul; 7:1: A letter of inquiry was sent to Paul; 16:17: Three Corinthians visited Paul.

Supper, 11:17; ignorance of the nature of spiritual gifts, 12:1; and denial of the physical resurrection of believers in Christ from the dead, 15:1.

Examination of these various problems reveals that the underlying cause was spiritual pride. Repeatedly the phrase “puffed up” appears throughout the epistle. This spiritual pride asserted itself in numerous ways. The Corinthians were developing a distaste for the preaching of God’s Word. Many of the members had a severe case of what Paul calls “itching ears,” 2 Timothy 4:3. They favored something more “mysterious,” and they thought that; with the knowledge the Gospel gave them, they deserved a place of importance in the eyes of men. The result was that there was the danger of making the Gospel of Jesus Christ little more than just another brand of Greek philosophy.

As we have said, the Corinthian congregation was immature,—immature in its attitudes, in its enthusiasm, and in its knowledge of the nature and proper use of spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of glossolalia. Schweizer summarized well the situation at Corinth. He writes:

“In Corinth a conception of the Spirit of God was predominant which mixed up Holy Spirit and enthusiasm. To the Corinthians, an utterance seemed to be the more godly the more miraculous it appeared. Thus glossolalia was the highest degree of spiritual maturity, just because it showed itself depending on a mysterious power which could not be identified with any natural faculty of man.”<sup>20</sup>

Stolee’s summary of the situation is more incisive. He calls it “a pronounced case of religious inflation!”<sup>21</sup>

So it is that in his first epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul gives much attention to the true nature of spiritual gifts and their proper usage, with special emphasis upon the gift of glossolalia. The three chapters, which we will consider, are chapters 12, 13, and 14.

We will leave the situation at Corinth with this significant fact that Paul mentions the gift of glossolalia in only one of his letters,—the epistle before us. This is in itself significant, because Paul, to quote Frank Beare, is “the great theologian of the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Spirit in the life of the church and of the individual Christian believer occupies a great place in his thought ...”<sup>22</sup> We agree with William Bellshaw when he writes:

“If it were the normal thing to expect the manifestation of this gift, certainly Paul would have given instructions for its use in such epistles as Ephesians (which deals with the body of Christ), Philippians (which deals with the Christian’s walk), and the pastoral epistles (which deal with the order in the church). Yet in these books no reference is made to this gift. This in itself should give cause for a careful consideration of the place of tongues in the church today.”<sup>23</sup>

## **1 Corinthians 12 – The Single Source of Spiritual Gifts**

In chapter 12 the Apostle Paul makes several points which are helpful to us. He wastes no time, nor minces any words, but comes straight to the point, saying: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Schweizer, “The Service of Worship,” *Interpretation*, X111 (October, 1959), p. 403 (cited by Gromacki, op. cit., pp. 109-110)

<sup>21</sup> Stolee, op. cit., p. 51

<sup>22</sup> Frank W. Beare, “Speaking with Tongues; A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, v.83:240 (Sept., 1964)

<sup>23</sup> Bellshaw, op. cit., p. 146

these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” 12:1-3.

Despite all their moral and spiritual problems, which they had brought upon themselves as the result of their human pride and spiritual immaturity, and which he had discussed at length in the previous chapters of this letter, the apostle still recognizes the Corinthians as fellow Christians, as “brethren” in the Lord, and addresses them as such. In fact, it is on the basis of this common bond of brotherhood by faith in Jesus Christ that Paul will speak to them about spiritual gifts.

Reminding the Corinthians of their pagan days, when they were led astray under the influence of false gods, Paul gives them a test whereby they can determine whether a person who speaks in “tongues” has this gift from God, or not. His words imply that the congregation had been shocked by some of the things which were actually said by supposedly “spirit-filled” people. In an ecstasy, reputedly under the inspiration of a spirit, they had uttered the blasphemous declaration that “Jesus is accursed!”<sup>24</sup> And Paul informs the congregation that, while such a blasphemy may be prompted by a spirit, it certainly is not prompted by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit does not move men to curse Christ, but rather and only to confess Christ, to declare that “Jesus is the Lord.” In this connection, Gromacki asks an interesting question:

“Could it be that some Corinthian in a human effort to reproduce the gift of speaking in tongues rearranged and pronounced certain syllables with the total effect of actually calling Jesus accursed?”<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to discuss a striking similarity between *ἀνάθεμα*, accursed, and *μαρανάθα*, our Lord cometh, in certain sounds, cf. 1 Corinthians 16:22. Gromacki poses two possibilities. He says:

“A Greek speaker may have tried to simulate this latter Aramaic phrase with the faulty re-arrangement of a-na-tha-mar. Thus, he would have been calling Jesus accursed rather than declaring his coming. Another possibility is that the person said “Jesus is accursed” (anathema) instead of “Jesus is a votive offering” (anatheima) or that he substituted “accursed” for “a curse” (katara; cf. Gal. 3:13).”<sup>26</sup>

Whatever the case might have been, the Apostle Paul begins this chapter on spiritual gifts by emphatically declaring that he who sincerely confesses the Lord Jesus is actually speaking by the Holy Spirit. With this opening statement, Paul begins at the beginning of all spiritual gifts by reminding the Corinthians that the greatest of all God’s gifts is “the gift of the Holy Ghost,” and that this gift is not restricted to only a select group of Christians—such as church members who have received certain, special, supernatural signs—but is the gift of all who confess faith in Christ. Indeed, the confession of faith in Christ is the sure sign that the confessor has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, and that no other signs of the Spirit are necessary for faith, or to substantiate the existence of saving faith within a believer. Thus does the apostle establish the foundation for all spiritual gifts, including the gift of glossolalia which the Corinthians were guilty of over-emphasizing in their efforts to compete with the pagan world from which they had been recently converted.

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<sup>24</sup> Beare, op. cit., p. 241

<sup>25</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 61

<sup>26</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., pp. 61-62

Paul then proceeds to set the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their proper perspective, and to relate them to the common life in the church.<sup>27</sup> “Now there are diversities of gifts, ... there are differences of administrations, ... and there are diversities of operations, ... but the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God,” 12:4-6, who works in and through all and is served by all of these various gifts. Which are they? And Paul presents two catalogs of gifts. In verses 8 to 10 he lists: Wisdom, Knowledge, Faith, Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of spirits, Tongues, and Interpretation. In verses 28 to 30 he lists: Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, Miracles, Helps, Governments, Tongues, and Interpretation. We notice that in connection with the first list Paul repeats four times that it is one and the same Spirit who is active in all of the gifts. In connection with the second list of gifts Paul indicates the order of their eminence with the enumeration of “first,” “secondarily,” and “thirdly:” And we observe that he has placed the gift of tongues near the bottom of each list, indicating thereby his personal evaluation of this particular gift as compared with the Corinthians’ evaluation. They had placed it first, as the gift to be most earnestly coveted, while Paul placed it last, as one of the lesser gifts.

