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SPEAKING IN TONGUES

By Donald S. Metz

A Biblical Analysis
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PREFACE

The modern tongues movement began as a result of an intensive study of the Bible at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kans., in 1901. It has since grown to a worldwide movement. Since Pentecostalism claims to be biblical, the most logical method of analyzing the movement is to examine its scriptural interpretation.

At this point it probably should be stated that the author believes that the Bible does not support the tongues movement. There is no desire by the writer to deride the many devout people in the Pentecostal churches. Nor is there any motive of conducting a tirade against a movement which has emphasized an aspect of Christian life and doctrine largely neglected by the Christian Church, namely, the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Neither is there any intent to belittle an experience which apparently is extremely meaningful to many people. Yet the issue must be considered, frankly, openly, and with Christian charity.

In dealing with biblical interpretation the process followed is to select the scriptural references of Pentecostal writers and point out what appear to be discrepancies or misunderstandings, or faulty applications of such biblical passages. The scriptures to be considered are Isa. 28:11; Joel 2:28-29; Mark 16:17-20; Acts 2:4; 4:31; 8:15-17; 9:17-18; 10:44-48; I Corinthians 12--14.

-- Donald S. Metz

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Part 1

TONGUES IN THE PROPHETS AND IN THE GOSPELS

I. THE PROPHETS

In presenting a list of reasons supporting the tongues doctrine one contemporary writer included the following: "Speaking with tongues is a specific fulfillment of prophecy." [1] The references listed by the writer are Isa. 28:11 and Joel 2:28-29.

1. Isa. 28:11. "For with stammering [by men of strange] lips and [with] another tongue will he speak to this people." Paul quoted this verse in I Cor. 14:21, but only to compare the childish nature of the Corinthians with the childish rebellion of Israel. Israel had made fun of the plain teachings of the prophets. Because they had rejected the Lord, the people would be led into

captivity. In their captivity "the Lord will speak to them by a foreign and hostile people, whose utterance will be to them as stammering and strange jargon." [2]

To apply the verse to speaking in tongues is to tear it out of its context. The words of Isa. 28:9-13 were both a lament and a prediction. The prophet lamented the childish indifference of the people to plain teaching and preaching. The prophet predicted that God would withdraw the plain instruction of the prophets. In addition, "God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste." [3] Those who make light of compassionate teaching would be made to bear the teaching of harsh enslavement. When Paul quoted this verse from Isaiah, he was reminding the Corinthians of their childishness and rebellion, not encouraging them to speak in tongues.

2. Joel 2:28-29. Joel lived in a time when the national hopes of Israel were shattered. But the prophetic vision of Joel looked beyond national barriers to a time when God would bless the faithful with His Spirit. Joel's prophecy of the future is climaxed in the following statement:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

The central point of interest here is that Joel was pointing to a time in the future when the Spirit would be poured out "in rich abundance, like a rain-fall or water-fall." [4] In the Old Testament the presence of the Spirit was limited to a few gifted and spiritual men. "This limitation was to cease in the future." [5]

After Pentecost, when Peter referred to Joel's statement by saying, "This is that" (Acts 2:16), he recognized that the outpoured Spirit was a partial fulfillment of the ancient prophecy. "In other words," comments H. A. Ironside, "he does not identify the events. He did identify the power." [6] The Holy Spirit had now come in full measure, even though some of the other events related to "the great day of the Lord" -- the Judgment -- would still take place in the future.

There is no reference to speaking in tongues in Joel's prophecy. None of the recognized commentators outside the Pentecostal groups make the attempt to link this prophecy to speaking in tongues. Joel does mention visions, dreams, and prophesying. But prophecy is distinct from speaking in tongues, as Paul plainly teaches in I Corinthians 12 and 14. So the prediction of Joel, as well as the statement of Isaiah, must be rejected as a valid support for speaking in tongues. The burden of Joel's message is that at some point in the future God would baptize, or fill, His people with His Spirit. The Wesleyans and related holiness groups have emphasized the prophecy of Joel for generations.

* * *

II. THE GOSPELS

There is only one reference related to tongues in the Gospels; it is found at the end of the Gospel of Mark 16:17-20.

1. Mark 16:17-20. The final words of Mark present an account of a brief and rather severe address of the risen Christ to the 11 disciples. In this short period Christ upbraided them, commissioned them, and stated that certain "signs shall follow them that believe" (16:17a). The signs were five in number: (1) casting out devils (16:17b); (2) speaking with new tongues (16:17c); (3) taking up serpents (16:18a); (4) possessing immunity from deadly poison (16:18b); (5) healing the sick (16:18c).

According to Pentecostals, "new tongues" undoubtedly refers to the tongues miraculously spoken by the disciples at Pentecost and in subsequent instances in the New Testament. [7] One Pentecostal writer, J. H. King, presents the following interpretation of this passage: "New tongues denotes more than a mere change in our speech from an unholy to a holy conversation. It signifies a language distinct from our mother tongue. [8] Adam Clarke states that the promise to "speak with new tongues" was literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. [9]

It is significant that there are five signs mentioned in the passage under consideration. To lift out one of the five and to exclude the others is hardly sound exegesis. From this point of view the snake-handling cults are given biblical support to the same degree that speaking in tongues is supported. The signs must be accepted as a group or not at all. One writer stated that "this promise was peculiar to the primitive church and to such as lived immediately after Christ's ascension." [10] D. D. Whedon noted that this promise "does not affirm that all in all ages who believe shall be followed by those signs." [11] The sign of speaking in tongues, he goes on to say, was a miracle which "remained in the early church as a symbol of the power of Christianity to pervade all the tribes and languages of the babbling earth, and as a means of arresting the attention of the unchristian and unheeding world." [12] The history of the Christian Church indicates that converts are won to Christ by love-filled men who preach full redemption by faith in Christ.

2. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit. While the Gospels contain only one reference to speaking in tongues, there are several references in these records to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, or to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The main references are Matt. 3:11-12; 28:19; Mark 13:11; John 14:16, 26; 16:8, 13-14; 20:22-23.

a. Matt. 3:11-12. The forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, anticipated the coming of the Holy Spirit when he said:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

The important truth in these words of John the Baptist is that the main objective of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the purging, the winnowing of the followers of Christ. Fire is used as the instrument of purging, "for fire illuminates and invigorates the soul, penetrates every part, and assimilates the whole to the image of the God of glory." [13]

The primary result of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a spiritual state of purity rather than a physical activity such as speaking in tongues.

b. Matt. 28:19-20a. The great commission of Christ to the disciples is found in the following words:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. This commission included the missionary task on a worldwide scale; it involved a baptism in relation to the triune God, and it incorporated the teachings and commands of Christ. But nowhere in the commission itself nor in the teachings of Christ is there any direct commandment or any specific injunction regarding speaking in tongues.

c. Mark 13:11. Christ knew that the preaching of the gospel would result in persecution and that many would stand trial before the tribunals of government. The person standing on trial would not need to organize a strong defense for himself, for the Holy Spirit would be his Advocate:

But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

Naturally, the defense one presented under the direction of the Holy Spirit would be in a known language, not in an unknown language.

d. John 14:16, 26. In these passages the word for the Holy Spirit is "Comforter." Correctly interpreted, the word "comforter" means "nourisher." So, when the Comforter comes, He will strengthen and nourish because "he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

e. John 16:8 and 13-14. In reality, the task of the Holy Spirit, or as John calls him, the Comforter, is three-fold. One task of the Holy Spirit is to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." In regard to the believer, the Spirit "will guide you into all truth." The primary task of the Holy Spirit, however, is to glorify Christ, for "he shall glorify me."

f. John 20:22-23. In one of the final appearances of Jesus to His disciples, Jesus said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

In this instance the coming of the Holy Spirit is directly related to the forgiveness of sins. As in the other examples cited above, the work of the Holy Spirit was a spiritual work, evidenced in spiritual ways.

