

A DOCTRINAL DISCUSSION OF TONGUES  
THE FOUNDATION TO ALL CHARISMATIC ACTIVITY  
BY HAROLD MACKAY

**Contents**

A DOCTRINAL DISCUSSION OF TONGUES .....	1
THE FOUNDATION TO ALL CHARISMATIC ACTIVITY.....	1
BY HAROLD MACKAY .....	1
Tongues .....	1
Error #1: Placing higher priority on tongues than the Bible does. ....	3
Error #2/3: Making a distinction between the tongues in the book of Acts and in I Corinthians. ....	4
Error #4: Declaring tongues to be the result of Spirit baptism.....	4
Error #5: Confusing the baptism and the filling of the Spirit by making them synonymous.....	5
Error #6: Claiming tongues to be the sole evidence of Spirit filling. ....	6
Error #7: Claiming that tongues give evidence of deeper spirituality.....	7
What is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? .....	9
Should we expect a revival of sign gifts? .....	10
Tongues at Corinth .....	11
Tongues as a sign .....	15
Are tongues for public or private use?.....	17

We suggest that all Charismatics read this article. It will help you to see how the foundations of historic Pentecostalism were flawed from 1900 onward.

***Tongues***

In this study we want to examine Pentecostalism by the Scriptures of truth. The prophet Isaiah declared, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them: (Isaiah 8:20). So we will turn the white light of the Word of God on this popular movement. Unquestionably, the two most rapidly expanding religious movements of the 20th century are the Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostalism. Both claim tremendous increases in membership in this country and elsewhere in the world. Yet these two groups are in many ways diametrically opposed to each other. Their major doctrinal tenets are as far apart as the poles. The Jehovah's Witness movement is a noxious weed in the world's religious garden, disseminating spiritual poison through its false doctrines. In regard to the person of Christ, the way of salvation, and the future state, its teachings are absolutely unscriptural, dangerously heretical, and spiritually injurious. Measured by the infallible Word of Truth, the movement is weighed and found wanting on every doctrinal count.

The Pentecostals, on the other hand (although it is difficult to speak in general terms because of the numerous groups linked together under this title), are usually sound as to the deity of Christ. Many preach salvation by grace through faith, although usually rejecting the truth of the eternal security of the believer. Most accept Bible truth regarding heaven and hell.

The doctrine which characterizes practically all the various groups of Pentecostals, and which is usually the main plank in their platform of preaching and practice, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This they claim is not the common experience of all believers, but is a sort of second blessing received only by those who fulfill certain conditions; usually tarrying and praying or possibly the laying on of hands. This, they teach, results in speaking in unknown tongues. Before examining this major tenet of Pentecostalism, let us inquire as to the reason for the appeal which this movement is undoubtedly making to millions of people. There can be no denying its drawing power. It is estimated that in 1970, approximately 4 million people were involved in the tongues movement in America. Possibly half of these - about 2 million -

are connected with the various Pentecostal denominations. The other 2 million will be found among the Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and other sects, including Roman Catholics.

Wherein lies the attraction of Pentecostalism? From personal observation and a careful perusal of published material, several reasons emerge for the movement's present popularity. First, it would appear to be a reaction against the impotence of a sterile liberalism. Liberal Christianity is bankrupt. In spite of high-sounding claim, a parading of great scholarship, and a well-publicized program for social betterment, it has little to show for a half-century of effort. Its membership is decreasing, its coffers are being depleted, and it finds itself the object of attack by those it claims to befriend. The stone of liberal skepticism has proved to be a poor substitute for the bread of life.

Second, closely akin to this, is the deadness of formal orthodoxy. Much of Christendom that has not openly denied the truth of the Bible has lapsed into a state of spiritual dearth that has little attraction for the masses. It is strikingly evident that the neo-Pentecostal movement making inroads in old-line denominations is having greatest success in those denominations most given to liturgical formalism. Here again, there seems to be a reaction against spiritual death and dearth.

Third, we could suggest the emotional extremist. In revolting from the pit of formalism, he is in danger of falling into the equally-dangerous ditch of fanaticism. Pentecostal excesses offer an emotional outlet for the stresses which characterize this 20th century. People today are looking for something to turn them on. An emotional religious experience seems to provide such an opportunity for many. Reverting to the thought of reaction against the deadness of formal religion, we are all aware of the innovations being introduced in religious services in some quarters - folk music, expressionist arts, dances, and even drugs are being employed in an effort to attract the people and, as they phrase it, make religion relevant to this space age. Need we be surprised then to find ecstatic orgies called tongues meetings appealing to a thrill-seeking crowd?

Fourth, without a doubt some sincere Christians are attracted to Pentecostalism because it seems to offer a fulfillment of a genuine desire for greater holiness and effectiveness in life and testimony. There are few Christians who have not, at some time or another in their Christian life, experienced a great longing for complete victory over indwelling sin and greater fruitfulness in service for the Lord. Such desires are certainly legitimate and to be zealously fostered. Pentecostalism professes to provide the answer. Where there is a lack of understanding of the teachings of Scripture this offer can appear most attractive.

And finally, undoubtedly many uninstructed believers are attracted to Pentecostalism because of its use of Biblical terms. The very name Pentecost has an appeal in it. Spirit baptism, the fullness of the Spirit, the gift of tongues -- these all seem to promise that which is of God, for they are all New Testament terms. To the immature and to the uninstructed they seem to be the truth. Today's tragic condition of woeful and willful ignorance of the Bible in America certainly contributes to the possibility that people will succumb to the claims of the tongue movement. In over 40 years of Christian service, I have never met one well-taught Christian who has become ensnared by the specious claims of Pentecostalism. On the contrary, there have been discovered among its adherents a sad immaturity and lack of knowledge of Scripture. It could be expected that from those who claim a superior endowment of the Spirit, there would issue such a rich unfolding of the deep things of God by preaching and pen as would authenticate their claims. But there is little evidence that such is the case.

Now let us consider the errors of Pentecostalism. It would appear that the seven most common errors to be found in the movement are these:

1. Placing higher priority on tongues than the Bible does.
2. Designating them as "unknown".
3. Making a distinction between the tongues in the book of Acts and in I Corinthians.
4. Declaring tongues to be the result of Spirit baptism.
5. Confusing the baptism and the filling of the Spirit by making them synonymous.
6. Claiming tongues to be the sole evidence of Spirit filling.
7. Suggesting that speaking in tongues is an indication of advanced spirituality.