Of particular interest is the fact that these spiritual gifts are called τῶν πνευματικῶν, 12:1, and χαρισμάτων, 12:4. Grammatically speaking, the former word is a genitive which by its form could be either neuter or masculine. If it is taken as neuter, it would mean “the spiritual things,” referring to the gifts, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:1. On the other hand, if it is taken as masculine, it would mean “spiritual people” or “spirit-filled people,” referring to the gifted men, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37. For all practical purposes, however, it is difficult to distinguish between the gift and the person who has the gift.<sup>28</sup> The latter word, χαρισμάτων, means “gifts of grace,” or “grace gifts.” It indicates that the gifts have their origin in God’s grace, while the former term, πνευματικῶν, indicates that the gifts are spiritual in essence, being given and controlled by the Holy Ghost.<sup>29</sup> This the apostle points to when he says: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,” 12:4; “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” 12:7; “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will,” 12:11; “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him,” 12:18; and: “God hath set some in the church, ...” 12:28. The definition of a spiritual gift, then, is that it is an ability given to the Christian solely by God’s grace, through and controlled by the Holy Ghost, for the purpose of Christian growth and service.<sup>30</sup>

In chapter 12 Paul also discusses the character of the gift of glossolalia. The phrase γένη γλωσσῶν, which is translated as “kinds of tongues” in verse 10 and as “diversities of tongues” in verse 28, has been variously interpreted. One meaning is different foreign languages, and the other is different kinds of unintelligible words which sound like language. We have already given our conclusion concerning the character of the gift of tongues as recorded in the book of Acts. This now raises the question: Are the references to tongues in Acts and in First Corinthians similar in nature, or are they not? Are there two different kinds of tongues referred to in the New Testament? If they are not identical, what is the difference between them? One writer also raises the question as to whether the references to tongues in both New Testament books have the same character but a different purpose.

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<sup>27</sup> Beare, op. cit., p. 242

<sup>28</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 111

<sup>29</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 111

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.



Lenski believes that the various occurrences are identical in nature. He writes:

“Since the promise regarding ‘tongues’ or regarding ‘new tongues’ (the better reading) mentioned in Mark 16:18 was first fulfilled at Pentecost in Jerusalem and shortly thereafter at Caesarea, ... and since this phenomenon did not appear in Corinth for a number of years after these first occurrences, we must ask whether a difference exists between the tongues spoken in Jerusalem and in Caesarea and those spoken in Corinth. The answer is that they are the same. As the promise is one, so the fulfillment is one regardless of the place where the fulfillment occurs.”<sup>31</sup>

In his dissertation, “A Scriptural Evaluation of Tongues in Contemporary Theology,” Richard Ruble came to the same conclusion. He wrote:

“The explanation of the difference between tongues in Acts and tongues in 1 Corinthians centers around the concepts of progressive revelation and dispensational distinctives. The glossolalia in Acts occurred some years before that in 1 Corinthians. It would be expected that with the passage of years regulations would be set up in the churches to govern the use of the spiritual gifts.”<sup>32</sup>

Commenting upon these words of Ruble, Robert Gromacki agrees that the nature of the tongues in Acts and in First Corinthians is identical, but that there is a difference in their purpose. He states that

“the last occurrence of tongues in Acts (19:1-7) took place during Paul’s third journey in Ephesus. At this time Paul wrote First Corinthians from Ephesus; therefore, it would be more logical to conclude that the Corinthian manifestation of tongues preceded that of the disciples of John the Baptist, although the Corinthian letter was written shortly after the Ephesian occurrence. Thus, if regulations were imposed, they were done so quickly, not progressively.”<sup>33</sup>

Gromacki then presents three reasons in support of a difference in purpose between the gift of tongues in Acts and in First Corinthians:

“In Acts, speaking in tongues is a transitional sign of the unique reception of the Holy Spirit.... In First Corinthians, tongues was a spiritual gift given to some believers for the edification of the church. Regulations of the gift of tongues (number, in order, need of interpreter, etc.) are not seen in the Acts occurrences.”<sup>34</sup>

As noted earlier in the introduction of this essay, ἡ γλῶσσα, which is the key word of this Scriptural phenomenon, occurs fifty times in the New Testament.<sup>35</sup> In twenty-five of these fifty times, the word is used to describe the actual phenomenon of glossolalia. And it is significant that all but one of these twenty-five times are recorded in the book of Acts and in First Corinthians. It is also significant that, though the term γλῶσσα appears in nine different grammatical constructions,<sup>36</sup> the basic vocabulary is the same. No qualifying words are used to

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<sup>31</sup> Lenski, op. cit., p. 504

<sup>32</sup> Richard L. Ruble, “A Scriptural Evaluation of Tongues in Contemporary Theology.” Unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1964

<sup>33</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., pp. 135-136

<sup>34</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 136

<sup>35</sup> Cf. page 3 of this essay.

<sup>36</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 57

distinguish these references, or to show that there is any difference in character between the phenomenon found in both New Testament books. The Biblical proof is overwhelming, compelling the conclusion that the gift of glossolalia in Acts and in First Corinthians consisted of speaking in known languages and of praising God by men who were under the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

Having listed nine different spiritual gifts in verses 4 to 10, Paul's "next thought is that the church lives by a unity in diversity, or diversity in unity, like that of the body with its different parts,"<sup>37</sup> 12:12-27. Just as the human body is an organic unit, so is the church, in and through which the Spirit of God works. Just as the human body has many parts—eyes, ears, nose, hands, head, and feet—and all the parts have different functions which promote the health and life of the body, so in the church the different members have different gifts, distributed according to the gracious good will of God, and all are needed. Regardless of the spiritual gifts, or the proportion of gifts, bestowed upon any member of the church, all the members are united by and in the same Spirit of God, who originally gives the gifts. This being the case, all members are dependent upon one another. No member is independent of all the other members.

Moreover, because these various gifts are bestowed by "the same Spirit," no one is at any time justified in belittling or envying the grace gifts of some one else. Nor is any professing Christian ever justified in elevating one particular gift of God above another, as the Corinthians had done with the gift of tongues. Paul reminds the Corinthians, and us, that it is God and God alone who determines how the gifts are distributed,—to whom and in what measure—and God simply has not chosen to give all of his gifts to everyone, 12:28-30.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," 12:27. For "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit," 12:13.

### **1 Corinthians 13 – The Atmosphere in Which All Gifts Must Function**

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," 12:31. With these closing words of chapter 12 the apostle interrupts the main discussion of spiritual gifts, which will be resumed in chapter 14, to set forth the attitude, the motive, the atmosphere in which all gifts must function if they are to be used properly. In their attempted use of the gifts God gave them, the Corinthians had, in our modern idiom, "goofed", and terribly so. Not only did they "covet earnestly" the least of God's gifts; not only did they value the gift of tongues more highly than all the other spiritual gifts; not only did they who professed to have the gift of tongues think more highly of themselves than of those who lacked the gift; and not only did they who lacked the gift of tongues think themselves to be useless because they had not received the gift, but they had miserably failed to follow the "more excellent way,"—the way of Christ-centered love.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, ... though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, ... and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned," 13:1-3. "Choose a gift of God," says the apostle, "or think of something worthwhile that I might do in the kingdom of God." Regardless what the gift would be, or what I might do, the gift and my doing are worthless without love. If I "have not love, I am nothing," and "it profiteth me nothing," 13:2-3.

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<sup>37</sup> Beare, op. cit., p. 242

Love, Christ-centered love, the love of God above all things, the love of our neighbor as much as we love ourselves,—far outranks all the other gifts that the Corinthians have received, or that any believer may receive, from God. Why? Time does not permit us to answer this question at length here. Suffice it to say that it is the greatest of all gifts because “God is Love,” 1 John 4:8. In that love, which He is, God created all things, redeemed a world of sinful men, and sanctifies all who trust in him for forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. And, above everything else in this life, it is the will of God that we be constrained, in all we are or do, by his love, 2 Corinthians 5:14. Indeed, because the Corinthians permitted spiritual pride to be their guide instead of love, they were led into error and false practice, for which Paul was constrained to admonish them in this epistle.

Not only might we rephrase a proverbial saying and declare that “more things are wrought by love than this world dreams of,” but the apostle emphasizes two important truths,—that all other gifts of God, including the gift of tongues, “shall fail, ... cease, ... vanish away,” 13:8, while “faith, hope, love” abide, the greatest of which is love, 13:13. Therefore, admonishes Paul, “follow after love,” 14:1.

In addition to the primary point of this chapter, that love is the atmosphere in which all gifts of God must function, there are two other interesting items to which we would briefly call attention.