In each of the predictions of the coming of the Holy Spirit the results were purity, knowledge of the truth, teaching of the truth, nourishment, and judgment. Nowhere is there any reference which associates the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues. If speaking in

tongues was so essentially connected with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, it seems that there should be at least one direct reference to it in the teachings of Jesus. Since none can be found in this most important portion of the inspired Word, it seems safe to conclude that such a relationship is not a valid aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit.

3. People Filled with the Spirit. Not only do the Gospels contain significant references to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, but also the Gospels contain examples of individuals filled with Holy Spirit such as Elisabeth, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Simeon, and, of course, Jesus himself.

a. "And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she spake out with a loud voice" (Luke 1:41-42).

b. "And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied" (Luke 1:67).

c. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit in accord with the words, "And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

d. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon . . . and the Holy Ghost was upon him" (Luke 2:25).

e. "And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost . . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).

In every case cited above, each person was filled with the Holy Spirit. But in no instance was there any speaking in tongues. To say that the evidence of speaking in tongues was reserved for Pentecost is to beg the question. When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, the power, the evidence, and the basic results would be the same at one time as at another. Any difference in the manifestation or in the results would come as a result of personality differences. In any case, the permanent results would not differ, since the Holy Spirit does not change His nature.

4. Biblical Evidence of Salvation. The Bible nowhere states that speaking in tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is only by drawing vague inferences from biblical experience that one can maintain such a doctrine. And from the examples just given from the Gospels, it is possible to draw conclusive evidence that the filling of the Holy Spirit is not always accompanied by a specific reaction, except an inner state of grace called purity. But the Gospels do present valid evidence of full salvation. The biblical evidence for full salvation is always ethical and spiritual. A few examples are cited below:

a. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know [if we love in deed and in truth] that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (I John 3:18-19).

b. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (I John 2:3). John is referring to the commands of the Christ, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). John also refers to

perfected love as the old and new commandment (I John 2:7-8). The double evidence is again expressed (I John 2:10a, 11a).

c. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (I John 2:5). The love of God perfected in the heart is the biblical evidence of full salvation.

d. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (I John 4:13). It is Spirit within spirit -- the divine and the human within: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (I John 5:10a). Spiritual reality is not physically evidenced at all, but is spiritually sanctioned.

e. "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (I John 3:24b). It is thus an immediate witness within. Perfected love and the resident Holy Spirit within are John's evidences of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The Gospels, like the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, teach the coming of the Holy Spirit upon individuals. But in all the references to the coming of the Holy Spirit in these writings, there is no connection between the descent of the Spirit and speaking in tongues. The work of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual work which is affirmed and attested by spiritual means.

* * * * *

Part 2

TONGUES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is one of the primary sources of teaching regarding speaking in tongues. There are three references to speaking in tongues in Acts: 2:4; 10:46; 19:6. In addition, there are several references to the coming, or filling of the Holy Ghost: Acts 4:31; 8:15-17; 9:17-18; 13:9. Since speaking in tongues is directly associated with the baptism, or filling, with the Holy Spirit, all of the references to both tongues and to the filling with the Holy Spirit are discussed in the following pages.

1. Acts 2:4. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." From this concise, direct statement spring the interpretations related not only to the tongues movement but also to much that is basic in Christian thought and life. Interpretations of Pentecost are varied. Examples of some different interpretations of the event are listed below.

a. John W. Walvoord claims that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is legal, or positional, rather than experiential, as indicated by the following statement: "Baptism is not experimental because it is positional truth. While our position in Christ is the ground of our experience when we are yielded to the Spirit, our position in itself does not produce experience." [1] From this point of view every Christian is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. "Salvation and baptism are therefore co-extensive, and it is impossible to be saved without this work of the Holy Spirit." [2]

b. Some scholars question the authenticity of the account in Acts. Harnack suggests that in the early chapters of Acts there is "a body of tradition, homogeneous in its treatment of the supernatural, which had been transmitted to the author in a form and with a coloring that were congenial to his temperament." [3] He questions the truth of Pentecost, for "Chapters i and ii . . . are the passages of the Acts furthest removed from actual history." [4] Ira Jay Martin appears to follow Harnack, for he states that "the author of the Acts was unaware of the implications of his report." [5] Meyer also rejects the historicity of the event, regarding the account as a tradition which "was elaborated and embellished by legend into a speaking in foreign languages." [6] Meyer also writes: "Since the sudden communication of a faculty of speaking foreign languages is neither logically possible nor psychologically and morally conceivable, and since in the case of the apostles not the slightest indication of it is perceptible . . . it cannot be presented in the actual form of its historical occurrence." [7]

To accept the position of Harnack and other similar positions would involve the problem of inspiration, which cannot be discussed here. Since our task is to attempt to interpret the record as it stands, this position cannot assist in any way toward a solution.

c. Closely allied to the above position is that of E. F. Scott, who holds the following: "Most of the so-called charismata . . . can have been nothing more than natural endowments, which were new only in the sense that they were exercised more zealously and directed to new subjects." [8] Since there were those present who could interpret, Scott feels that "it may be surmised that in most cases the 'tongues' did not signify anything very mysterious." [9]

Scott's position, like that of Harnack and Martin, presents the problem of the validity of the Scriptures. Since the attempt is being made to deal with the issue within the context of Scripture, it does not help any to project the problem to another realm.

d. Pentecost has been interpreted as a reversal of Babel. The point stressed in this interpretation is that sin caused the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel. To counteract this action the Holy Spirit overcame this prolonged confusion and the apostles were gifted with the tongues of all nations, because Christ sent them to preach to all nations. Some of the group at Pentecost thus spoke the language of Judea, others the language of Italy, and still others the language of Crete or Arabia. Commentator Charles Wordsworth explains it as follows: "The same member, the tongues, which had scattered mankind through all the world, was now, when attuned by the Spirit of peace, used to bring back the world to the fold of unity. "The curse was taken away, and a blessing poured forth in its place." [10] This explanation is credited to Chrysostom, who regarded the miracle of Pentecost at Jerusalem as the antithesis of Babel.

Against this idea is the fact that the apostles did not use any language but their native language in preaching, so far as the record indicates.

e. Still others have suggested that the utterances on the Day of Pentecost may have consisted of pieces of Hebrew prophecy which had been heard in the synagogue, but had been only imperfectly understood by the Aramaic and Greek speaking Jews. [11]

f. At least one noted scholar, Phillip Schaff, has proposed that the miracle was in the ears of the listeners rather than in the tongues of the speakers. [12]

g. Joseph Klausner has stated that "it is more than likely that 'speaking with tongues' was the breaking forth of disconnected and unintelligible utterances from the mouths of highly emotional people at a time when they were greatly excited and thus imaginations were stirred to the point of ecstasy." [13] The objection to all these attempts to explain the utterances of Pentecost is that the Bible clearly states that "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6c); and the record continues, "And how hear we every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:8)

h. The most acceptable explanation of Pentecost is that those filled with the Holy Ghost spoke in known languages. As one writer phrased it, "Every conceivable natural explanation of these phenomena has been brought forward by men but nothing meets the situation but to accept the facts frankly told by Luke." [14] Both Pentecostals and many non-Pentecostals agree that languages were spoken at Pentecost.