Now a very brief consideration of each of these.

#### [Error #1: Placing higher priority on tongues than the Bible does.](#)

In Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues is practically the keynote of the movement. Is it so in Scripture? Let us consider these facts: In all the teachings of Christ recorded in the four gospels, there is but one reference to tongues. This is in Mark 16:17, a portion of Scripture questioned by many conservative scholars; and is a reference to the future. "They shall speak with new tongues." The word "new" here signifies different, and this was fulfilled at Pentecost.

In Acts 2, the great chapter on Pentecost, there are only five references to tongues in verses 3, 4, 6, 8 and 11. This chapter contains 47 verses, only 13 of which are in any way connected with the subject of tongues. The book of the Acts covers approximately the first 30 years of church history. In its entire scope of 28 chapters, there are only three occasions recorded on which there was speaking in tongues: chapter 2, 10 and 19. Out of 1,007 verses in Acts, only 18 deal with tongues.

Paul wrote 13 or 14 of the 27 books in the New Testament, and in only one of these (I Corinthians) does he mention tongues. In the 14 epistles from Romans to Hebrews there are 100 chapters, and tongues are the subject of only part of two of them (I Corinthians 12 and 14). When he does write about them, Paul places tongues and their interpretation last in both the manifestations of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7-10) and the gifts of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:28). In giving his inspired estimate of the relative value and importance of tongues, Paul writes in I Corinthians 14:5, "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." And again in the 19th verse of that same chapter, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, ... than ten thousand words in an [unknown] tongue." Odds of two thousand to one against tongues!

Eight of the New Testament epistles were written by Peter, James, John and Jude. These inspired writers make absolutely no reference to tongues. With these facts before us, it is

evident that little or no emphasis was placed on tongues even in the apostolic era when the gift was operative.

### [Error #2/3: Making a distinction between the tongues in the book of Acts and in I Corinthians.](#)

Those who take this position admit that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were understood by those familiar with those languages, but they claim that the tongues referred to by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians were quite different, inasmuch as they required an interpreter to be understood. While some good and godly men, in no way connected with the tongues movement, have held the view that these were ecstatic utterances, sometimes called angelic languages, this view appears untenable. Before examining it, let us notice the inevitable results of admitting this difference. If the tongues at Corinth were not the same as at Pentecost, then there is no connection whatsoever between speaking in unknown tongues and Pentecost. The whole Pentecostal movement is undermined and the name itself becomes a misnomer. Claiming to possess a Pentecostal gift that has no connection with Pentecost is so obviously wrong that one wonders that it is ever being advanced.

In seeking to escape from one horn of this dilemma, the advocates of this theory are impaled on an even sharper one. Without entering on a detailed exposition of I Corinthians 14, which we will do later, we consider here only the matter of terminology. In our English translation of I Corinthians 14, we find the word tongue or tongues occurring 16 times. Fifteen times it is a translation of the Greek word *glossa* which we have discussed already. The remaining instance is in a quotation from the Old Testament in verse 21, where we have another form of *glossa* as a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word. This form of *glossa* is literally "other-tongues" and signifies a foreigner. As you will recall, this word *glossa* is the identical word employed in Acts 2 for the tongues in which they spoke at Pentecost. It is also used in Acts 10:46 of the speaking in tongues by the Gentiles at Caesarea and in Acts 19:6 of the disciples of John at Ephesus.

Thus on the ground of the word used by the Spirit of God to describe tongues, they were one and the same at Jerusalem, Acts 2, at Caesarea, Acts 10, at Ephesus, Acts 19, and at Corinth, I Corinthians 14. Dr. S. Louis Johnson, Jr., professor of New Testament Literature Exegesis at Dallas Theological Seminary has this to say: "The gift of tongues is the gift of speaking in a known language for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the message of the apostolic church. Some have contended for a difference in the gift as it occurred in Acts and at Corinth. This is manifestly impossible from the standpoint of the terminology."

Dean Henry Alford, a recognized authority in New Testament Greek, says this in commenting on Acts 2: "How is this speaking with other tongues related to the speaking in tongues afterwards spoken of by St. Paul? I answer that they are one and the same."

### [Error #4: Declaring tongues to be the result of Spirit baptism.](#)

The adherents of the tongues movement, whether inside or outside the Pentecostal denomination, practically all teach that Spirit baptism is a sort of second blessing received some time subsequent to conversion and experienced only by those who tarry, pray-through, or engage in some [ sign activity. This is defended by the abuse of ] John 1:33. These all refer to John the Baptist's prophetic words regarding the baptism in the Spirit by Christ in contrast to John's baptism in water. Thus in these four passages we have the expectation of Spirit baptism, "He shall baptize you." The two historical references are found in the Acts of the Apostles-- that which had been expected was now to be experienced.

In Acts 1:4 and 5 we have the words of the risen Christ, "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, he have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." In speaking of the promise of the Father, Christ was undoubtedly referring to His earlier words as recorded in John 14:26 where He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name."

Some ten days after Christ made this promise to His disciples, concerning the baptism of the Spirit, Pentecost occurred as described in Acts 2. The events of that feast day undoubtedly included the baptism of the Spirit. For Peter so described it in his words to the Jerusalem leaders after the reception of the Spirit by the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius at Caesarea. Here are his words as given to use in Acts 11:15-17, "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as [he did] unto us, ...what was I, that I could withstand God?" Peter here finds a parallel between what occurred at Pentecost in Jerusalem with the Jewish believers and what took place at Caesarea with the Gentile converts, and he designates both as being baptized with the Holy Ghost.

There is but one other place in the New Testament where the expression, "baptized with the Holy Ghost," is explained -- I Corinthians 12:12 and 13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also [is the] Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether [we be] Jews or Gentiles, whether [we be] bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Here is the doctrinal statement concerning Spirit baptism. Here, and here only, is the explanation given by divine inspiration. What was expected in the gospels during the earthly life of our Lord and experience by both Jews and gentiles after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost is explained by the inspired Apostle Paul. According to the Word of God, baptism in the Spirit is that work of God by which the body of Christ, the true church, was brought into being, Jew being incorporated into it at Pentecost, Gentiles at Caesarea.