The first has to do with Paul’s opening statement. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels” has prompted some to divide the tongues phenomenon into known languages (“of men”) and unknown languages (“of angels”). This, however, is not necessarily the case, and for three reasons. One, Paul was merely describing a hypothetical case. He says: “If ...” This does not mean that he had spoken in angelic languages even though in the next chapter he admits that he did speak in tongues. Two, the fact that the word “tongues” is used only once with “men” and “angels” simply shows that human and angelic languages can be grouped together. Thus they have something in common,—they are both languages which can be known and understood by the hearers. Three, whenever men and angels had occasion to converse together in Biblical times, they were able to do so intelligently in known languages without difficulty or the need of interpretation. Our conclusion, therefore, is that far from dividing languages into known and unknown categories, the apostle is reaffirming that the gift of glossolalia was in the form of definite languages, not ecstatic utterances.<sup>38</sup>

Speaking on the permanence of tongues in the New Testament, Bellshaw presents a telling exposition based on the words “part” in verse 9 and “perfect” in verse 10, and relates the whole to the completion of the canonical Scriptures. He writes:

“Since the New Testament was not complete, this gift was needed to validate the message which was being preached. After the canon of the Bible was completed, this gift was no longer necessary. Such is the explicit testimony of 1 Corinthians 13. The words of verse nine assert that tongues will cease. When will this be? The succeeding verses answer the question. It is important to note that Paul places the emphasis in the next verse on the twofold use of the word ‘part.’ Literally he said: ‘For in part we are knowing, and in part we are prophesying.’ The incomplete nature of the revealed Word of God is thus emphasized. But there is a time when it will be completed. Paul refers to the finished product as ‘that which is perfect’ (verse 10). Though some may refer the word ‘perfect’ to Christ, this interpretation cannot be sustained. This adjective (used as a noun) is in the

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<sup>38</sup> Gromacki, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63

neuter gender. Therefore, it is a reference to the finished (perfect) or completed Word of God. If it referred to Christ, it would be in the masculine gender.

“With the completion of the New Testament there no longer was a need for men to be used as instrumentalities to give forth God’s authoritative message. This is now contained in the written Word. Men now simply proclaim it. The gift of tongues authenticating these messages also was no longer necessary. All of the things relating to this partial testimony will be made idle or rendered inoperative (the literal meaning of ‘shall be done away’). The gift of tongues and related gifts were for the first years of the church’s history (verse 11), while God was still in the process of revealing his Word to mankind (verse 12).”<sup>39</sup>

When or if this interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13 was ever made in a Hermeneutics course, the essayist humbly admits that he cannot recall. But it surely presents a logical argument against tongue-talking today.

### **1 Corinthians 14 – The Purpose of All Grace Gifts**

Having set forth the atmosphere in which all gifts of God are to function, the Apostle Paul, in chapter 14, returns to the main discussion of the spiritual gifts which he had listed in chapter 12. In this chapter Paul states the purpose of all grace gifts and points out what value is to be attached to them, particularly what value the gift of glossolalia has in relation to all the other gifts. A brief study of this chapter shows us that the purpose of God’s gifts of grace is to edify the church.

“Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy,” says Paul, 14:1. He repeats the main thought of chapter 13, declaring that Christ-centered love is the supreme need for the proper use of all God’s gracious gifts. If one has this love, then love will also show to that one which spiritual gift is especially to be sought, namely, the gift of prophecy. The definition of prophecy here is not in the narrow sense of direct revelation from God, as we see it manifested among God’s Old Testament prophets when they were inspired to speak of future events. “Prophecy” here is to be thought of in the broad sense of the word, as the Apostle Peter spoke of it in Acts 2:18, namely, speaking forth the Word of God, proclaiming “the wonderful works of God,” Acts 2:11. Throughout chapter 14 now, the Apostle Paul draws a comparison between the two gifts, prophecy and speaking in tongues, and indicates which of the two gifts is to be considered more important and therefore more desirable.

“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,” 14:2. The word *unknown*, which appears in italics here in verse two and in five other verses of this chapter (verses 4, 13, 14, 19, and 27), is most unfortunate. This adjective is not a part of the original text, but was added by the translators because their understanding was that the Corinthian tongues phenomenon consisted of speaking in an unknown, ecstatic utterance. The insertion of this word has caused much misunderstanding, leading some people to believe “that these sounds had never been uttered before as intelligible languages.”<sup>40</sup> Important to verse two are the Greek words *λαλῶν γλώσση*—the same expression used throughout the book of Acts. This indicates, then, that if one speaks in a tongue, in a foreign language, he is not really speaking to men but to God,

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<sup>39</sup> Bellshaw, op. cit., pp. 151-152

<sup>40</sup> Bellshaw, op. cit., p. 147

because no one who hears him understands what is being said. Concerning the phrase “no man understandeth him,” one writer has this to say:

“Some believe that the phrase ‘no man understandeth him’ (1 Cor. 14:2) is a categorical statement. This means that if a representative from every known language group were present at a tongues meeting, no one would be able to recognize or to understand what was being spoken by the person who was speaking in tongues. However, to be consistent then, the advocates of tongue-speaking would have to say that every occurrence of tongue-speaking must be in the form of unknown languages, and yet, they admit that many of their own group have spoken in known foreign languages. Thus, this would constitute an argument against their position that both known and unknown languages can be spoken. Actually, this verse only means that no man *present at the service* understands the speaker. Since God was the source of genuine glossolalia, he knew what language groups were present and caused the person to speak in a foreign language not represented. Thus, the gift of interpretation was always necessary.”<sup>41</sup>

“But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 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, 14:3-5. On the other hand, says Paul, he who proclaims the Word of God not only speaks and is understood by his hearers, but the direct result of his preaching is that his hearers are edified, that is, built up and strengthened in the saving faith and filled with zeal to live sanctified lives unto God. The long and short of the comparison between speaking in tongues and prophesying is that he who speaks in tongues only builds up his own soul, while he who proclaims the Word of the Lord builds up the church of God. Paul sincerely wishes that all the members of the Corinthian congregation would have the gift of glossolalia, but, even more important, that all of them were preachers and would preach the Word of God. Why? Because he who preaches the Word does a greater work than he who speaks with tongues,—unless, of course, the latter also has the gift to interpret his words for the edification of the church.

“Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?” 14:6. To make his point more concrete for the Corinthians, the apostle uses himself as an example. Suppose that Paul came to the Corinthians and during the time that he was with them he would speak in a language which was utterly unfamiliar to them. What good would they get out of that? No, the only way in which the Corinthians could and would profit from Paul’s ministry in their midst is if he could give them “some revelation of God’s Truth, some knowledge in spiritual things, some message from God, or some teaching about the Christian life.”<sup>42</sup>

We are given other analogies in verses 7 to 9. The apostle writes: “And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.” If inanimate objects like a flute or a harp produce indistinct notes; if the notes all sound alike, how can

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<sup>41</sup> Gromacki, *op. cit.*, p. 63

<sup>42</sup> J. B. Phillips, “Letters to Young Churches,” (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1951), p. 61

anyone know what is being played on these instruments? Or if the bugle-call to arms does not sound loud and clear, who will get ready for battle? So it is in your case, Paul tells the Corinthians. If you utter unintelligible speech, how can anyone know what you are talking about? “You might just as well be addressing an empty room.”<sup>43</sup> “As musical sounds are distinguished by various notes of the scale and octave, so speaking is distinguished by vocabulary and grammatical construction.”<sup>44</sup> We see from these analogies that the Apostle Paul was opposed to the mere repetition of certain sounds or “words” (as many modern tongue-speakers do) as the proper expression of the phenomenon of glossolalia. Paul directs that words “easy to be understood” should be spoken, so that a person is able to recognize what is said as a known language.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me,” 14:10-11. Certainly, ever since the Tower of Babel, cf. Gen. 11:1-9, the world is full of a variety of languages and spoken sounds, and each of them has a distinct meaning. But if the sounds of a speaker’s voice mean nothing to me, or if the sounds of my voice mean nothing to him, the end result will be a mutual exclusion of each other. We will be mutual strangers, foreigners.