Pentecostal writers interpret the "tongues" in Acts 2:4 as language. Referring to the miracle at Pentecost, Brumback states: "There its initial oncoming was signaled by utterance by the one hundred and twenty in languages never learned by them." [15] Another writes as follows: "Accompanying the fulfillment of this promise (Acts 1:8) were supernatural manifestations, the most important and common of which was the miraculous utterance in other languages." [16]

Non-Pentecostal writers agree that the "tongues" spoken at Pentecost were languages, as indicated by the words: "'And how hear we every man in our own tongue?" (Acts 2:8) The context of the words implies that "the disciples' words made good sense to those who understood the various languages or dialects." [17] In agreement with this view of F. F. Bruce is that of Jackson and Lake, who state: "According to Acts 11, the outward manifestation of the Spirit on this first occasion was glossolalia, which the editor interprets as speaking foreign languages." [18] They add, however, that they cannot suppress a suspicion that the record was written by someone who did not know from personal experience the meaning of "speaking with tongues." [19] Again in the Expositor's Bible, G. T. Stokes writes: "I can find.., no more satisfactory [explanation] than the old-fashioned one that there was a real bestowal of tongues, a real gift of speaking in foreign languages." [20] A final writer, J. C. Massee, is quoted as follows: "The Pentecostal tongues were not unknown tongues. They were not tongues needing an interpreter. By a supernatural enabling every man heard them speak in his own language." [21]

Problem of Permanency. Since both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals agree that known languages were spoken on the Day of Pentecost, the source of disagreement is to be found elsewhere. The question is the question of permanency. Was speaking in tongues a temporary, dispensational symbol or was it a pattern for all succeeding generations?

Pentecostalism makes "speaking in tongues" the scriptural pattern for believers of the whole Church age. As Brumback has stated: "It is our sincere belief that without this evidence there can be no fully scriptural baptism with the Holy Ghost." [22] For the Pentecostal, "the gift of tongues is the sine qua non in relation to the baptism of the Holy Spirit." [23] To them "the records

of the Scriptures have established the fact that all will speak with tongues when baptized with the holy Ghost." [24]

Non-Pentecostals interpret Pentecost in other ways. Following is a list of explanations of Pentecost by non-Pentecostals:

1. In the miraculous gift of tongues it was one design of God to break down Jewish prejudices, and to show that salvation was now especially to be offered to Jew and Gentile. [25]

2. Sound as of wind, appearances of tongues as of fire, miraculous exhibitions of languages, formed a fitting background for the inauguration of such a momentous change in God's dispensational dealings with men as Pentecost signified. If Sinai was wrapped in smoke and flame when the Law was given to one nation (Ex. 19) was it to be thought strange that phenomenon of wind, fire, and tongues . . . should accompany the glorious gift of the Holy Spirit Himself to herald the sublime message of unfathomable grace to all nations? [26]

3. Pentecost must not be viewed from the spiritual standpoint alone, but also from the historical point of view. It was the beginning of a new dispensation of God among men. [27]

4. The extraordinary signs on the day of Pentecost were given to remove every doubt, to assure every hope of His flock, and to signify to all Jerusalem that the crucified Christ was indeed the victorious Christ in whose name alone there would be salvation. [28]

5. Olhausen, Baumgarten, Thiersch, Lechler, Hackett, Gloag, Plumptre, and Schaff do not believe in the permanent endowment with the knowledge of foreign tongues at this time, but they do believe that a temporary supernatural endowment of this sort was enjoyed by the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and that it passed away with the visible tongues of flame. [29]

6. The supernatural or extraordinary gifts were temporary, and intended to disappear when the Church should be founded and the inspired canon of Scripture closed; for they were an external proof of an internal inspiration. [30]

7. Here is spectacular, miraculous witness to those Jews that the Gospel message concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus is attested by the Holy Spirit, that all prophecies, and promises, and provisions of their salvation are now fulfilled in Christ. [31]

8. It should be . . . noted that these audible, visible manifestations of the Spirit's presence were special, peculiar and transient . . . and never designed to illustrate the normal effect of the Spirit's power. [32]

In summary, the gift of tongues at Pentecost served the double purpose of denoting a new and more glorious dispensation of divine grace as well as defining the boundaries of the divine message. The external symbols were temporary, for there was no further need of them once the truth they represented was incorporated into the life of the Church. The internal significance of Pentecost was permanent, for the people of God in every age need power to meet the grinding challenge of sin and need purity to live victoriously over sin.

Analysis of Pentecost. Thus far in the discussion the conflicting opinions of various scholars have been presented. In the light of these opinions it would be advisable to reexamine the experiences surrounding Pentecost. Since Pentecostals claim that Pentecost is the basic pattern for all Christians, it seems valid to expect that the experience of the Apostolic Church and the experience of contemporary Pentecostals should harmonize. The following conclusions may be drawn from a study of the Pentecostal experience in the Book of Acts.

a. If Pentecost alone is taken as the pattern, then anyone speaking in tongues should speak in a language that could be understood, or at least a language in use and one understood. This would eliminate "unknown tongues" from consideration at this point.

b. If Pentecost alone is the pattern, no one should actively seek for the evidence of tongues, for the 120 prayed only for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The speaking in tongues was as much a by-product of their praying and of their expectations as were the sound as of wind and tongues as of fire.

c. If Pentecost alone is taken as the pattern, speaking in tongues should be a group experience, for they "were all filled . . . and began to speak with other tongues" (Acts 2:4).

d. If Pentecost is taken as the pattern, heart purity is the essential, permanent result, rather than speaking in tongues (Acts 15:8-9).

e. If Pentecost alone is taken as the pattern, an exact reproduction in contemporary experience should also be accompanied by the sound of wind and the tongues as of fire.

2. Acts 4:31. In Acts 4:81 there is a record of Christians being filled with the Holy Ghost without speaking in tongues: "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" This verse seems to contradict the Pentecostal teaching that "in Acts, the speaking with tongues is always the direct result of the filling with the Spirit," [33] as well as this statement, "No one may Biblically and truthfully assume to say that anyone is baptized with the Holy Ghost, without such outward manifestation." [34] Ness writes as follows:

. . . in every instance where it is recorded that believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit after the Day of Pentecost, they received the experience according to the original pattern of Acts 2:4.[35]

Recognizing the difficulty this passage in Acts 4:31 presents, Brumback attempts to explain it is a "refilling of the disciples, and not a first filling or baptism with the Spirit." [36] The context of the fourth chapter hardly gives credence to such an interpretation. In Acts 4:4 there is the record of a great conversion to Christ: "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." Five thousand new converts -- without the baptism of the Holy Spirit! Further, the day following this ingathering of new believers, the apostles were called before the authorities to explain by what power these 5,000 had been won. The writer of the Book of Acts described the reply as follows: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 4:8).

So Acts 4:31 could not refer to the Apostle Peter, for he was already filled with the Holy Spirit. The only logical answer is that the 5,000 converts mentioned in 4:4 were the ones who were filled with the Holy Ghost in 4:31. And there was no speaking in tongues. This experience alone could disqualify the assertion that all cases of the baptism with the Holy Spirit resulted in speaking in tongues. But another incident is at hand.