Every believer in Christ is now constituted a member of the body of Christ. It is not the ecstatic experience of a favored few, but a divine work on behalf of all. The final statement in I Corinthians 12:13 is the, "and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." What you drink is in you. If you drink enough you're filled. When you are filled you are full. In the bible we read of being filled with the Spirit. We also read of being full. the former is an experience, the latter a condition resulting from the experience. The believers present at Pentecost were filled with the Holy Ghost according to Acts 2:4.

This has led to another error of Pentecostalism:

#### **Error #5: Confusing the baptism and the filling of the Spirit by making them synonymous.**

Because both took place at the same time, in the same place, and with the same people does not by any means prove that they are one and the same. Consider this simple illustration: A man goes to the barber shop. He sits down in the usual chair. His favorite barber gives him a shave and a hair cut. Both take place on the same day, in the same place, on the same person, by the same barber. Does that prove that a hair cut is the same as a shave? Certainly not. Nor are Spirit baptism and the filling of the Spirit the same. The Scriptures speak of both, and both are important, but they are not synonymous. Having examined these Scriptural teachings regarding Spirit baptism, let us look at what the Bible says regarding the filling of the Spirit.

There are 16 references in the Bible to Spirit filling -- four of these are before Pentecost, one at Pentecost and eleven following Pentecost. First, before Pentecost, in Exodus 31:3 and 35:31, Bezaleel is spoken of as being filled with the Spirit. In Luke 1:15, it is stated that John the Baptist would be filled with the holy Ghost from his birth. In Luke 1:41 Elizabeth, the mother of John, is filled with the Spirit on the occasion of the virgin Mary's visit to her. And in Luke 1:67, Zacharias, the priestly father of John, is filled with the Spirit after the birth of his son.

Now second, at Pentecost, according to Acts 2:4, the disciples were filled with the Spirit on the feast day of Pentecost. And third, after Pentecost, according to Acts 4:8, Peter, who had been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost, was again filled. In verse 31 of the same chapter, all the believers gathered in the prayer meeting were filled. In Acts 6, we have the selection of the first deacons. One of the qualifications for such was that they be full of the Holy Ghost (verse 3). Stephen, one of those chosen, is so described in verse 5. Again in chapter 7, Stephen is described in verse 55 as being full of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 9:17 it is announced to the young convert, Saul of Tarsus, that he is to be filled with the Spirit. And in Acts 13:9 he is so described. Paul's early co-worker Barnabas is spoken of in Acts 11:24 as a man full of the Holy Ghost. The disciples at Iconium are described in Acts 13:52 as being filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. And finally the command to be filled with the Holy Ghost in Ephesians 5:18 completes the Scriptural reference to the filling of the Spirit.

From a consideration of these Scriptures, there emerges a sharp contrast between the baptism and the filling of the Spirit. There are at least three significant differences. First, Spirit baptism is never found in Scripture before Pentecost, but in both Old Testament days and during the earthly life of our Lord men were filled with the Spirit. And second, Spirit baptism is never commanded in Scripture. But in Ephesians 5:18 we have the specific injunction, "Be filled with the Spirit." And third, there is no suggestion in Scripture of repeated baptisms in the Spirit, but several fillings of the same individuals are recorded in the book of the Acts so that we are quite scriptural when we say, "One baptism, many fillings." It should always be remembered, then, that Spirit baptism has to do with our position in the body of Christ, while Spirit filling has to do with our condition. Baptism is objective; filling is subjective. Baptism is the portion of all believers; regrettably only some are filled.

We should now consider another error connected with the truth of the Spirit's filling:

#### [Error #6: Claiming tongues to be the sole evidence of Spirit filling.](#)

This error lies at the very base of the tongues movement and must be subjected to a careful Scriptural analysis. As it has been pointed out previously, there are sixteen specific references in Scripture to Spirit filling, and these provide us with ample evidence as to its results. Let us examine them.

In Exodus 31:3 and 35:31 Bezaleel, the chief workman in the construction of Israel's tabernacle in the wilderness, is spoken of as being filled with the Spirit. What was the result? He was given wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in all workmanship -- no mention of tongues.

In Luke 1:15 John the Baptist is said to have been filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb in preparation for his great ministry as the forerunner of Christ. Yet, we never read of John speaking in tongues. And in John 10:41 it is specifically declared, "John did no miracle."

In Luke 1:41 John's mother Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit and she extols the mother of Jesus in the highest terms. But no mention is made of her speaking in tongues.

In Luke 1:67 John's father Zacharias is filled with the Spirit. He utters a magnificent prophecy concerning his son's ministry and concerning redemption through Christ. But there is no speaking in tongues.

In Acts 2:4 we do read, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

In Acts 4:8-12 we read of Peter being filled with the Spirit and boldly witnessing for Christ, but not speaking in tongues.

In Acts 4:31 and 32 all the assembled believers were filled with the Spirit. They manifested a boldness in witnessing for Christ, as well as a delightful unity and great liberality, but there is no suggestion of tongues. When Saul of Tarsus obeyed the command to be baptized, he was promised the filling of the Spirit. He immediately bore a courageous testimony for the One he had formerly rejected, but no mention is made of his speaking in tongues (Acts 9:17-21).

And in Acts 13:9-11 Paul is again filled with the Spirit. On this occasion he is able to discern and sternly denounce the hypocrisy of a charlatan professor, but no tongues are in evidence. In Acts 6 the deacons that are chosen to serve the church, including Stephen, are described as men full of the Holy Ghost and they manifest faith, wisdom, and power, but they do not speak with tongues. So that out of ten separate instances of Spirit filling we find tongues evident on only one occasion -- ten to one against tongues as a necessary evidence of Spirit filling.

It might be profitable right here to consider the passage in which we are enjoined to be filled with the Spirit. In Ephesians 5:18-21 we read, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Speaking, singing, thanking, submitting -- these will be the practical manifestations of the filling of the Spirit. But tongues, where most to be expected, are conspicuous by their absence.

Let us now consider another error somewhat akin to the previous one.