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church,” 14:12. The Corinthians’ eagerness for the spiritual gifts of God is commendable; it is good. But in their zeal for these gifts they should strive, above all, to excel in building up “the church of God which is at Corinth.” And since, as we have heard, building up the church is accomplished by prophesying, by proclaiming the Word of God, rather than by speaking in tongues, Paul’s implication is clear. They are to strive for that greater, more important gift of prophecy.

Because uninterpreted or uninterpretable speaking in tongues is useless for anyone in the congregation, the apostle points out in verses 13 to 19 the importance of the gift of interpretation.

“Wherefore let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful,” 14:13-14. Paul urges that a person who has the gift of glossolalia should also pray for the power to interpret for others what he says in tongues, in order to edify his hearers. In verse 14 there is again a difference of opinion as to the interpretation of the phrase, “my understanding (*νοῦς*) is unfruitful.” This has led many to believe that what was spoken was ecstatic language because it could not be understood. If we remember, however, that speaking in tongues was a result of the Holy Spirit’s work, it can be understood that it was the Holy Spirit speaking through the individual, and therefore one’s mind would not be active as the one producing the speaking in tongues.

“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,” 14:15-17. Since praying in tongues means that one’s mind is not active, it is better, writes the apostle, that one use both his spirit *and* his mind when he worships the Lord. For if a person speaks in a tongue which cannot be understood by all others present at a service, how can a catechumen, or one who is ungifted, say Amen to something he does not comprehend?

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<sup>43</sup> Phillips, op. cit., p. 62

<sup>44</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 64

A person who gives thanks to God in tongues may be thanking God splendidly, but it does not help anyone else who does not know what the tongue-speaker is talking about.

“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that . . . I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue,” 14:18-19. These words of Paul are significant when we recall that the underlying cause of the problems in the Corinthian congregation was spiritual pride, particularly as that pride was applied to the divine gift of speaking in tongues. Did the apostle have this special gift too? There is no reason to doubt that he had it. Did he make use of it upon occasion? There is no reason to doubt that he did. *But* there is much more to serving the Lord and his church than merely being able to speak in foreign languages. How much more, Paul indicates with his ratio of five to ten thousand. Five words spoken with understanding, which might teach other people something, far outranks thousands of words spoken in a language which nobody understands.

“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men,” 14:20. This speaking with tongues in the congregation without an interpreter is childish. Certainly, when it comes to evil by all means be innocent as babes. But in this matter of tongues you must use your mind, the intelligence God gave you. It is high time to grow up, to become τέλειοι, mature. What is spiritual maturity? It is keeping the gift of glossolalia in proper perspective to all the other spiritual gifts, as Paul lists them in chapter 12. It is remembering that in the use of spiritual gifts, glossolalia included, Christian love is to be the guide, as Paul points out in chapter 13. And it is seeking to possess and develop those spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of prophecy, which will edify the whole church.

“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. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” 14:21-23. Remember too, Paul continues, that according to the Old Testament Word of God, the speaking in tongues is a judgment of God which is intended, not for those who believe, but for those who do not believe. If we recall the event of the first Christian Pentecost, this truth is well documented by St. Luke. It is a well known fact that the disciples’ speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost did not bring anyone to faith. It made people wonder; it made those Jews who were confirmed unbelievers even more hostile, so that they accused the disciples of being drunk, “full of new wine,” Acts 2:13. What does Paul say in verse 23? He says that the effect of glossolalia upon the unlearned, or upon unbelievers, should they happen to attend a church meeting and hear everybody speaking in tongues, will be that they will think the speakers are insane. The Old Testament Scripture, which the apostle quotes, is a prophecy from Isaiah (28:11-12). That prophecy dealt with the time when Judah and Israel were both invaded by the Assyrians, cf. 2 Kings 17-18. The words “this people” meant the Jews and the phrase “men of other tongues and other lips” meant the Assyrians. The threats of the Assyrians who spoke both Assyrian and Hebrew did not change the sinfulness and unbelief of the Jews. This speaking in foreign languages was to be a sign to the Jews, but they did not receive it. Here in verse 22, Paul then applied this truth to the congregation at Corinth. We observe, further, from these verses, that since foreign languages are definitely meant in verse 21 with the word ἑτερογλώσσοις (cf. also Acts 2 :4 ), then use of the word “tongues,” αἱ γλῶσσαι, in verse 22 must also refer to foreign languages. This is supported further by use of the article of

prior reference (*αἰ*) and the conjunction “wherefore” (*ὥστε*).<sup>45</sup> Had the Apostle Paul considered speaking in tongues to be no more than an unknown utterance, he would not have used the same word twice in these two verses, particularly since the definition of *ἡ γλῶσσα* was clearly established in the first usage.<sup>46</sup>

“But if all prophesy, there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth,” 14:24-25. In sharp contrast to the effect which speaking in tongues would have upon unbelievers and the uninstructed, Paul points the Corinthians to the effect which would result upon the aforesaid if they attended church and heard the Word of God being preached. Not only would they be convicted of their sins, brought to repentance, and fall down and worship the Lord, but they would be convinced that the Lord was indeed present in the congregation. Again, we think of Acts 2, where, after speaking in tongues which bore no fruit unto repentance, the Apostle Peter stood up, preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and three thousand immortal souls were brought to faith in Jesus as their personal Redeemer.

Following his exhortation, “Let all things be done unto edifying,” 14:26, the Apostle Paul lays down three rules for governing the gift of tongues.

First, the gift is to be exercised by two or three people, but no more than that. “If any man speak in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret,” 14:27. The intent of the last part of this verse is to control the speaking in tongues so that no more than one will be speaking at a time. And this is, of course, precluded by the procedure of having only one interpreter.

Second, an interpreter must be present when anyone is speaking in tongues. “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God,” 14:28.

The same rules of order are to be applied also to prophets, 14:29-32, and that for the obvious reason that God wants peace, not confusion, in his church, 14:33.

Third, women are not to participate in any speaking in the church. “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. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church,” 14:34-35. We may gather from this that even the women members had made, to say the least, an attempt to participate in speaking in church. Nor does a conclusion of this kind appear unrealistic when we remember that the pagan world, from which this Gentile Christian congregation was but recently converted, had priestesses, as well as priests, serving in the many temples of their many false gods. On this subject of women keeping silence in the church, Bellshaw has this to say:

“This indicates that the gift of speaking in tongues was not given to women, since they could never exercise it. The interpretation is sometimes given that this verse means a woman is not to break into a service and interrupt the proceedings of the meeting. On occasion one will teach that the verb *speak* means to chatter. Such a position is untenable. The context in which verse 34 is found eliminates this view. A regulation is given in verse 28 which contains exactly the same verbs as are found in verse 34 (‘keep silence’ and ‘speak’). No one would contend that verse 28 means that the person involved here is

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<sup>45</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 64

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



not to interrupt the proceedings of the meeting, or to chatter. It can only mean absolute silence.”<sup>47</sup>

Lest there should be any who would, and there no doubt were a few who did, challenge the apostle’s regulations governing the gift of glossolalia, Paul concludes chapter 14 by reminding the Corinthians that the Word of God did not originate in their midst, nor do they enjoy a monopoly of God’s Truth. “What? came the Word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order,” 14:36-40. Paul reaffirms his apostolic authority, as well as the divine truth of verbal inspiration for this entire First Epistle to the Corinthians. And he declares that anyone who considers himself to be a true preacher and a spiritually-minded person will recognize and bow to this authority. As for those who do not recognize this authority, they will simply continue in their spiritual ignorance.