3. Acts 8:15-17. Peter and John went to Samaria to investigate the work done under Philip (8:14). When Peter and John arrived, they found a full-scale revival in progress, with men and women being baptized (8:16-17). Among these converts was Simon, a former magician, who was amazed at the wonders and signs done by Philip (8:13). Stressing the necessity of being filled with the Holy Ghost, Peter and John "laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17). There is no reference to tongues here; so any evidence must be purely circumstantial. [37] A rather nebulous bit of evidence is presented by Pentecostals in suggesting that Simon offered money (8:18) for the power to reproduce the same effect on people as the apostle did. "With this power he could again take his place before the people as at least the equal of Philip. The multitudes would wonder at him and acclaim him again as 'the great power of God.'" [38] These shreds of circumstantial evidence must be rejected for two reasons. First, any truth which claims complete biblical support and universal application must bear the stamp of direct command or of direct witness. In the court of ecclesiastical discernment, circumstantial evidence is not acceptable. Secondly, Simon had been converted and baptized and had witnessed miracles and signs (8:13). If this regeneration of Simon was valid, he would have forsaken his former practice before Peter and John arrived. And if he had wanted to compete with Philip he would have made the attempt to buy power to perform miracles and signs before the duo from Jerusalem arrived. The evidence does not support dogmatic interpretations such as, "The record of the reception of the Spirit by the Samaritans so strongly implies the presence of tongues that every unbiased student of the Word is reasonably certain that it was manifested there too." [39]

Here again, in Acts 8:17, as in Acts 4:31, the Holy Ghost had fallen -- with no reference to tongues. If speaking in tongues is the essential, initial, physical evidence of the baptism in or with the Holy Spirit, these two incidents must needs be deleted from the apostolic activity. But still another episode presents a difficulty to the Pentecostal position -- the reference to Paul in Acts 9:17.

4. Acts 9:17-18. The zealous foe of the infant Church had his life revolutionized on the way to Damascus. As a result of his experience on the Damascus road, Paul gained profound spiritual insight but temporarily lost his natural eyesight. In Damascus a man whose vision could detect spiritual revelation was directed to the house of Paul's confinement, the home of Judas on the street named Straight. Ananias obeyed, and upon meeting Paul declared: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 9:17). The inspired record states (9:18) that Paul immediately received his sight and was baptized.

No mention is made, however, of the reception of the Holy Spirit, and none of speaking in tongues. That Paul did receive the Holy Ghost at this time is implied in the description of the event. This may be accepted, for shortly after the experience in the home of Judas, Paul faced a severe challenge in the city of Paphos (13:6) in the person of a false prophet named Bar-jesus.

Paul was equal to the occasion: "Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him" (13:9). So Paul did receive the Holy Spirit, and it is reasonable to assume the event occurred in Damascus.

But there was no reference to tongues here, although Pentecostals related I Cor. 14:18 to this event. There could be two reasons why there is no reference to Paul's speaking in tongues in Damascus. First, tongues does not necessarily accompany the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as shown by Acts 4:31 and 8:17. Further, if the Bible is written at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit may have wanted to avoid the confusion of speaking in tongues with this event. Certainly the confusion resulting from the use of tongues and the misuse of tongues in the history of the Church seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit omitted any reference to tongues in Paul's early experiences.

5. Acts 10:46. Eight years after Pentecost the disciples were still victims of their Jewish prejudice. Although God was working in the Church, and the Church was constantly expanding its influence, yet the preaching of the disciples was confined to the Jews. So the Church needed a divine jolt to shock it out of its narrowness. The barriers of bias were shattered by a two-pronged event.

The first episode involved Peter's vision during his prayer at high noon on the housetop in Joppa (10:9-16). Like many a lesser spirit, Peter prayed and then succumbed to the demands of the flesh and fell asleep. But the siesta was transformed into a spiritual vision. For as Peter slept, God, through the vision of the sheet containing all manners of beasts, taught Peter that the gospel was to go to all people.

While Peter puzzled about the possible interpretation of his vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrived to invite Peter to come to Caesarea for an evangelistic campaign. Peter responded, but even after he arrived at the home of Cornelius he reminded the assembled relatives and friends "that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation" (10:28). Prejudice dies hard. Peter had been under the tutelage of Christ for over three years; he had seen the resurrection of Christ attested; he had experienced Pentecost; he had preached and suffered for eight years; he had a vision from God -- and yet he was cautious about mingling with the Gentiles. Peter needed a lesson that would climax all previous experience, one that would erase all doubts as to the extent of the gospel benefits. The lesson was presented immediately.

As Peter warmed to his preaching he reached a sweeping, exalted climax by declaring "that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sin" (Acts 10: 43). The sermon was not finished, but a dramatic interruption occurred; for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (10:44). Five results followed the coming of the Holy Ghost on these Gentile friends: (1) those Jewish co-workers who had accompanied Peter to Caesarea were astonished (10:45); (2) the Gentiles who had received the gift of the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues (10:46); (3) these same Gentiles magnified God (10: 46); (4) Peter immediately perceived the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit as had the Jews; (5) Peter commanded that they be baptized immediately, a sign of their full acceptance into the Church (10:48).

Referring to 10:46, Clarence Tucker Craig declares:

During the delivery of Peter's sermon, the Spirit fell upon his hearers. Its presence was demonstrated by the speaking in tongues as at Pentecost. In fact, the incident is sometimes referred to as the Gentile Pentecost. Since the Gentiles had already received the Spirit, it was considered proper to baptize them into the Christian faith. [40]

Scholars again are at variance in their interpretation of the experience of speaking in tongues at Caesarea; so an appeal to conflicting opinions will not resolve the case. An analysis of the event as recorded in the Acts presents at least the following:

a. Peter and the disciples had not broken out of the Jewish prejudices prior to this experience.

b. The vision of the sheets at Joppa prepared Peter's mind for the event in Caesarea.

c. Peter and his friends were astonished at the dramatic and indisputable way God revealed the extent of the gospel.

d. Peter, while astonished at the coming of the Holy Spirit so dramatically, seems to be pleased and enlightened. So it is logical to assume that the "tongues" spoken here were languages, as at Pentecost. In reference to his act of baptizing the Gentiles, in a later statement at Jerusalem, Peter said: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (11:15). If there had been some variation in the response, Peter would have indicated such. What Peter needed was a clear, unquestioned demonstration that the Gentiles were included in exactly the same measure that the Jews had been.

If the Holy Spirit had prepared Peter's mind with a vision the night before, it seems that the clinching demonstration would be unquestionable, which speaking in languages would have indicated. A speaking in some ecstatic utterance would have aroused Peter's suspicions about the authenticity of the Gentiles' conversion from heathenism. Again in a later council at Jerusalem, Peter introduced the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the indisputable fact that includes the Gentiles: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us" (15:8). It might be added that Peter suggests a valid result of the filling with the Holy Spirit is "purifying their hearts by faith."

e. It can be added that the use of the same word, *glossa*, in Acts 2:4 and Acts 10:46, by the same author should carry some weight. Luke was a master of literary form and a careful student of details. When a conscientious scholar used the same word in different parts of his writings, it may be assumed that the word means the same throughout, unless otherwise indicated. There is no indication that Luke suggests a different meaning here than the meaning of "language" which appeared in the first use of the word in 2:4. Either the words mean the same in all cases (2:4; 10:46; 19:6) or Luke is guilty of slovenly scholarship.

Ramsay calls Luke a first-class historian. [41] Regarding Luke's work in writing the Acts he comments:

It would be difficult in the whole range of literature to find a work where there is less attempt at pointing a moral or drawing a lesson from the facts. The narrator is persuaded that the facts themselves in their barest form are a perfect lesson and a complete instruction, and he feels that it would be an imposition and even an impiety to intrude his individual views into the narrative. [42]

f. It might be added that they "magnified God." They must have been understood, or how would it be known that they "magnified God"? Paul says that he that speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself -- he that speaks in a known language magnifies God. Here they magnified God.

6. Acts 19:6. A final reference to speaking in tongues is the visit of Paul to the church at Ephesus. The incident is admittedly more difficult than the previous two. For in Jerusalem (2:4) and at Caesarea (10:46) there are specific, clear-cut needs which are met by the demonstrations of languages. At Ephesus the need is not so apparent. Yet study indicates a need -- the need to once and for all cut away from all external forms of both legalism and ceremonialism. These two things, legalism and ceremonialism, were two of the great threats to the Primitive Church. The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) settled the problem of legalism by exempting Gentile converts from circumcision, as a symbol of the fulfillment of the law of Moses.