#### [Error #7: Claiming that tongues give evidence of deeper spirituality.](#)

We are given the impression by the advocates of the tongues movement, if we are not expressly told so, that those who possess the gift of tongues form a sort of spiritual elite, that they have made greater progress in spirituality than others. This is so contrary to true spirituality as revealed in the Word that it is manifestly more carnal than spiritual. The more spiritual a person is the less he will talk about it. Coming down from his forty days' vigil with God on the mount, "Moses," alone, "wist not that the skin of his face shone" (Exodus 34:29). So it will be those who live closest to God.

But does not speaking with tongues give evidence of a greater spirituality? Are not those who claim this gift living on a higher plane than others? Not according to the Bible. Paul, as previously pointed out, urged the Corinthian saints to seek to prophesy rather than to speak in tongues (I Corinthians 14:5). And he declared that he would rather speak five words with his understanding than ten thousand with a tongue (verse 19). Does this suggest that he desired less spirituality for them or for himself? Surely not. In Galatians 5:22 and 23 we have

enumerated the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit, the end-result of a spirit-filled life. We search in vain for tongues, although we do find the ingredients of true Christian character: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Thousands of godly saints including preachers, teachers, evangelists, educators, expositors, reformers, missionaries, martyrs, writers, and poets have lived and labored for the glory of God and the eternal blessing of millions without ever speaking in tongues. Were they less spiritual than those who claim no second blessing and he spearheaded the Reformation. Moody, Torrey, Wesley and Whitfield won thousands for Christ, but they never spoke in tongues. Livingstone did not speak in tongues, but he opened Africa to the gospel and blazed a trail for Moffatt, Dan Crawford, and other non-tongues-speaking missionaries. George Muller of Bristol, England, did not possess the gift of tongues, but he trusted God for millions of dollars to support his orphan homes on Ashley Downs without once making known his need to man. Time fails to speak of hundreds of others.

But, say some adherents of this movement, since I received this gift I have had more love for others, more desire to read my Bible, more importunity in prayer, more peace of mind, and more power in testimony. Good-- but I know many who have read their Bibles daily over a long lifetime, many who have sent hours in prayer, many who have experienced deep peace in the face of sore trials and bereavement, many who have lived lives of genuine love for others, many who have been highly effective soul winners, and who never once spoke in tongues. So the gift of tongues cannot be the cause for these desirable characteristics. If anything else were needed to convince me that this is not a Spirit-directed movement it would be the fact that many leaders in it hold unscriptural doctrines, engage in unscriptural practices, and act in disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture. The Spirit of God could not possibly lead to such actions.

Having examined Pentecostalism by the Scriptures I would now like to briefly present to you ten basic reasons why I reject the modern tongs movement. Some of these I have already referred to in the previous study, others will be enlarged upon in following messages. Here I simply enumerate them.

1. Because of a nonscriptural over emphasis on tongues. I have already shown that this is contrary to the teaching of the New Testament. It is majoring in a minor.
2. Because the so-called tongues of today's movement bears no resemblance to the gift of tongues in the New Testament. These were various known languages readily recognized by those familiar with them and requiring an interpreter only when the hearers were unacquainted with that dialect.
3. Because the Scriptural regulations given by the inspired Apostle in I Corinthians 14 in connection with the use of tongues are almost totally disregarded by the modern advocates of tongues. These regulations will be dealt with more fully in a later study on the Corinthian passage.
4. According to I Corinthians 14:21 and 22, tongues were originally given as a sign to unbelieving Israel. This purpose has been fulfilled. Israel as a nation has been set aside and the gospel is going out into all the world in many tongues. the Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into hundreds of different languages and dialects.
5. The gift of tongues is unnecessary today and serves no useful purpose. This is closely akin to (4)

6. The inherent dangers connected with the tongues movement far outweigh any apparent blessings. There are very real dangers in the emotional, psychological, and spiritual areas. The attempt to speak in tongues opens dangerous doors for fleshly activity and spirit activity. Any supposed benefits may be secured by the spiritual Christian entirely apart from the supposed gift of tongues.

7. The attempted revival of the gift of tongues through the centuries of the Christian era has always been connected with doctrinal errors. This is true of today's movement.

8. There is absolutely nothing in Scripture to warrant an expectation of the revival of sign gifts toward the end of this age.

9. Modern tongue meetings are characterized by disorder and confusion. The Bible declares emphatically that God is not the author of confusion. There is clear disobedience to the Word of God in the movement and it is a divisive element among the people of God. The Spirit of God never leads to disorder, disobedience, and division.

10. Women are prominent in the movement in disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture. For these reasons and others, I firmly and fully reject the modern tongues movement.

### ***What is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost?***

When I have stated my outright rejection of the modern tongues movement and have given by ten reasons for doing so, I have been accused of blaspheming against the Holy Ghost. There are undoubtedly some sincere Christians, who, while they do not go along with the tongues movement, are nevertheless fearful of taking a position of opposition to it lest they should be guilty of this unpardonable sin. Let me set such fears at rest from the infallible Word of God. We read of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost in two passages of Scripture: Matthew 12:31 and 32 and Mark 3:28-30. Both record the words of our Lord in which he declared that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was unpardonable.

Let us notice first the circumstances under which this solemn warning was uttered. Christ had been casting out demons. His critics said He did so by Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Matthew 12:24). Christ said He did so by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28). So they were attributing the work of the Spirit through Christ to the devil. This is distinctly said to be their sin. In Mark 3:30, we read, "Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit." Nothing could be clearer than that. It is attributing the works of Christ to the devil.

There is something else of real importance that should be noted. In Matthew 12:32, Christ said, "...but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him of committing this unpardonable sin should not deter anyone from opposing this modern distortion of the truth of God, the modern tongues movement.

There is considerable discussion today in connection with the charismatic movement as to whether the miraculous sign gifts which were given to the church at the beginning, ceased at the end of the apostolic age when the canon of Scripture was completed. Much of this discussion is unnecessary. The undeniable fact is that they did cease. The exact time and the true reason for this cessation may be debated, but not the fact itself. Anyone who denies that the gift of tongues ceased early in the church's history lacks even an elementary knowledge of church history. There have been through the centuries various sporadic efforts to revive the gift of tongues, but no one acquainted with church history would claim that it has ever

formed a major part of the church's preaching and practice since the apostolic age. The miracle gifts have ceased, including the gift of tongues.