In conclusion, the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to set their hearts on preaching the Word of God,—that is the main thing, while, at the same time, not legalistically forbidding the use of the gift of glossolalia. At all times they should remember that God is not a God of confusion and disorder but a God of order and peace. Accordingly, all things, whether in an individual Christian’s life or in the larger life of a Christian congregation, are to be done in harmony with the will and the Word of God. It is clear that Paul does not condemn the use of tongues in the Corinthian church, for it is one of the special, supernatural signs which God was pleased to bestow upon some of that church’s membership. It is equally clear, however, that the apostle decidedly discourages the practice of speaking with tongues by diverting interest and directing attention to the other and better spiritual gifts which God has given to his church, notably the gift of proclaiming the saving message of God’s Word,—the good news of salvation alone by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That was the first commission Christ gave his church prior to his ascension into heaven, and no other activity in the church can ever be considered of greater importance. The Lord of the church declares: “I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,” Luke 15:10. Sinners are not led to repentance by hearing somebody speak ten thousand words in a language they do not understand. Sinners are led to repentance, however, by hearing five words from the Word of God in their own language, which they can comprehend, Romans 10:17. God has given us his canonical, verbally inspired Word. We have “the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ” in its finished form. Our commission is clear, as the Apostle Paul charged young pastor Timothy: “Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.... Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry,” 2 Timothy 4:2,5.

Compelled by Christ the Lord’s commission to his church on earth and by the conclusions set forth in the clear Word of the Lord concerning the charisma of glossolalia, we reject the following concepts concerning this special gift of God:

1. We reject any thought that neither foreign languages nor ecstatic speech was involved in the Scriptural accounts of speaking in tongues, that nothing more was involved in these

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<sup>47</sup> Bellshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 152

accounts than “decisive expository preaching.”<sup>48</sup> We reject the idea that the term αἱ γλῶσσαι may be translated as “pericopes,” that is, as selected Scripture passages, which formed a usual part of the public worship service, and that the astonishment of the multitudes at what the disciples said on Pentecost was due solely to the content of their message.<sup>49</sup> Doubtless the multitudes were astonished at the content of the glossolalia on Pentecost, but this cannot be understood as detracting from the multitudes’ astonishment over the fact that the disciples spoke in other languages and dialects which they had never learned. We also hasten to add that any equation of “tongues” with “pericopes” hopelessly fails to account for the other occasions of glossolalia which did not occur in worship services or on festival days.

2. We reject the contention that every instance of glossolalia in the Scriptures consisted of ecstatic speech, that “early Christian glossolalia was the utterance of gibberish at the compulsion of ecstatic and uncontrolled emotion—a cacophony unintelligible to all save the few who were charismatically endowed for its interpretation.”<sup>50</sup> We likewise reject the contention of the higher critics who claim that St. Luke confused speaking with tongues with foreign languages,—a contention which, naturally enough, stems from the denial of Biblical inspiration.<sup>51</sup>

3. We reject the thought set forth by some conservatives that the disciples either spoke in their native tongue or in ecstatic speech.<sup>52</sup> We also reject the declaration that the disciples spoke in their native Galilean language and that the Holy Spirit caused the foreign listeners to hear what the disciples said in their own respective, foreign language. For if the disciples, on the one hand, spoke only in their native Galilean Aramaic, then the glossolalia was a miracle of hearing and nothing more. If, on the other hand, the disciples spoke in ecstatic speech, then it was a double miracle, both in hearing and speaking. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile these two assertions with the clear statements that the disciples spoke in foreign languages and dialects which they had never learned.

4. We reject the most prevalent opinion found among both tongue-speakers and non-tongue speakers that the charisma of glossolalia consisted of both foreign languages and ecstatic speech, the former being identified with the phenomenon in the book of Acts and the latter with the phenomenon in First Corinthians. As we have seen from the Scriptural accounts in both New Testament books, there is no support for this double interpretation of glossolalia. Even the fact that an interpreter was required to explain what was said by the tongue-speakers at Corinth, while interpreters were not needed at Jerusalem, Caesarea, or Ephesus, does not alter this conclusion. For, as the Apostle Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 14, since a person who spoke in tongues only edified himself, while the main aim, the chief purpose, of all God’s gifts is to edify the whole church, an interpreter was required at Corinth only in order that this latter purpose might be effected. Again we declare, there is no warrant in the Word of God for believing that this charismatic gift was anything else than speaking in foreign languages.

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<sup>48</sup> G. J. Sirks, “The Cinderella of Theology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Harvard Theological Review*, L (April, 1957), p. 86

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> S. MacLean Gilmour, “Easter and Pentecost,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXI (March, 1962), p. 64

<sup>51</sup> William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), p. 16

<sup>52</sup> Richard Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1953), p. 19

## Chapter 4 – The Validity of Glossolalia Today

Thus far we have answered two of the three questions which most concern students of God's Word, namely: What is the nature of the gift of glossolalia? and What is the purpose of the gift? There yet remains a third question: What is the validity of speaking in tongues today?<sup>53</sup> Did the gift of glossolalia cease, as St. Paul said it would, or have there been sporadic, recurring outbursts of this gift since apostolic times and now particularly in our own time? Is speaking in tongues today identical with that of Biblical times? Is it of God, or is it not? Coupled with these questions are other subjects which come to mind. For example, the excesses of the tongues movement, the abuses of great Biblical truths by Pentecostals and Glossolalists, their over-emphasis of a Biblical doctrine which has been assigned its proper place in the Word of God, their wresting of the Scriptures to support their claims, and the pride and presumption which, more often than not, is the hallmark of the adherents of tongue-speaking.<sup>54</sup>

We may best answer these questions by briefly considering, first, the historical continuity of Pentecostalism or glossolalia since apostolic times. For, if the gift of speaking in tongues did not cease in the apostolic era but continued down through the centuries to the present, there should be historical evidence of it. Donald Gee, an English Pentecostal writer, claims such evidence does exist, and he cites Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Augustine as referring to the existence of this gift in their own times.<sup>55</sup> Cleon Rogers, on the other hand, has taken the opposite view. He writes that "it is significant that the gift is nowhere alluded to, hinted at, or found in the Apostolic Fathers."<sup>56</sup> Who is correct? A study of the lives and writings of the church fathers in the three centuries that followed the apostolic era reveals that there are only two references to glossolalia, namely, Montanus (126-180 AD) and Tertullian (160-220 AD), who was a Montanist. What do we know about Montanus? Eusebius writes this characterization of him:

"... a recent convert, Montanus by name, through his unquenchable desire for leadership, gave the adversary opportunity against him. And he became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things, prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning. Some of those who heard his spurious utterances at that time were indignant, and they rebuked him as one that was possessed, and that was under the control of a demon, and was led by a deceitful spirit, and was distracting the multitude.... And he stirred up besides two women, and filled them with the false spirit, so that they talked wildly and unreasonably and strangely, like the person already mentioned."<sup>57</sup>

We glean three points of characterization from this description: 1. The Christians of that day considered Montanus as heretical and demon-possessed; 2. His prophesying and speaking in tongues were contrary to the known procedures of that day; and 3. His claim to be the exclusive

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<sup>53</sup> S. Lewis Johnston, Jr., "Symposium on the Tongues Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, CXX (July-September, 1963), p. 225

<sup>54</sup> Bellshaw, op. cit., p. 152

<sup>55</sup> Donald Gee; *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield, Mo.: The Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), p. 10

<sup>56</sup> Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "The Gift of Tongues in the Post Apostolic Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, CXXII (April-June, 1965), p. 134

<sup>57</sup> Eusebius, *C Church History*, trans. A. C. McGiffert, Vol. I of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (second series; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), V. 16, p. 231

mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost and his physical actions hardly conform to the Biblical experiences and regulations. The fact that Montanus and his sect held a false, egotistical view of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit does not argue for the validity of Biblical glossolalia at that time. Hence, there are no genuine instances of speaking in tongues in the post-apostolic era. This particular gift had definitely ceased as a normal activity of the believers.