It is significant that "when there had been much disputing" in the council, Peter stood to recount the experience of the Gentiles receiving the Holy Ghost in the same fashion as had the Jews. It was the baptism with the Holy Spirit which fully opened the doors of the Church to the Gentiles, without any legalistic additions from Judaism.

With the problem of legalism (of observing Old Testament ritual) resolved there yet remained the problem of ceremonialism, or the proper method of baptism. Since baptism was related to belief and to personal salvation, it was essential to clarify this problem also. Again the solution came by a baptism with the Holy Spirit and by speaking in tongues.

The question of ceremonialism was settled at Ephesus, where Apollos had taught and had won many including Jews, to the baptism of John the Baptist (19:3). When Paul paid a visit to Ephesus, he found that the converts had not progressed to a full-orbed experience in Christ. Paul immediately baptized them in the name of Jesus, laid his hands on them, and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. Paul's purpose was to show that true baptism is an inner, spiritual experience. It might be added that the men at Ephesus "spake with tongues, and prophesied" (19:6). To "prophesy" is to proclaim the gospel message -- in a known language. It is logical to accept both "tongues" and "prophesied" as speaking in languages.

Rather than follow Paul, Pentecostals are actually reversing his teaching by insisting upon an external sign, which was the very thing that Paul attempted to eliminate.

* * *

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ACTS

The Holy Spirit came on different people six times, as recorded in Acts 2:4; 4:31; 8:17; 9:17 and 13:9; 10:46; 19:6. An analysis of these six events reveals the following:

1. In one case, 2:4, the people spoke in languages, not unknown tongues.
2. In three cases, 4:31; 8:17; and 9:17 and 13:9, there is no reference to tongues.
3. In the other two cases, 10:46 and 19:6, it is logical to explain the speaking in tongues as languages, as in Acts 2:4, for the following reasons.
 - a. Peter indicated that the events at Caesarea (10:46) and Ephesus (19:6) were similar to Pentecost.
 - b. Specific needs which were highly significant to the progress of the Church can be attached to speaking in languages. No particular significance, outside of ecstatic experience, can be derived from unknown tongues.
 - c. The reputation of Luke as a reputable writer calls for languages in all cases when "tongues" is mentioned.
 - d. It might be added, if the Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture, it would appear that such a contradiction in meaning would be impossible -- that is, that the same word would mean different things, without any distinction.
4. In none of the six cases did the people seek or pray for such a gift. It was a result of the divine initiative when the people spoke in tongues.
5. It was always a group experience. At Pentecost there were 120; at Caesarea there was a group of the relatives and friends of Cornelius (10:24); at Ephesus there were at least 12 men (19:7).
6. There is never any confusion, spiritual pride, problem, or division in Acts as there was at Corinth.

In the light of the teaching of Acts it appears possible to state that the modern phenomenon of speaking in unknown tongues finds only vague and nebulous support. The preponderance of the evidence in Acts is that speaking in tongues was a speaking in languages designed to meet specific needs in the life and understanding of the Early Church. The ultimate evidence, or witness, of the presence of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual state of grace in which perfect love, heart purity, and humble service to God and man are the initial and the permanent evidence.

* * * * *

Part 3 TONGUES IN CORINTH

Pentecostals place a twin emphasis on speaking in tongues. The first emphasis is that it is the initial result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is the privilege of all believers. "All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Ghost and fire, according to the command of Jesus Christ." [1] This baptism in the Holy Spirit is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth. In order that the believer may know that such an experience is real, "the baptism of believers in the Holy Ghost is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking with tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance." [2]

The second emphasis is that speaking in tongues is also a gift of the Holy Spirit. All who are filled with the Holy Spirit receive the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, but this experience is not necessarily a permanent endowment. It is initial. Others receive the experience of ecstatic utterance at a gift of the Holy Spirit. Thomas F. Zimmerman of the Assemblies of God stated it thus:

Speaking in tongues as the initial evidence should be distinguished . . . from the gift of tongues as described in I Corinthians 12:10. Many individuals have received the baptism in the Holy Ghost and spoken in tongues at that time, but have not experienced the gift of tongues. [3]

Modern Pentecostalism is thus traced to the church at Corinth as well as to Pentecost. For it was in the church in the city of Corinth that the gift of tongues was prominent. The problem of the gift of tongues is discussed in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. It is apparent that an exposition of the "tongues" in Corinthians is much more difficult than an interpretation of the "tongues" of the Book of Acts. The attempt has been made earlier in this study to indicate that the Book of Acts does not support the Pentecostal claim that speaking in tongues is the necessary, initial, physical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. While the teaching of I Corinthians is more obscure and more indirect in its treatment of speaking in tongues, it seems valid to state that Paul's letter presents certain principles of spiritual procedure which, if accepted, would eliminate speaking in tongues from the Church.

I. THE TONGUES OF CORINTH AND OF PENTECOST

In comparing the experience of speaking in tongues at Pentecost with the gift of tongues at Corinth, two major positions are maintained by scholars. Some regard the experiences as similar in nature, with languages being spoken in both cases. Others see a distinct difference in the two experiences, accepting languages at Pentecost and unknown, ecstatic utterances at Corinth. From these two opposing points of view it may be possible to draw a conclusion which helps to resolve the problem.

A. As Similar

Among the older commentators it was customary to interpret both the tongues at Pentecost and the tongues at Corinth as known languages. [4] In a rather cautious statement John Calvin interprets the experience at Pentecost as follows: "I suppose that it . . . appears . . . that the apostles had the variety and understanding of tongues given them, that they might speak unto the Greeks in Greek, unto the Italians in the Italian tongue, and that they might have true communication

with their hearers." [5] In regard to I Cor. 14:28, Calvin writes: "Under different kinds of tongues he comprehends both are knowledge of languages, and the gift of interpretation." [6] In reference to I Cor. 14:2, where Paul uses the expression "tongue," Calvin says that "the term denotes a foreign language." [7]

Adam Clarke interprets both Pentecostal tongues and Corinthian tongues as languages. Referring to the gift of tongues at Pentecost (Acts 2:4) he writes: "At this foundation of the Christian Church, the gift of various languages was given to the Apostles." [8] Discussing the various spiritual gifts listed in I Cor. 12:8-10 he writes: "Different languages which they had never learned, and which God gave them for the immediate instruction of people of different countries who attended their ministries." [9] Explaining the list of spiritual gifts listed in I Cor. 12:28, Clarke interprets the phrase "diversities of tongues" as follows: "The power to speak, on all necessary occasions, languages which they have not learned." [10]

Matthew Henry also states that the "tongues" of Pentecost and the "tongues" of the Corinthians were the same -- the use of languages. Of the tongues of Pentecost he writes: "They began to speak with other tongues, besides their native language, though they had never learned any other." [11] In regard to the gift of tongues at Corinth he writes: "To another divers kinds of tongues, or the ability to speak languages by inspiration." [12] Again he writes, "Diversities of tongues, or such as could speak divers languages." [13]

Among the older writers, John Calvin, Adam Clarke, and Matthew Henry represent those who regard known languages as the proper interpretation of tongues at Pentecost and also at Corinth. More recent writers, however, tend to draw a distinction between the two types. Pentecostal writers, in particular, stress the difference between the two types of tongues. These writers accept the statement of Luke that languages were spoken at Pentecost, but regard the gift of tongues in Corinthians as an unknown tongue, an ecstatic utterance.