### ***Should we expect a revival of sign gifts?***

Is there anything in Scripture to warrant such an expectation? Among recent publications appearing on today's religious scene, there is a quarterly interpreting the world-wide charismatic revival. In the first issue the editor wrote, "The charismatic revival has been listed as one of the five most important religious news events in 1963. Its importance lies in the fact that it seems to be the last great thrust of the church."

Now granted, that this movement may stem in part from a revolt against a dead formalism that holds much of the professing church in its grip, is it any true remedy to replace dead formalism with unscriptural fanaticism? If this movement is, as suggested, the last thrust of the church, is there any warrant in Scripture for such? Does it seem in keeping with the ways of God as revealed in His Word that there should be in these days a revival of Pentecostal sign gifts? Evidential miracles and manifestations of the Spirit were very prominent in the early days of the church, the apostolic era, and this is quite in keeping with the revealed ways of God.

Scripture records the presence of miracles and signs as the divine authentication of various ages. The age of Israel was ushered in with the plagues in Egypt and the opening of the Red Sea. In the wilderness, there was the miraculous pillar of cloud and fire, the daily supply of manna from heaven for forty years and the water from the smitten rock. At Mt. Sinai there was fire, smoke, and the quaking mountain. In Canaan, the river Jordan was miraculously divided and the walls of Jericho fell down before the encircling hosts of Israel. But in the latter history of the nation after continued departure and apostasy, God permitted His people to be persecuted, slain, and carried into captivity with no miraculous intervention. At the beginning of Israel's national age, God performed through Moses many notable miracles, but of John the Baptist, the last prophet before the earthly ministry of Christ, it was said, "John did no miracle" (John 10:41)

Christ's earthly life began with the appearance of the star and the angelic choir. During that life, many signs and miracles bore witness to His Messianic character as we have in Acts 2:22. They marked His sojourn here, culminating with the miraculous resurrection and ascension.

The present age of grace, the dispensation of the church, began with the descent of the Holy Spirit marked by a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the gift of divers tongues. In the apostolic era, the gospel was authenticated by signs and wonders and miracles, as we are told in Hebrews 2:4. Miraculous gifts, including speaking with and interpreting of tongues, were prominent in the church at that time (I Corinthians 12:10 and 28).

Because these sign gifts were present at the commencement of the age, should we expect them to continue? What are the facts to be gleaned from a careful study of the Scriptures? While miraculous sign gifts are found prolifically in the early chapters of the Acts, they are rare in the closing chapters. The last reference to signs and wonders is in Acts 14:3, at Iconium in A.D. 45; twelve years after Pentecost. The last mention of miracles is in Acts 19:11 at Ephesus about A.D. 54 or 56. The last mention of tongues is in Acts 19:6 at Ephesus. The last mention of prophecy is in Acts 21:9 at Caesarea about A.D. 60. Eutychus was restored to life at Troas in Acts 20:12, about A.D. 59. Paul's life was miraculously preserved at Melita in Acts 28, about A.D. 62.

Thus, there is a definite diminishing of sign gifts after the first 25 years of the church age. By the end of the book of Acts, about 30 years after Pentecost, Paul is in prison at Rome, but no angel is sent to deliver him as in the case of the apostles (Acts 5) and of Peter (Acts 12). Epaphroditus, who visited him, was sick nigh unto death (Philippians 2:27), but Paul does not miraculously heal him. From prison Paul writes four epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, but in them there is no mention of tongues as in his earlier writings to Corinth. The filling the Spirit is to be evidenced, he writes to the Ephesians, not by speaking in tongues, but by speaking in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:18 and 19). After his release Paul writes his first epistle to Timothy and advises him to use a little wine for his oft infirmities (I Timothy 5:23). During his second imprisonment, Paul pens a second epistle to Timothy in which he mentions leaving Trophimus sick at Miletum (II Timothy 4:20). Was the gift of healing not still operative? This is about A.D. 68, just 35 years after Pentecost.

In the light of these recorded facts, can we expect a revival of Pentecostal sign gifts this late in the church age? I believe we cannot for the following reasons:

(1.) There is never a call to go back to Pentecost in the New Testament. There are only two references to Pentecost after Acts 2, Acts 20:16 and I Corinthians 16:8, and both of these refer to the feast day, not to the descent of the Spirit. The emphasis for the church age is not backward to Pentecost, but upward to a living Christ (Colossians 3:1-3). (2) It is declared in I Corinthians 13:8 that prophecy shall fail, that is, shall be done away, knowledge shall vanish away, and tongues shall cease or come to an end.

(3) Instead of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit toward the end of the age, a movement of deceiving spirits is forecast. Now this should be carefully noted. Christ warned of it in Mark 13:22. In Paul's last writings, I and II Timothy and Titus, there is no suggestion of a return of Pentecostal gifts, but rather there are solemn warnings of apostasy and deception. Look at I Timothy 4:1, II Timothy 3:1 and 5, 13-17, and II Timothy 4:1-5.

Second epistles are usually recognized as containing messages relating to the last days. II Corinthians reveals Satan as the god of this age, blinding the minds of the unbelieving (II Corinthians 4:4). There is a warning of his subtlety as a serpent (II Corinthians 11:3). He is described as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:15). II Thessalonians tells of the coming of the lawless one, even him whose coming is after the workings of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness (II Thessalonians 2:9 and 10). II Peter warns of false teachers (II Peter 2:1-3), and II John of many deceivers (II John 7). The Book of the Revelation tells of the deception of the antichrist by means of great wonders or signs and miracles (revelation 11:13 and 14; 19:20) and of the spirit of demons working miracles before Armageddon (Revelation 16:14). These are perilous times in which we live, and we do well to be ever on our guard against the deception of Satan, the great counterfeiter, who would lead the unwary astray.

### ***Tongues at Corinth***

Let us consider now the gift of tongues at Corinth. A correct appraisal of the teaching of tongues cannot be made apart from a careful exposition of I Corinthians 14. This important chapter must first be seen in the wide context of the entire epistle and the church to which it was written. Then it must be considered in relation to the two preceding chapters, 12 and 13.

The Apostle Paul wrote inspired epistles to seven churches. In none of these letters did he mention the subject of tongues except to the church at Corinth. It is striking to note that this

church is described by Paul as being carnal and childish. Here are his words as found in I Corinthians 3:1, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." This certainly establishes the fact that the Corinthians were not mature, spiritual Christians, but rather were carnal and babyish, immature and spiritually stunted. Let us notice now the words of chapter 1:5-7, "In every things ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge: even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift."