On this subject, Cleon Rogers came to some significant conclusions.<sup>58</sup> He points out, first, that some of the church fathers had written to and from congregations where the gift had been practiced in New Testament times, but that they did not mention the existence of glossolalia. Second, the fathers lived in cities and wrote to cities in every important part of the Roman Empire, and, in this connection too, had glossolalia been widespread and in existence, it would have been referred to in some way. Third, the church fathers wrote on every major New Testament doctrine, but they do not mention glossolalia. And fourth, in many of their writings they sought to show the character or superiority of Christianity in contrast to paganism, and nowhere do they cite glossolalia as an example. Surely the silence of the post-apostolic church fathers must be considered as most significant.

Relative to the Middle Ages (590-1517) and the Reformation Era (1517-1648), we find that there is a definite question as to whether the gift of tongues occurred. Claims have been made that certain saints of the Roman Catholic Church had the gift, but these claims cannot be substantiated beyond a reasonable doubt. We concur with Philip Schaff, who has concluded that “not one of these saints claimed the gift of tongues or other miraculous powers, but only their disciples or later writers.”<sup>59</sup> We also concur with Robert Gromacki, who writes:

“The tendency of Roman Catholicism to elevate and to venerate their saints must always form the background for any evaluation of their claims to miracles, whether they be healings or tongue-speaking. For this reason, any claim to glossolalia from Catholic sources must be regarded as suspect.”<sup>60</sup>

It is also a point of more than surpassing interest that the intense spiritual and doctrinal revival in Europe, which was the Lutheran Reformation, produced no cases of glossolalic manifestations.

With the Post-Reformation Era (1648-1900)—the era when Christianity spread throughout the world, including America—we find the development of cults and sects, which either sprang up spontaneously or were the result of church schisms. And in many of these glossolalia became an integral part of their worship services. In the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, ecstatic experiences, which included prophesying and speaking in tongues, broke out among the French Huguenots during a time of great persecution. Morton Kelsey reports that it began with a ten year old girl, soon spread to other children all over the Cevennes (for which they were named the Cevenal Prophets), and that also adults “were seized by the spirit and found themselves speaking the words of French they did not understand.”<sup>61</sup> Glossolalia has been attributed also to the Jansenists, a seventeenth century reform element within the Roman Catholic Church, which was later condemned by Rome. Tongue-speaking is also reported to have occurred among the Quakers, a sect started by George Fox (1624-1691) in England, also during the seventeenth century. Perhaps most notable of all the cults and sects in the Post-Reformation period are the Irvingites, founded by a Scotch-

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<sup>58</sup> Rogers, op. cit., pp. 134-136

<sup>59</sup> Schaff, op. cit., I, pp. 240-241

<sup>60</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 20

<sup>61</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 52-53

Presbyterian named Edward Irving (1792-1834), who was noted for his interest in eschatology and for his heretical belief in “the sinful substance of the body of Christ.”<sup>62</sup> Speaking in tongues broke out among Irving’s parishioners in their homes and later in his church services. They, of course, distinguished between the Pentecostal glossolalia in foreign languages and the Corinthian glossolalia in ecstatic, unknown languages, and only practiced the latter. According to Philip Schaff, who observed this latter phenomenon in an Irvingite church in New York, the words were unknown, and the speakers were unconscious and without control of their tongues.<sup>63</sup>

If anything, the Post-Reformation period was one of spiritual and doctrinal confusion, and produced a rash of tongue-speaking occurrences. But, while Roman Catholics, Mormons, and false sects like the Quakers and Irvingites, all reported tongue-speaking as a part of their worship life, it was totally unrelated to orthodox beliefs, and the physical convulsions which reportedly gripped the people are hardly in harmony with the Biblical standard of self-control. Hence, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove that these instances constituted a revival of Biblical glossolalia. There simply are too many discrepancies. The lack of historical continuity and of clear proof according to Biblical standards indicates that glossolalia was not a permanent gift to the church. Rather, it indicates all the more strongly that speaking in tongues has ceased.

The modern tongues movement among historic, denominational churches, as indicated in the Introduction of this essay, has its grass roots in the Pentecostal movement, which developed at the turn of the twentieth century, and is currently enjoying a resurgence in growth and expansion. What brought about the outbreak of tongue-speaking and the subsequent founding of Pentecostal churches? Several reasons have been advanced. To begin with, there was a breakdown of strong orthodoxy after the Civil War, with the result that evolution and the philosophy of Horace Bushnell’s “Christian Nurture” (the idea that there is no need for spontaneous conversion because people are basically good, and that people gradually become Christians through education, not through an instantaneous event of regeneration) invaded and conquered the established churches. Almost simultaneously, the industrial revolution produced moral corruption and labor-management problems. Third, the reaction to this moral and economic breakdown was the rise of the Holiness Movement, spearheaded by Methodism and camp meetings which emphasized Christian holiness and the second blessing of perfection,—doctrines which found eager acceptance in the rural and frontier areas of America. Fourth, key Pentecostal leaders, such as Richard G. Spurling and Charles F. Parham, began to promote their distinctive position actively. And a sympathetic, tolerant attitude toward the Pentecostal movement developed among the leaders of American orthodoxy. As an apt illustration of this attitude, Kelsey quotes A. B. Simpson, a leader of the Christian and Missionary Alliance:

“We believe the scriptural teaching to be that the gift of tongues is one of the gifts of the Spirit, and that it may be present in the normal Christian assembly, as a sovereign bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon such as he wills. We do not believe that there is any scriptural evidence for the teaching that speaking in tongues is the sign of having been filled with the Holy Spirit, nor do we believe that it is the plan of God that all Christians should possess the gift of tongues. This gift is one of many gifts and is given to some for the benefit of all. The attitude toward the gift of tongues held by pastor and people should be ‘Seek not, forbid not.’ This we hold to be the part of wisdom for this hour.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Robert C. Dalton, *Tongues Like as of Fire* (Springfield, Mo.: The Gospel Publishing House, 1945 , p. 19

<sup>63</sup> Schaff, op. cit., I, p. 237

<sup>64</sup> Cited by Kelsey, op. cit., p. 75

Simpson and his movement did not experience the gift of glossolalia, but certain individuals within the denomination sought to recover the spiritual gifts. Pentecostals took advantage of this tolerant attitude and emphasized the “forbid not” command while neglecting the “seek not.” They accepted the thesis that the gift of glossolalia is bestowed according to the will of God, but rejected the view that it is not the sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Of all the names connected with the Pentecostal movement, Charles F. Parham (1873-1929) has been called “the father of the modern Pentecostal movement.”<sup>65</sup> He established the Bethel Healing Home in 1898 and the Bethel Bible College in 1900, in Topeka, Kansas. It was at this college that one of the students, Agnes Ozman, spoke in tongues on January 1, 1901. While she was not the first person in modern times to do so, she was the first to have received such an experience as the direct result of seeking a baptism in the Holy Ghost with the expectation of speaking in tongues.<sup>66</sup> And from that time Pentecostals would formally teach that baptism in the Holy Spirit was an experience to be sought and verified in tongues. Thus the experience of Agnes Ozman has been called the origin of the modern Pentecostal revival.<sup>67</sup>