B. As Different

One of the earliest writers to present a difference in Pentecostal tongues and Corinthian tongues was D. D. Whedon. "At Pentecost," he says, "the disciples spoke in other languages than their native tongue." [14] He adds, "Each one of the disciples in turn spoke a single foreign language, so that the various foreigners were successfully addressed, each in his own language." [15] But in discussing tongues at Corinth, Whedon states in I Cor. 14:2, "The word unknown, though interpolated by the translator, expresses the truth. The tongues were unintelligible to the congregation unless interpreted. And herein they were inferior to the Pentecostal tongues, which spoke to every man in his native dialect." [16]

James Stalker, who accepts the tongues of Pentecost as languages, writes in a different vein about the phenomenon at Corinth: "Others possessed a strange gift called the gift of tongues. It is not clear what it was; but it seems to have been a kind of tranced utterance, in which the speaker poured out an impassioned rhapsody by which his religious feelings received both expression and exaltation." [17] A contemporary writer, E. M. Blaiklock, states that "the lack of any need for interpretation [at Pentecost] makes it difficult to identify the situation with that which Paul seeks to regulate in the Corinthian Church." [18] Contrasting the Corinthian's tongues to that of the Acts,

Kleupfel writes as follows: "In the Corinthian church the form which it assumed was that of an address to God, intelligible to none but those endowed with the Charism of the interpretation of tongues." [19]

Of more significance to this study is the belief of Pentecostals themselves regarding the differences between the speaking in tongues in Acts and that of Corinth. The distinction is made that the tongues at Pentecost were a sign, witnessing to the initial physical evidence of the coming of the Holy Spirit, while the tongues at Corinth were a gift which some, but not all, Christians may receive. One spokesman for Pentecostals states the differences as follows: "There is a clear distinction . . . between a sign that follows them that believe when the Holy Ghost comes in as described in the Acts, and the permanent gift described in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians." [20] That the tongues of the Corinthians are of a different and higher level than that of the Acts, to the Pentecostals, is also indicated by the following statement: "The saint is allowed to speak in the language of divinity -- a language unknown to humanity." [21]

Since the Pentecostals regard the experience of Acts 2:4 as initial and temporary, it is the Corinthian gift of permanent ability to speak in tongues which is most frequently encountered today. Modern Pentecostalism stresses the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, but greater emphasis is placed upon the permanent gift of tongues. This is particularly true of what is called neo-Pentecostalism, or of those who are members of older denominations, and who witness to the experience.

C. A Possible Synthesis

So far, two interpretations have been presented. [*] One view regards languages as the true meaning of tongues. The other group states that the two experiences were different, with languages used at Pentecost and ecstatic utterance at Corinth. Is it not possible that both views are right? It is possible that there was a valid gift of languages at Pentecost and that Paul was referring to such an experience when he used the word. On the other hand, the true gift of languages at Pentecost could have degenerated into unintelligible utterance in the lives of carnal Christians who had come close to the edge of an outright repudiation of Christianity. The Corinthian church, composed mainly of raw converts from heathenism, was a sorry spectacle of primitive piety. It takes little imagination to think that such a church would adopt a true gift of the Spirit and pervert it or interpret it in childish fashion. In order to discuss this view we need to look first at the city of Corinth and then at the church at Corinth.

*Some interpret both Pentecost and Corinthian tongues to be ecstatic utterances. Since such a view involves a different view of inspiration, it is not discussed here.

II. THE CITY OF CORINTH

In discussing the necessity of an indelible demonstration at Pentecost the thought has been suggested that such manifestations were needed to shock the Jewish-indoctrinated Christians out of their bias and prejudice. Even though these men had become devout followers of Christ who willingly went to prison for the sake of the gospel, they were extremely slow in throwing off the ideas and religious practices of their early training.

The Christians in Corinth had a similar difficulty in ridding themselves of ideas and practices which were part of their earlier environment. But here at Corinth the environmental carry-over was different. With the Jews the great barriers were racial pride and legalism. With the Corinthians the great handicaps here heathen practices and customs. Some of these customs were not sinful -- such as speaking in tongues at the heathen temples. With a tradition already in existence of true Pentecostal languages, it would be plausible for these new converts to transfer the ecstatic utterances of the heathen temple into the Christian Church. For such phenomena were a part of heathen worship at Corinth.

When Paul went to Corinth about A.D. 52 to begin an 18-month ministry there, he found himself in a prosperous seaport where the ships of all nations anchored. Two hundred years earlier a Roman army had plundered and leveled the city. Julius Caesar rebuilt it as a military outpost and as a commercial center of the empire. The city attracted merchants, politicians, and others. H. F. Mathews describes the situation as follows:

The rift-raft of the world was there . . . Scoundrels who found life uncomfortable in their own towns drifted to Corinth. The busy port was notoriously more immoral than any other in the Roman Empire; and that tendency was encouraged because the temple of Venus (Aphrodite), the sensual Greek goddess, still held sway over the new Roman city. [22]

Here in Corinth, Paul again encountered the Greek mind, as he had in Athens. In Corinth, however, the Greek mind was not devoted to science, eloquence, or literature, "but was given to gaiety and effeminate luxury." [23] In Corinth the outstanding building was the temple of Venus, "erected on its acropolis, and towering high above the city, as illustrative of the taste and the character of the Corinthians." [24] In Corinth, Christianity came into contact "with all that art could devise for the amusement of life; with all that was adapted to nourish the habits of voluptuousness; with all, refined or gross, that could be made to minister to the pleasures of sense." [25] Corinth was thus one of the "most luxurious, effeminate, ostentatious, and dissolute cities of the world." [26] Corinth was a place of exceptional immorality and open licentiousness which was encouraged by the worship of Aphrodite, with a thousand temple prostitutes. So notorious was its depravity that the name of the city "had actually passed into the vocabulary of the Greek tongue; and the very word 'to Corinthianize' meant 'to play the wanton.'" [27]

III. THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

God's grace is sufficient to redeem fully and to sustain continually. Many spiritual churches, composed of truly devout saints, have existed in sinful and unfavorable environments. But unfortunately, the church at Corinth was not such a church, for "there were many complications in the attempt of the early Christians to separate themselves from sinful society." [28] Corinth was a problem church. St. Paul, in his first letter, was led "to denounce the sins which had polluted the Corinthian Church, and almost annulled its right to the name of Christian." [29]

In writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminded them that they were set apart, "called to be saints" (1:2); he complimented those who were enriched in "utterance, and in all knowledge" (1:5); he commended them for the variety of their gifts (1:7). But Paul also expressed some serious

concern for them. He begged them to "all speak the same thing" (1:10); he abhorred the divisions among them (1:11); he drew a graphic picture of the inability of the natural man to understand spiritual concepts (1:18-26); he presented Christ as the supreme object of Christian loyalty and devotion (1:30-31). Having laid a foundation by showing his personal concern for them, Paul launched into a detailed analysis of their spiritual state. And a sordid picture it was. The charges Paul made against the Corinthians included the following:

1. Divisions and Contentions. A. B. Bruce describes the Corinthians as "volatile, opinionated, addicted to party spirit, and to the faithlessness and heartlessness which that spirit usually engenders." [30] Paul begged that "there be no divisions among you" (1:10). He had heard that there were "contentions among you" (1:11). The great feature of the apostles before Pentecost had been unity of spirit. After Pentecost the followers of Christ were marked by an extraordinary sense of fellowship. It is difficult to see how the Corinthians could have been baptized with the Holy Spirit and yet be torn by strife and divisions.