Here was a church that was richly endowed with every gift from the risen Head of the church yet they were carnal and not spiritual, childish and not mature. Should we not learn from this that the possession of gift, even a gift of the Spirit, does not in itself indicate a state of true spirituality? That is a body blow to the high-sounding claims of the charismatic movement. Of the church, then, to which Paul wrote about tongues, we can say that it was not spiritual, but carnal.

Now let us look at the epistle he wrote to the church at Corinth. The prominent characteristic of the epistle is that it is corrective. Apparently, the Corinthians had written to the apostle for information and instruction on several subjects. Paul knew about other matters also that required correction, and he dealt with these as well in his inspired instruction. One of these matters was the gifts of the Spirit, including that of tongues. This is his subject when he comes to chapters 12, 13 and 14.

First, in chapter 12, he brings the whole subject of the gifts of the Spirit into proper perspective by relating them to the body of Christ, showing their position and purpose in that body. Then in chapter 13, he deals with the preeminence of love, showing the profitlessness of gift apart from divine love. This leads up to chapter 14, where we are given the comparative value of two of the gifts, tongues and prophecy, and are shown why the latter, prophesying, is of much greater value than tongues. Then, because tongues were indeed a gift of the Spirit, the abuse of the gift is corrected and regulations are laid down for its proper use. This is a brief, broad outline of the subject. Now we will glance at the details of the important portion of Scripture.

In opening chapter 12, Paul writes concerning spiritual gifts - which is literally "spirituals" and possibly signifies spiritual manifestations. Three basic facts stand out clearly in the chapter: First, the body of Christ is formed by the baptism of the Spirit, verses 12 and 13, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is [the] Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Second, the various members are placed in the body of Christ according to the good pleasure of God, verse 18, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Verse 28 enlarges on this. And third, the varied gifts are given to the members of the body of Christ according to the sovereign will of the Spirit of God, verse 11, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

These are the basic facts concerning the body, the members, and the gifts that affect all that is to follow. To ignore these facts or to act contrary to them is to court disaster.

Now, in connection with the body, its members, and the gifts of the Spirit, these truths emerge repeatedly in the apostle's teaching in the chapter. First, unity -- there is great emphasis placed on the unity of the body. Five times the expression one body is found. Second, multiplicity -- if there is but one body, there are many members in that one body,

"For the body is not one member, but many" (verse 14). "Now are they many members, yet but one body" (verse 20). And third, variety -- this third fact of variety is stressed both in connection with the members and the gifts. One member, no matter how important nor how many times multiplied, could not constitute a true body. Paul asked in verse 19, "If they were all one member, where were the body?" The preceding verses, 15 through 17, have illustrated this simple but important fact. Foot, hand, eye, and ear are all important, but all the others are needed.

As there is a variety of members in the body, so there is a variety of gifts given by the Spirit. This is most important, and the overlooking of this fact is one of the weaknesses in the tongues movement. The gift of tongues is but one of seven gifts enumerated in verses 7 through 10. Paul has declared that there are different gifts, different administrations, and different operations in verses 4 through 6. Now he spells it out very carefully, closing with these words, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (verse 11). Could anything be clearer than that? The gifts are not given as a man prays, or carries, or yields himself, but as the Spirit wills. And notice that tongues and their interpretation are placed last in the list of seven, as they also are in verse 28. This diversity of gifts is reiterated at the end of the chapter in verses 29 and 30. There is no possible excuse for anyone to overlook this fact.

Now the variety of members in the body leads to another important fact, and that is interdependency. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary" (verses 21 and 22). As in the human body, the members have been made dependent upon each other, so it is in the body of Christ. Each member has a specific place to fill, a specific purpose to perform. Why? That is the crux of the whole inspired argument here. Why are the various gifts given? Notice carefully verse 7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

Spiritual gifts are not given for pride, or pleasure, or even personal profit, but for the profit of all. That is the basis of the apostle's argument all through chapter 14. But before he plunges into that, he digresses, as it were, in chapter 13 to show the preeminence of love and to emphasize to be is infinitely greater than to do. Grace in the life is greater than gift. Coming now to chapter 14, the apostle picks up the thread of his argument from the closing verse of chapter 12 where he had written, "covet earnestly the best gifts." The word rather in verses 1, 5 and 19 of chapter 14 emphasizes the need for discriminating choice. The compelling motive in such a choice is to be, not personal pleasure or profit, but the edifying of the church. "He that prophesieth edifieth the church" (verse 4); "That the church may receive edifying: (verse 5); "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (verse 12); "Let all things be done unto edifying" (verse 26); "That all may learn, and all may be comforted" (verse 31).

The unselfishness of love had been stressed in chapter 13:5, "Love seeketh not her own." And this greatest of all virtues would not lead to seeking a gift that would minister to personal pleasure, pride, or even profit, but rather that which would bring the greatest blessing to the largest number of the Lord's own. Pursuing this thought then, the inspired apostle contrasts prophesying and speaking in tongues. The former is to be desired rather than the latter (verse 1) because the use of an unknown tongue makes the ministry, although understood by God, unintelligible to hearers unacquainted with that particular language (verse 2). But prophesying in the language of the hearers results (verse 3) in edification (building up), exhortation (stirring up), and comfort (binding up). The use of a language known only to the speaker may profit him, but certainly not his hearers (verse 4).

Multilingual ability can most assuredly be of use in the service of the Lord, but ministry in a known language is greater and much more desirable than that which requires an interpreter (verse 5). Ministry to be profitable must be either revelation, knowledge, prophesying, or teaching. And this could only be accomplished by the use of an interpreter if unknown tongues were spoken (verse 6). This need for communication by means of clear understandable sound is illustrated in verse 7 and 8 and emphasized in verse 9 through 11. The word barbarian in verse 11 is foreigner; thus, clearly denoting the reference to another language.