There are two particular Old Testament passages which Pentecostals believe have a prophetic character, and which they apply to their movement. In Hosea 6:3 and Joel 2:23 the rainfall in Palestine is spoken of in two seasons, the early rain and the latter rain. Pentecostals maintain that the early rain was Pentecost with its unusual signs and blessings, recorded in Acts 2, while the latter rain began at the turn of the twentieth century and is continuing to fall within the Pentecostal revival. It goes without saying that such a conviction, although it is founded upon a misinterpretation and a misapplication of God’s Word, has, nevertheless, provided impetus to the growth of Pentecostalism, which has seen this group grow from 1612 churches with a membership of 91,981 in 1920 to 8094 churches with a membership of 505,552 in 1959. Today there are more than 8409 churches with a membership of 543,000, located in 50 states and 73 countries.<sup>68</sup> Small wonder that *Time* magazine has called Pentecostalism the “fastest growing church in the hemisphere.”<sup>69</sup>

From 1900 to the present, the tenets of Pentecostalism were limited to its own peculiar groups, but in recent years the Pentecostal message has been embraced by members of the historic, denominational churches. Most observers date the beginning of this current, organized outburst from the years 1955-1960. The specific event which is said to have triggered the modern glossolalia movement occurred in Van Nuys, California, on April 3, 1960, when Dennis Bennett, the rector of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, startled his congregation with the announcement from the pulpit that he had spoken in tongues. Not only did this announcement shock his congregation, but it received nation-wide publicity. Needless to say, this latest revival has its “role of pioneers and saints.”<sup>70</sup> In the Pentecostal literature the reader is regularly confronted with the names of Dennis Bennett; of Harold Bredesen—a Reformed minister in Mt. Vernon, New York, who has championed the cause particularly among college students; of Larry Christensen—an American Lutheran minister, who has sought to give the movement respectability and orthodoxy in Lutheran circles; and of Jean Stone—the editor of their magazine, *Trinity*. As William Horn

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<sup>65</sup> Cited by Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled* (Springfield, Mo.: The Gospel Publishing House, 1961 ), p.37

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>67</sup> Gromacki, *op. cit.*, p. 26

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>69</sup> “Fastest-Growing Church in the Hemisphere,” *op. cit.*, p. 56

<sup>70</sup> William M. Horn, “Speaking in Tongues: A Retrospective Appraisal,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, XVII (November, 1965), p. 317

points out, wherever the glossolalic movement has found a new root or tendril today, you can almost trace it back to one of these four.<sup>71</sup>

Developing, as it has, from an obscure past, with no direct connection to the Biblical accounts of glossolalia; originating, as it were, always in times of spiritual uncertainty, moral laxity, and physical distress; and being found in religious circles which lack a firm foundation in the Word of God, and which, in fact, teach and tolerate false doctrine,—what explanation can there be for this phenomenon? What evaluation can be made of the modern tongues movement? Is it divine, satanic, psychological, or artificial? All four of these alternatives have been suggested as the proper evaluation of the source of glossolalia today. Nor are opinions necessarily restricted to just one or the other of these alternatives. Within the movement itself, among tongue-speakers and non-tongue speakers alike, there are those who believe that glossolalia today can be attributed to two or more of these sources. Neither group denies the fact that the phenomenon of speaking in tongues has occurred. What is vigorously contested is the source of the experience. And since both sides admit that the phenomenon can be caused by one or more sources, this compounds an already complex problem. Who can say what is the source of each and every instance of glossolalia? What standard can be applied to determine the source of the experience? Because the experience can be caused in several ways, it cannot be pointed to as the determining factor. There must be an wholly objective and authoritative standard, and there is—the inspired Word of the infallible Triune God! This alone can and must be the authority in determining the actual source of any experience, including that of glossolalia today.

With this declaration, many in the modern tongues movement will agree. But even as they do, they wrest the Scriptures to suit their purpose. For example: the modern tongues movement bases its claim that all the spiritual gifts, recorded in 1 Corinthians 12, are possible today and are in fact being given because God is “the same yesterday, today and forever,” Hebrews 13:8. They claim that the position that the gift of tongues ceased with the death of the apostles is opposed to the sovereign will of God (1 Corinthians 12:11,18), who can do today what he did then. Robert Lightner has this candid and provoking reply to this assertion:

“Does this mean that the Holy Spirit of God is not able to do today what he did in the days of the early church? No, this does not limit the Spirit of God; actually it exalts his sovereignty, for it means that he does not choose to do today what he did in the early church.”<sup>72</sup>

To say that God must do today what he did yesterday, or in the apostolic era, is to place a limitation upon God, and is contrary to God’s character as well as the events of Biblical and post-Biblical history. God is, indeed, immutable in his Person or nature, but this does not mean that God’s dealings with men do not change, as the Scriptures clearly show. Hence, it is not a question as to whether God *can* give the gift of glossolalia today, but whether it is his *purpose* to continue the same phenomenon that the early Christian church experienced. To say that God *must* do today what he did then, and to do it in response to the prayers of believers, is begging the question. Any professing Christian, who persists in this claim, places himself into the scripturally untenable position of presuming to tell God what he should do.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 318

<sup>72</sup> Robert P. Lightner, *Speaking in Tongues and Divine Healing* (Des Plaines, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1957), p. 14

<sup>73</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 115

Pentecostals and glossolalists of today also wrest the Scriptures with their admission to an abundance of the lesser gifts and a lack of the greater gifts, which is evidenced in their insistence that every believer will speak in tongues.<sup>74</sup> This is diametrically opposed to what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about the body of Christ being in perfect balance, and it raises a valid question about God being the reputed source of the glossolalic manifestations today. On this point, Robert Gromacki poses a pair of penetrating questions:

“Since God tempers the body together (1 Cor. 12:24) and gives it perfect symmetry, why does this group have a distorted ratio of gifts? If God were truly the source of these manifestations today, would there not be a balance and a greater presence of the best gifts?”<sup>75</sup>

In other words, would the Holy Spirit give to the modern tongues movement an abundance of the least gifts at the expense of the best gifts? The obvious answer to this question is, No, just as the implied answer to the Apostle Paul’s seven questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 is, No. Yet the modern tongues movement flies in the face of the clear Word of God with its declaration that the gift of tongues is possible for all and so should be sought by all, which is also contrary to Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 12:19: “And if they were all one member, where were the body?”

As with the source or origin of tongue-speaking today, so with the linguistics of this phenomenon. The movement’s position is that tongue-speaking can be done in either known languages or unknown sounds, while in reality the greater majority of it is in the form of the latter. As we have seen earlier in this essay, the Biblical phenomenon of speaking in tongues occurred only in known, foreign languages. To be a renewal or revival of the Biblical spiritual gifts, therefore, the modern tongues movement must demonstrate that all tongue-speaking is done in known languages of the world, or it must show that Biblical glossolalia also included unknown, ecstatic sounds. The burden of proof is not with the Word of God, but upon the modern tongues-speaker. And all the more so as linguistic scholars have affirmed the fact that glossolalia today is characterized by the speaking of unknown sounds without any basis in language. Wherefore the essential character of the new movement is not in accord with the Word of God and consequently cannot be of God.