2. Lack of Spirituality. Paul wanted to speak to them of the wisdom and the power of God (I Cor. 2:6), but could not because they were not spiritual (I Cor. 3:1). He was unable to treat them as spiritual "because of their seditions and immoralities." [31] They were in a state of spiritual infancy (babes in Christ) and were making no progress. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not bestowed upon spiritual weaklings nor upon infantile Christians.

3. Carnal Spirit (3:1, 3). The word "carnal" means "adapted to, fitted for the flesh . . . one who lives according to the flesh." [32] To call them carnal was bold and even harsh, but Paul had to use spiritual surgery in order to save the church.

4. Substitution of Another Gospel (3:9-19). Paul maintained that the only foundation for the church was the one he had -- the gospel of grace through Christ. Yet some seemed bent upon shifting the superstructure to another foundation. Paul warned that this is sacrilege, which among the heathen was a cause for death.

5. Spirit of Criticism. They sat in judgment on Paul. The Apostle to the Gentiles was careful of public opinion. But when they came to the point of questioning his authority, he denied the "competency of the tribunal" in Corinth to judge him. "With a flash of proud indifference he repudiates the right of any self-constituted inquisitors (ix:3), at Corinth to examine his credentials." [33] A proud and rebellious group of Christians do not reflect the spirit of Christ.

6. Spiritual Pride. Carnal man is naturally an idolater. The pride of the Corinthians was due in part to a distorted identification with one teacher or another. From this idolatry came a self-pride, a state of being "puffed up" (4:6), or an inflated opinion of oneself. Paul promised to visit them shortly, and when he did, he would be impressed, not by their speech, but by their spiritual power (4:19). For the kingdom of God is not in speaking words (4:20) but in being Christlike.

7. Toleration of Immorality. To be proud of spiritual gifts and to be unconcerned about ethical living is a contradiction. Yet these people who were so zealous of gifts, especially tongues, were apparently unconcerned about a case of immorality that would cause even sinners to blush

with shame (5:1). Yet the church was not even deeply concerned about the situation. "Paul confronts the pride of the [Corinthian] Church with the crushing facts; no intellectual brilliance, no religious enthusiasm can cover this hideous blot." [34] Paul directs that the offender be put out of the church immediately.

8. Lawsuits. After the Day of Pentecost the followers of Christ, baptized with the Holy Spirit, were so filled with love that they were willing to sell their property to help each other; at Corinth the church members were conducting lawsuits against each other (6:1-9). "How absurd and illogical for church people to go before their bar, when they are soon to come before the saints as divine rulers of the world." [35] Since they were proud of their wisdom (v. 5), couldn't they find someone wise enough to render a just decision?

9. False Asceticism (7:1-35). Because of the immorality in Corinth some had taken the opposite road of extreme self-denial, extending it even to the matter of sex relations within the bond of marriage. Perhaps those who were confused about marriage expected some support from Paul, a bachelor or a widower. Paul would not impose his personal status on all. He indicates that the single state is preferable (7:7). But he also gives full sanction to marriage, and to full expression of life within marriage.

10. Return to Idolatry. In regard to the question of eating meats offered to idols, the question was twofold. Should a person eat meat dedicated to an idol? If some did eat, it would violate their conscience and cause them to fall back into idolatry. But the greater problem was the Christian who attended feasts and banquets in the heathen temples. This mingling with the world would have a weakening effect on the Christian.

11. Rebellion. The critics at Corinth were investigating Paul with sharp eyes, hoping to find fault with him. In this way they could throw off the authority of Paul (chapter 9). In particular they were challenging his right to be considered an apostle. Paul answers with a testimony about his record as a minister of Christ.

12. Abuse of the Lord's Supper (11:20-29). The church at Corinth had perverted the Lord's Supper. The simple observance had degenerated into a time of gluttony and intoxication. There were pride and exclusiveness in their meal. Some were ignored or left out. To Paul this practice was the very opposite of the meaning of the Holy Communion service. A church that would pervert such a simple ceremony as the Lord's Supper certainly could not be depended upon to rightly interpret the spiritual gifts.

13. Denial of the Resurrection (15:12). Paul's gospel was based on the resurrection of Christ. If there was no Resurrection, then Paul's hope was an illusion; yet some at Corinth denied the possibility of a resurrection. To Paul this was a denial of the very heart of the gospel.

14. Confusion Concerning Gifts (chapter 12). In Corinth, the gifts of the Spirit had degenerated. Most of the gifts were ignored, as Paul reviews them in chapter 12. The one gift stressed above all others was "speaking in tongues." The interest seemed to center in acquiring a power to do miraculous things and to create astonishment in non-Christian minds. The Holy Spirit

was exploited for sensational results. As A. B. Bruce has said regarding the misconceptions concerning the Holy Spirit at Corinth:

His renewing, sanctifying function seems to have been left very much in the background. He was thought of as the author, not of grace . . . but of Charisms [gifts], and "spiritual" in the vocabulary of the period was an attribute ascribed to the effects of a spirit of power, not to those of a spirit of holiness. [36]

In this manner the gift of the Holy Spirit came to mean, in the common mind, not the power to believe, to hope, to love, to be pure, but the power to speak ecstatically and to prophesy enthusiastically and to perform sensational deeds. Of this type of religion Bruce goes on to say:

The whole fraternity of people who can be religious and at the same time false, greedy, sensual, bending like reeds before the swollen stream in a time of enthusiasm without radical change of heart began to swarm. They appeared everywhere, tares among the wheat of the Kingdom; they were unusually abundant in the Corinthian Church, where everyone could speak in one way or another, and virtue was at a discount -- a church mostly gone to tongues. [37]

Such a church, then, is the New Testament source for the gift of speaking in unknown tongues. It is admitted that one cannot dismiss a particular truth by attacking the man or the group sponsoring the idea. But in spiritual matters it is difficult to divorce theory from action. And any church which had strayed so near the edge of outright distortion of all the basic practices to true Christianity cannot be accepted as the source of sound practice.

The point made here is that there was a valid gift of language at Pentecost, which was repeated after Pentecost in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10) and at Ephesus (Acts 19), and may have appeared in other services in the Primitive Church. But this valid gift of languages became degenerate in the lives of people still affected with the pattern of heathen temple worship and still carnal and infantile in the Christian life. So the tongues at Corinth may not have been a true gift but a distortion, a perversion, of the true gift.

To regard the tongues of the Corinthians as a perversion of the valid gift of languages raises the problem of Paul's treatment of the tongues issue.

IV. PAUL'S METHOD OF DEALING WITH TONGUES

Paul did not attempt to rule out tongues by a direct refutation. To do so would have been a fatal blow to the Corinthians who had placed so much spiritual value on this particular gift. The church at Corinth was a vital link in the chain of churches of the West and those of the East. In addition, Paul's great spiritual insight saw that there was a possibility of shifting this emphasis to more basic spiritual concepts. To save this church required all the diplomacy and statesmanship of the apostle. Rather than brutally extinguish the flickering spark of spiritual life at Corinth, Paul tried to gently eliminate the false emphasis on tongues. Paul's indirect method of dealing with the problem involved four principles: (1) the principle of spiritual priority; (2) the principle of spiritual utility; (3) the principle of spiritual toleration; (4) the principle of spiritual restriction.

1. Spiritual Priority. In I Corinthians, Paul presents two lists of spiritual gifts. In both instances speaking in tongues is at the bottom of the list. Some say that the listing of the various gifts, with speaking in tongues last, is simply a random arrangement, with no particular significance attached to this sequence. But many think that there is meaning in the order of the gifts. Chrysostom, no enemy of tongues, said: "Seest thou where he hath set this gift, and how he everywhere assigns it the last rank?" [38] The list of gifts as presented in I Cor. 12:8-10 is as follows: (1) word of wisdom, (2) word of knowledge, (3) faith, (4) healing, (5) working miracles, (6) prophecy, (7) discerning of spirits, (8) divers kinds of tongues, (9) interpretation of tongues.