The desire for spiritual gifts should lead to a seeking after those which will prove most profitable to the church (verse 12). If the only language known to the speaker is unknown to those whom he desires to edify, then he should pray for the ability to interpret his message into their language (verse 13). All prayer should be in the Spirit according to Ephesians 6:18, but it should also be in an intelligent and intelligible manner so that the hearers present may join in the praise and the petitions uttered (verse 14 through 17). Much of the blessing derived from singing comes not only from an enjoyment of the melody, but from an understanding of the words and the message of Jehovah to them through their own prophets and their own language, it was necessary for God to speak in judgment through the Assyrians. The strange tongue of their conquerors was a sign to them of their unbelief and rebellion against God and His discipline of them. Thus Paul refers in verse 21 to the words of Isaiah 28:11 and 12. The unbelievers of verse 22 are unbelieving Israel to whom the tongues at Pentecost in Acts 2 should have served as a warning that God is about to set them aside because of their continued unbelief. They are to be distinguished from the unbelievers mentioned in verse 23. This subject will be dealt with more fully in a later study.

The confusion of such a gathering as described in verse 23 would lead one to imagine that he had entered a madhouse; whereas, meaningful messages readily understood by the hearers would result in the recognition of God's presence in the gathering (verses 24 and 25). If tongues are to be employed in the ministry, then the inspired regulations must be followed, and these regulations are given: (1) Not more than two or three are to speak in any one service (verse 27); (2) these must be by course, that is, not simultaneously, but consecutively (verse 27); and (3) tongues unknown to the hearers must be interpreted (verse 27 and 28). All tongues and languages are known to God and understood perfectly by Him; thus, anyone can speak to himself and to God. But, when a message is given publicly, it must be delivered in a language understood by the hearers.

Following these detailed instructions regarding the use of tongues, we find instructions in the chapter regarding the gift of the prophet (verses 29 through 32) lest confusion result from improper use of that important gift. Restrictions on public ministry in the church by Christian women follow in verses 34 and 35. The Word of God did not originate with the Corinthians, but it came to that church and to all the assemblies through the inspired apostle according to verses 36 and 37. The acceptance of these God-given commandments was an indication of true spirituality. But if some were determined to remain in willful ignorance by disregarding the divine instructions, nothing further could be done for them (verse 38). This important chapter concludes with a three-pointed injunction: (1) prophesying is to be zealously desired, because of the profit derived by the church from it (verse 39); (2) speaking in tongues is to be accepted, when in accordance with the divinely given regulations and instructions; and (3) all things are to be done decently and in order (verse 40). Unrest and confusion never originate with God.

## *Tongues as a sign*

The subject of this study is tongues as a sign. In any adequate study of the subject of tongues, the question of the purpose of the gift must be considered. Why was the gift of tongues given? What was the divine purpose in the gift? Our God is a giving God and He gives both generously and wisely. His gifts are given for a specific purpose to meet a definite need. We are all familiar with these three greatest gifts; the Son of God, the Spirit of God and the Scriptures of God. Each of these was given for a specific purpose to meet a definite need. On the day of Pentecost, the gift of the Spirit was given as we have recorded in Acts 2. Through the Spirit, various gifts have been given as enumerated in I Corinthians 12:4-11. Each of these seven gifts was undoubtedly given for a specific purpose to meet a definite need. This would hold true to the gift of tongues, one of the seven.

Now, what was the purpose for the giving of tongues? Are we told in Scripture? We are! I Corinthians 14 is the one chapter in the Bible which deals in any detail with the gift of tongues. Does it say anything about the divine purpose for this gift? It does! I Corinthians 14:22, "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." Tongues are for a sign; can anything be more definite than that? A sign to whom? Not to them that believe. So the gift of tongues, when given to believers, was not given for the purpose of being a sign to believers.

In the modern charismatic movement, this is completely reversed. We are told that the gift of tongues is a sign of the Spirit baptism. According to I Corinthians 14:22 that is wrong, for only believers are baptized by the Spirit. We are told that the gift of tongues is a sign of a second work of grace in believers. According to I Corinthians 14:22 that is wrong. We are told that the gift of tongues is a sign to other believers that they have not progressed as far spiritually as those who have received this gift. According to I Corinthians 14:22 that is wrong. Let me read the inspired statement again, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign not to them that believe." Who then is the sign for? The verse tells us, "not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." There is no mistaking that. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers. But who are the unbelievers? Certainly not the unsaved, unbelieving man who comes into the tongue meeting. Listen to the equally clear words of verse 23, "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?" If the unbeliever thinks the people speaking with tongues are mad, how could the gift of tongues possibly be a sign to him? Something is surely wrong. Yet verse 22 definitely states, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not."

The key to the mystery is the first word of verse 22, "Wherefore." This takes us back to the preceding verse, verse 21, where we read these words, "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." That is a quotation from the prophet Isaiah. Let me read the words of Isaiah 28:11,12, "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is refreshing: yet they would not hear."

Isaiah prophesied prior to and during the carrying away of the northern kingdom of Israel into Assyrian captivity. He delivered the prophetic messages of God to both Israel and Judah. In chapter 28:1-13, he is rebuking the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, here called Ephraim, for their failure to hear the message of the Lord to them. This message had been sent repeatedly and in the simplest form and, of course, in their own language through the Hebrew prophets. Their

repeated rejection of the divine message was now about to lead to their being carried away into Assyria. The stammering lips and another tongue of their captors would be God's message in judgment to them. They would not hear God's call to repentance, refreshing, and rest in their own tongue; now they must hear His message of rebuke in a foreign tongue.

It is this verse that the inspired Apostle Paul quotes in I Corinthians 14:21. The foreign tongue of the Assyrians was God's sign to Israel of His rejection of them in Isaiah's day. This was a message of judgment. For foreign tongues heard on the day of Pentecost -- and there were possibly 14 of them -- was God's sign to Israel that they were again rejected and the message of the Gospel was now to go out to the Gentiles in their tongue. Thus it is quite clear that the unbelievers of I Corinthians 14:22 were the Jewish people.

Signs are always connected with Israel, not with the church. The word sign occurs 46 times in our King James version and 27 times more in the Greek for a total of 73 times. It is also translated miracle, token, and wonder. It seems to carry the basic thought of an indication. At the very beginning of his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes in 1:22 that the Jews require a sign, and in each of the three occurrences of tongues in the book of Acts, they are assigned to unbelieving Jews. In chapter 2 -- for only Jews and proselytes are present at the feast of Pentecost -- the fact that they heard the wonderful works of God in Gentile languages filled the hearers with amazement and was a sign to them that God's good news was now to be proclaimed in other tongues than that of Hebrew.