Another evidence that glossolalia today is simulated and not divinely motivated is seen in the qualities which speaking in tongues, if it were genuine, should manifest, but which qualities are not seen today. Here let us refer to what the Apostle Paul has written in 1 Corinthians 13 on the nature of God-given love and how this love will manifest itself in all that the believing child of God does. Each descriptive phrase in this chapter can be applied to the exercise of the spiritual gifts. And if a person fails to manifest each characteristic, “it is a sure sign that he is trying to reproduce the spiritual gift in his own energy.”<sup>76</sup> Listen to the vivid illustration presented by Robert Gromacki:

“‘Love suffers long.’ A tongue speaker will wait his turn to speak and will not burst into speaking at any time (cf. 14:27-28). ‘Love envieth not.’ Believers should covet or desire that the best spiritual gifts be exercised among them (12:31; 14:1), but a person should not covet a gift which God has not been pleased to give him (12:7,11,18).... ‘Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.’ A tongues speaker should not be proud or think that he is someone special. ‘Love doth not behave itself unseemly.’ Speaking in tongues

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<sup>74</sup> Dalton, op. cit., pp. 82, 118

<sup>75</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 117

<sup>76</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 121



should be done decently and in order (14:40; cf. 14:23). Shaking and physical convulsions are unseemly. 'Love seeketh not her own.' The modern tongues movement believes that speaking in tongues can be done privately for self-edification. However, were the gifts given that only the possessors would reap benefit? Is this not selfish? Rather, were they not given for the edification and the profit of the entire body of Christ? Self-edification may be a by-product of the gift, but it should never be the goal (14:4,12)."<sup>77</sup>

Any evaluation of the modern tongues movement must of necessity also contend with the question of permanence. How long will the gift of tongues last, assuming, that is, that the phenomenon today is a continuation or a renewal of the Biblical glossolalia? The movement's position is that the spiritual gifts, including that of tongues, will cease at the second coming of the Lord; therefore, they should and are being experienced today.<sup>78</sup> They base this claim on the phrase "that which is perfect," 1 Corinthians 13:10. They maintain that this phrase refers to the perfect age which will be ushered in by Christ's second advent. The word τέλειον, however, is never used in the New Testament to depict the second advent, the millenium, or the eternal state. In addition, since τέλειον is set in contrast to that which is ἐκ μέρους, "in part," it must refer to the conclusion of a gradual process. Christ's second advent is not a gradual process; it is an instantaneous event.

Another claim for permanence is based on 1 Corinthians 1:7: "So that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, they say, the gifts will last as long as believers are waiting for the Lord. The Apostle Paul, however, did not say explicitly that the gifts would last until Christ came again in glory. He simply states what was the existing condition of the Christians at Corinth, namely, that they had all the gifts of God and that they were waiting for the Lord.

A third argument for permanence is that tongues were given to the church, and since the members of the modern tongues movement constitute the church, they can have tongues today. This argument, however, is based upon faulty logic and is contrary to Biblical teaching. Apostles were also given to the church, but there are no apostles today.

Another argument they like to advance is that the purpose of the spiritual gifts was for the confirmation, not the substitution, of the Word to a pagan world, and since the same conditions prevail today in the mission fields, these gifts are needed there. This argument actually argues against the presence of the gifts here in America, because the same conditions do not exist here, not to mention, also, that this argument presupposes the reappearance of events which were unique in the early history of the church, such as: liars being struck dead, the unsaved being blinded, and earthquakes opening prison doors.<sup>79</sup>

Their strongest argument is based upon the Apostle Paul's example of a face-to-face confrontation, recorded in 1 Corinthians 13:12,—that gifts will cease when the believers literally see Christ the Lord. Even a cursory glance at this passage, however, will show that the apostle is speaking only of knowledge of himself and not of the gift of glossolalia or any other gift of God.

Much more could be presented concerning the various arguments and claims advanced by the advocates of the modern tongues movement in their effort to maintain and to find support for their tongue-speaking. But in all the material which the essayist researched in preparation for this

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-122

<sup>78</sup> Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This?* (Springfield, Mo.: The Gospel Publishing House, 1947), pp. 59-87

<sup>79</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 124

essay, nowhere did he find any tongues advocate who could honestly and clearly deal with the simple statement of the Apostle Paul that “whether there be tongues, they shall cease,” 1 Corinthians 13:8.

On the other hand, it is equally true that there are many non-tongue speakers, who are reluctant to state categorically that Biblical glossolalia cannot occur today. And the reasons for this reluctance run the gamut, from an outright admission of ignorance concerning the subject of tongue-speaking to the equally outright declaration that no verse of Scripture explicitly declares that tongues would cease *with the apostolic era*.<sup>80</sup> Thus they leave open the possibility of its occurrence today, not to mention that they do not want to impose a limitation upon God’s will and power today. The essayist does not deny that this is a commendable position to take, but he would hasten to add that such a position does nothing toward coming to grips with the problem of God’s purpose for this present era. God could destroy the world today, for he certainly has the power to do so. But God will not destroy it because to do so would be contrary to his revealed purpose, which is that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,” Matthew 24:14. Obviously, this purpose of the Lord has not yet been fully realized.

The essayist readily admits that, prior to the preparation of this essay, he did share the reluctant position indicated above, but that he is now compelled, by the sheer weight of evidence to the contrary, to declare that glossolalia today is *not* the glossolalia of the New Testament Word of God. Despite the movement’s claim of divine origin, its phenomena are best explained by Satanic origin, psychologically produced, or artificially simulated. In the majority of instances, it appears to be a human effort to recreate “a transitional Biblical phenomenon.”<sup>81</sup> The essayist shares the opinion voiced by John Walvoord:

“It is, of course, impossible for anyone to prove experimentally that speaking in tongues cannot occur today. It may be demonstrated, however, that speaking in tongues is not essential to God’s purpose now, and that there are good reasons to believe that most if not all the phenomena which are advanced as proof of modern speaking in tongues is either psychological or demonic activity.”<sup>82</sup>

What, then, we ask in conclusion, is the modern tongues movement? As would be expected with a subject as controversial as this movement has become, the conclusions to be found are many and varied. And whether or not a person agrees with them will depend, to a large extent, upon which side of the glossolalic fence he is on,—whether he is a member of the movement or not, whether he is a tongue-speaker or not. Of all the definitions the essayist has read, however, he prefers the four-fold definition presented by Robert Gromacki in the conclusion of his book. He writes:

“First, it is the penetration and the presence of the old Pentecostalism within churches of historic Protestantism. Although they may claim to be Presbyterians or Baptists with a Pentecostal experience, in actuality they are now Pentecostals holding membership in Presbyterian or Baptist churches.... The charismatic movement within the historic churches is not a spontaneous movement from within, but rather an active recruitment from without.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 125

<sup>81</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., p. 140

<sup>82</sup> John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press, 1954), pp. 185-186

“Second, the modern tongues movement is an essential part of the ecumenical atmosphere.... Liberals, conservatives, Protestants, and Catholics are being drawn together by the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. This *may* supply the inner unity that the ecumenical movement could not do organizationally. It is an inner unity based upon experience, not doctrine.

“Third, the modern tongues movement reflects a confusion and ignorance of Biblical doctrine. It has its basis in Arminianism and in spiritual immaturity. Many of their experiences simulate the crisis encounter of Barthian neo-orthodoxy. All kinds of doctrinal foundations are accepted by them as long as the person has had the proper experience....

“Fourth, the modern tongues movement is based upon experience, not doctrine. Someone once penned the maxim: ‘The man who has an experience is never at the mercy of a man who has an argument.’ This is true to a certain extent, but a religious experience in itself can never be the final test of its genuineness. The Bible must forever be the basis of faith and practice. It must always judge experiences to determine their validity.”<sup>83</sup>

On this last subject of errors of doctrine based upon experience, John Walvoord makes this telling presentation:

“Experience ever possesses two fatal grounds for error: (1) a misapprehension of the experience itself in its content and divine origin; (2) a faulty conclusion as to the doctrinal meaning of the experience. Hence, on the one hand, an experience supposedly of divine origin may be purely psychological, or worse, a deceiving device of Satan himself. On the other hand, a genuine experience may be misunderstood and mislabeled, as the common denomination of the work of the filling of the Spirit as the baptism of the Spirit.”<sup>84</sup>

There is no doubt that the modern tongues movement is guilty of both of these errors.

“Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.” Be assured, brethren, they have!

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<sup>83</sup> Gromacki, op. cit., pp. 141-142

<sup>84</sup> Walvoord, op. cit., pp. 185-186

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