Another list is given in I Cor. 12:28, where the gifts are listed as follows: (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) teachers, (4) miracles, (5) gifts of healing, (6) helps, (7) governments, (8) diversities of tongues. "The order in which the second list of ministries is named is deliberate. The apostles have received the highest gift and the speakers in tongues the lowest." [39] Comparing the tongues at Corinth with those at Pentecost another scholar writes, "In Corinth . . . it required an interpreter to explain the tongue to those who knew it not. Hence Paul placed this gift lowest of all. It created wonder, but did little real good." [40] Another writer states that in the first list speaking in tongues, "ranked first by the Corinthians because of their sensational character, Paul enumerates last in regarding to profiting." [41] The same writer commented as follows about the second listing: "Instead of a mere enumeration, Paul prefers an arrangement in order of rank." [42]

From the standpoint of spiritual priorities, speaking in tongues, however one may interpret it, is listed last. All the other gifts are more important. Since all these abilities listed are the gifts of the Spirit, why go to such extremes to stress the very least? Can it be that the contemporary movement is a repetition of the situation at Corinth, with people seeking the more spectacular gift and ignoring or minimizing the other, more important gifts? From the standpoint of spiritual priorities speaking in tongues would be relegated to an insignificant role in the life of the Church.

2. Spiritual Utility. In discussing the value of gifts Paul selects two that closely resemble each other -- prophecy and speaking in tongues. Prophecy, in the sense used here, is an inspired utterance, a speaking of the Word of God with power, while speaking in tongues is an ecstatic utterance. Notice the superiority of prophecy over tongues.

a. There is a definite limitation on the usefulness of tongues, for no one understands, unless there is one to interpret. There is no apparent limitation on the range of prophecy (14:2-3).

b. The one speaking in tongues helps himself (14:4), while the one preaching helps the church.

c. Tongues lead to confusion and to uncertainty (14:69), while prophecy gives clear directions.

d. The gift of tongues does not contribute to Christian fellowship, while prophecy is a source of strength in the church. One valid test of the value of a gift is the contribution it makes to the Kingdom (14:12).

e. Praying in tongues may be an emotional release and may make one feel inspired, but it adds nothing to his understanding of the gospel (14:14-15).

f. An endless volume and a continuous flow of words in an unknown tongue is not worth as much as the most simple statement in plain language. Five words clearly stated are better than an infinite number which no one knows (14:19).

g. Speaking in tongues arouses only derision and scorn from the unbelievers, while prophecy places the unbeliever directly under the judgment of the Word (14:22-25).

h. Paul urges the people to earnestly seek to prophesy (14::39). This is a positive approach. There is no urging at all to seek to speak in tongues.

3. Spiritual Toleration. Paul was familiar with the idea of spiritual toleration. At Mars' Hill he spoke of God winking at certain things in the former days because of the ignorance of man (Acts 17:30). Now Paul was ready to express a spirit of toleration himself. Paul certainly was aware of the languages spoken by the disciples at Pentecost. Whether the tongues at Corinth was similar to that of Pentecost is a matter of conjecture. As already indicated, the position of this discussion is that the Corinthian tongues was a carry-over from the heathen practices of converts to Christianity. "Speaking with tongues, or 'in' tongues, was a phenomenon of devotion which was so common at Corinth that Paul does not require to explain it." [43] Paul's attitude of tolerance is expressed in three ways.

First, he writes, "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied" (I Cor. 14:5). "Possibly Paul fears that he has gone too far in rejecting tongues. Hence, he makes it clear that he is not forbidding them, but is insisting on the superiority of prophecy." [44] Because it was so difficult to distinguish the valid gift of languages from the invalid expression of unknown tongues, Paul would not forbid speaking in tongues. But he distinctly points out that the gift of prophecy is better than the gift of tongues.

A second concession was Paul's identification with those who spoke in tongues, for he said, "I thank my God, that I speak with tongues more than ye all" (I Cor. 14:18). Jerome, in his Notes, says that Paul is exulting in his ability as a linguist. [45] However, it is admitted that Paul was rich in emotional experiences (II Cor. 5:13; 12:1-4). It seems logical to accept Jerome's idea of Paul's ability to speak many languages, for his training and background would have made him an excellent linguist, a master of languages.

But even if it is granted that Paul may have spoken in unknown tongues, the admission means little, for Paul immediately makes two statements that empty tongues of all meaning. He says, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (I Cor. 14:19). He also chides the Corinthians in a gentle way, pointing out that all the commotion about tongues was so much childish, infantile expression; for he says: "Brethren, be not children in understanding" (I Cor. 14:20).

A third concession is made by means of permissive direction in that Paul says, "Forbid not to speak with tongues" (I Cor. 14:39). Even here Paul has prefaced his permission to speak in

tongues with the admonition to "covet to prophesy." In other words, don't quarrel about tongues, don't make it an issue of division; but seek to proclaim God's Word, or seek to prophesy.

4. Spiritual Restriction. In dealing with the excessive interest of the Corinthians on the spectacular gift of speaking in tongues, Paul did not openly challenge nor directly disallow the practice. In fact, the restrictions placed on speaking in tongues are so strict that they all but eliminated tongues from all public services.

a. The first restriction is that of the number of such instances permitted in any public gathering. At the most, only three people are permitted to speak in tongues in a public service (I Cor. 14:27). Such a restriction would eliminate the confusion and disorder that would occur if several were speaking in tongues. This restriction of Paul would also eliminate much of the stress of neo-Pentecostalism, where as many as 10 or 12 join hands and speak in tongues.

b. A second restriction was in the order of speaking. They were to speak "by course," that is, only one at a time (I Cor. 14:27). This drastic restriction makes any multiple display of tongues in public contrary to the Bible. If the gift of tongues is from the Holy Spirit, then those who have the gift must follow the instructions of the inspired writings. Otherwise, they either oppose the Holy Spirit or cause the Holy Spirit to contradict himself.

c. A third restriction deals with the matter of interpretation. "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church" (I Cor. 14:28). Any public address should be for the edification of the church, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (I Cor. 14:31). Any public speaking in tongues without an interpretation is contrary to the Bible.

d. A fourth restriction is that women should not speak in tongues in public services, for Paul writes: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak" (I Cor. 14:34). There are two possible ways to interpret this statement of Paul. It may be applied generally, to exclude women from any vocal participation in the service. But in a previous discussion (chapter 11) Paul had talked of women's praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered. In this instance Paul's concern is for the preservation of modesty, which at that time was associated with coverings on the head. Paul apparently sanctions public prayer and speaking on the part of women if the head is covered.

A second explanation seems to be that women should not "speak in tongues" in church. For the prohibition appears in the center of a discussion on the value of tongues and prophecy (I Cor. 14:21-40). Rather than attempt to speak in tongues, with the resulting confusion (I Cor. 14:33, 40), the women should seek information from their husbands at home.

If the restrictions of Paul were accepted, tongues would have little, if any place in a public worship service. For the Bible teaches that not more than three should speak in tongues during any one service, that they should speak in order, or in sequence, that someone should interpret, and that women should be silent in church.

From a study of the Corinthian church and of the type of tongues spoken there, as well as of the problems it caused, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to sustain the doctrine of tongues. If

one also adds the ideas of spiritual priority, spiritual utility, spiritual toleration, and spiritual restriction, then tongues are reduced to one of two levels. They become either nonexistent in the public worship services of the church, or they occupy such a minor role that they are non-important in the life of the Church.

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