The second instance of tongues is in Acts 10. It had taken a vision from God to overcome Peter's Jewish prejudice and convince him that he should carry the gospel to the Gentiles. Accompanied by other Jewish disciples, he had gone to the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, at Caesarea and there preached the gospel (Acts 10:43-56). Here the gift of tongues served as a sign to the unbelieving Jewish disciples who had come with Peter. They were not unbelievers in the sense they did not believe in Christ; they did. But they did not believe that Gentiles could be saved and have the same blessing of the Holy Spirit as Jewish believers. Therefore, God gave the gift of tongues as a sign that the Gentile converts had received the Holy Spirit if there had not been some outward manifestation. You can't see the Spirit enter the body of the believer at conversion. This is something entirely new and unheard of before; therefore, a sign was given to indicate to these Jewish believers that the Gentiles who are being accepted by God are on an equal status with Jewish believers. Do we need such a sign today? Certainly not! For we have the complete Word of God which clearly teaches that every true believer in Christ has received the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Now the third and last occasion on which we have the gift of tongues in the book of Acts is in chapter 19. Here we have twelve disciples of John the Baptist receiving the Spirit after the laying on of Paul's hands. Then they spoke with tongues and prophesied, receiving two of the gifts of the Spirit, tongues and prophecy. Once again the gift of tongues is a sign, this time a sign of the apostleship of Paul. Because Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles chosen by Christ, his apostleship was continually being questioned by the Judaizers in the early church. In II Corinthians 12:11, 12 we hear Paul saying, "In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." One of these signs that authenticated an apostle was the laying on of hands for the reception of the Spirit. In Acts 8:14-18, we read, "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they

their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." It is striking to notice that Paul, in his ministry as recorded in the latter half of the book of Acts performed every miracle that Peter had performed in his ministry as recorded in the first half of the Acts. This included that laying on of hands for the gift of the Spirit, and this was proven in the case of the disciples at Ephesus by the speaking in tongues. Thus the statement of I Corinthians 14: 22, "tongues are for a sign," is illustrated in each of the instances in the book of the Acts. This original purpose of tongues has been completely fulfilled and the gift is no longer needed nor present.

### *Are tongues for public or private use?*

The adherents of the tongues movement certainly deserve credit for the tenacity with which they cling to their beliefs. Of course tenacity is sometimes a polite term for stubbornness. Driven from one position by the Scriptures of truth, the followers of the tongues movement retreat to another; when that proves untenable, they retreat once more. There was a time when tongues spoken on the day of Pentecost were claimed to be ecstatic utterances. The Word of God so clearly refutes that notion that this position had to be abandoned. A retreat was made to I Corinthians and it was claimed that what is spoken today in the charismatic movement was the gift given at Corinth. But that brought such claimants face to face with the apostolic regulations spelled out in chapter 14. Unwilling to yield to these inspired regulations and instructions, some have retreated to the position that the gift of tongues is for private devotions, not public demonstrations.

We'll briefly examine such a notion in this study. Of course it could very quickly be terminated by asking two simple questions: (1) Where is there one instance in the Bible of the use of tongues in private devotions? (2) Where are the inspired instructions for such a use of the gift? The answer to both questions is that there are none. For almost 50 years now, I have been reading and studying my Bible. I know of absolutely no instance in Scripture of tongues being employed in private. I know of no instructions given anywhere in the Bible as to the use of the gift for private devotional purposes.

We've considered in several previous studies the three instances in the book of Acts where there is a record of speaking in tongues. None of these occurred in private. In none of them were tongues employed in personal devotions, but rather as a public sign.

That leaves only I Corinthians 14 on which to build this theory. Any thoughtful student of the Scriptures will surely agree that this chapter contemplates a church gathering and gives instruction as to the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit in such a gathering. This is so evident it scarcely requires proof. There are only five statements in the chapter on which the notion of private devotions could possibly be based. Let us look at them: First, verse 2, "For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." If this referred to private speaking, how could any man be expected to understand him? If he were alone, no one would be present. No one understanding the language he knows, the man could speak only to himself and to God, who understands all languages. (Imagine yourself in a meeting where all but you speak Chinese and only Chinese. What could you do? You could speak only to yourself in your native language and silently to God.)

Then verse 4, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." Supposing in that Chinese assembly you did rise and

minister some precious truths concerning Christ. You alone understood English, so you alone were edified. Verse 14 and 15, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." Here are verses quite misunderstood and misapplied by those who are seeking to bolster their own theory. It is a solemn thing to make God say something other than what He has said.

first let us note the two things referred to by the apostle: the spirit and the understanding. Verse 14 makes it clear that it is Paul's spirit and Paul's understanding that are referred to. The spirit is the link the believer has with God -- that which was dead before his regeneration but that with which the Spirit of God now witnesses (Romans 8:16). The spirit of a Christian can pray and praise God without a word being uttered, as is often the case in private devotion. But prayer in the church is not only to be a spiritual contact with God, but an intelligent utterance to which the hearer can add his Amen. "Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at they giving of thanks, seeing that he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (verse 16).

The other thing to which Paul refers is the understanding; that is, the mind. Paul is telling us that prayer should be a matter of the spirit and of the mind, intelligent as well as spiritual. "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also," (verse 15). Nowhere does it say that he does not understand what he's praying. That is a hasty conclusion even good men have come to. What saith the Scriptures, "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth but I don't understand what I'm praying?" No, that is not what verse 14 says. What does it say? "My spirit prayeth but my mind is unfruitful," not "my mind is not understanding," but "my mind is unfruitful." His mind was unproductive, it was not producing any fruit for the benefit of others. This is the whole argument of this chapter -- prophesying, singing, praying, all should result in the edification of others. That is the charge brought in verse 17: "For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified." Sometimes it is inferred from verse 18, where Paul says, "I thank God that I speak with tongues more than ye all," that he is referring to in normal language our desires before God. But here it is the Spirit, not us, who does the groaning, and these are "groanings which cannot be uttered," so they are not expressed in any language, but lie unuttered on the heart, where the Great Searcher of hearts reads them. Of course, this entire notion that tongues are for private devotions is based on the theory that tongues are ecstatic utterances, a theory that cannot be upheld by Scripture.

by Harold Mackay