

A Catechism On Tongues

The issue of tongue-speaking continues to be controversial and divisive, even amongst very sincere people. It is sometimes hard, even for assiduous Bible students, to accede that tongues have ceased if they have come from a Charismatic background. This catechism seeks to reduce earlier papers to a more concise form to help those seeking information.

Scriptural information

Where are tongues mentioned ?

They are only mentioned in Acts 2, 10, 19 and 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14; possibly also Mk 16.

What are Biblical tongues?

FIRSTLY, THEY ARE RECOGNISABLE HUMAN LANGUAGES. This is the clear teaching of scripture whenever tongues are mentioned.

The reasons for this are:

1. In Acts 2 we see 'tongues' (*glossa*) and 'language' (*dialektos*) being used to refer to intelligible human languages. These two Greek words are used interchangeably here. The 'other tongues' are even heard in the pilgrim's own dialect (Acts 2:8).
2. *Glossa* means an identifiable human language in the Greek OT.
3. When *glossa* is qualified by *heteros* ('other') it especially means a language.
4. No one doubts that Acts 2 refers to human languages.
5. *Glossa* always means a genuine language in the New Testament; it is used to denote nations, ethnic groups and tribes (Rev 5:9, 7:9) because ethnic groups are chiefly determined by the language that they speak.
6. Mk 16:17 does not refer to an unknown language. Firstly, if we accept this passage as textually genuine (which very many do not), then we must note that the word 'new' (*kainos*) primarily means new in quality, fresh. The Greek word meaning recently added, new (*neos*) is not used here. It does not mean unknown languages never spoken before by men (e.g. angelic tongues), but foreign languages that were new to the speaker, but already in existence.
7. The tongues were not babbling noises. The context shows that these were real languages and were understood by men from different nations. There would be no miracle and no amazement if the apostles were babbling in gibberish.
8. The tongues in the other Acts passages are the same human tongues as in Acts 2. The same word, *glossa*, is used. The testimony of the tongues was to show that God's New Covenant blessings are now universal, given to the elect from all nations instead of just Israel. There is no evidence in Acts for the idea of meaningless or mysterious tongues that are not human languages.
9. In 1 Cor 12-14 tongues are also known human languages.
 - Paul uses the same words.
 - 1 Cor 14:7 – Tongues are compared to flutes and harps, instruments that use a known language.
 - 1 Cor 14:8 – Tongues are compared to a trumpet, which gives a recognisable message (a warning call to arms).
 - 1 Cor 14:10 - Paul's compares tongues to intelligible human speech.
 - 1 Cor 14:21 - Paul quotes from Isa 28:11 ff. where tongues refers to Assyrian speech. After Israel refused to hear prophetic words in their own language, they were judged and would now hear the foreign speech of invaders.
10. Early Pentecostals and Charismatics agreed that tongues were real languages.

11. There is thus no Biblical indication that tongues were gibberish, babbling or unintelligible - but were genuine languages. Trying to get round this by referring to angelic tongues is nonsense (see later).

SECONDLY, THEY ARE THE UTTERANCE OF PRAISE TO GOD, DECLARING HIS GLORIOUS WORKS.

- In Acts 2:11 we see that what was understood by these tongues was the 'wonderful works of God'.
- I Cor 14:2 – this clearly refers to prayer declaring the mysteries of God (see later).

Repercussions of this are:

- Any tongue purporting to be a prophecy when supposedly interpreted must be false.
- Any conversation between two people in tongues is false. [E.g. Kenneth Copeland with Rodney Howard-Brown filmed at the beginning of the Toronto Experience.]
- Furthermore, tongues are not personal petitions (requests) uttered in private.

Why were tongues given?

They were given as a temporary sign to:

- Authenticate Gospel preaching to Gentile nations with a preparatory witnessing sign (1 Cor 14:22). [Gabbling in ecstatic, unintelligible speech was nothing special to Greeks who witnessed many religious cults doing this.]
- This also symbolised to Jews the universality of the kingdom, no longer restricted to Jews alone.
- To confirm to Jews that the Holy Spirit had been outpoured on all believers as promised by Joel (Acts 2).
- To act as a judicial sign to Israel, pointing to the end of the Judaic (Old Covenant) system. God's judgment on Israel was manifest in bringing foreign nations (speaking other tongues) against them in warfare (note the curses in Deut 28:33, 36, 49). Paul refers to this and definitively states that tongues are a sign to unbelieving Jews (1 Cor 14:21-22 quoting Isa 28:11). In other words, they had rejected God's Messiah and had come under the Deuteronomic curses

Do tongues arise from the Baptism in the Spirit? No, they do not!

Baptism in the Spirit does not refer to an emotional experience passed on by the laying on of hands in scripture, but to the incorporation of the elect into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). It cannot be maintained that the Baptism in the Spirit is a subjective experience that results in the gift of tongues. In fact the phrase only appears once in each of the Gospels, twice in Acts and once in 1 Corinthians. 1 Cor 12:13 explains what it is; the Gospel texts refer to John the Baptist pointing forward to this event, and the texts in Acts refer back to it. The references in Acts show that the outworking of the once only baptism in the Spirit is a filling not another baptism (e.g. Acts 9:17). It is also called a *falling upon* (10:44), a *pouring out* of a gift (10:45) and a *reception* (10:47), not a baptism. There is only one baptism of the Spirit, which occurred when the Spirit of God united all the elect into union with Christ.

For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body. (1 Cor 12:13) 'Baptised' is an aorist, passive, indicative, Greek verb referring to a once only, finished past event. There are no repeated baptisms.

The Charismatic idea of a baptism which results in a powerful emotional experience that produces ecstasy and the gift of tongues, or other exotic experiences (falling over, crying, laughing, tingling, shaking etc.), is actually very common in occult religions and has been for thousands of years. Beginning with Nimrod's Babylonian false religion.

There is no apostolic command that believers should seek an experience of this name – not one! However, we commanded to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit. [For more details on this see my papers on the subject.]

Why is there no mention of tongues in the other letters?

If tongues are as important as claimed by Charismatics (they seek for all their members to experience a supposed baptism in the Spirit and then speak in tongues) then why are they never mentioned elsewhere?

- When Paul describes the gifts to be used in church meetings he does not mention tongues (Rm 12, written only a couple of years after 1 Corinthians).
- There is no mention in Paul's later letters (1 Corinthians is a fairly early letter, c. 55).
- When Paul talks about equipping the saints (Eph 4:11) he does not mention tongues.
- There is no mention of ecstatic tongues by James, Peter, Jude or John.

However, other aspects of church practice and personal walk are repeated in other letters. If tongues were vital, as claimed by Charismatics, these other letters would mention them.

Why does Paul issue so many warnings about tongues?

Paul's warns about the abuses of tongues more than any other gift. There were dangers when this gift was originally practised, even under apostolic guidance that is not available now. The danger was that this gift, given for a specific time and purpose, could easily degenerate into the occult form and could also flood meetings. The purpose of gifts is to edify the church (1 Cor 12:4-11). When genuine tongues were abused in those days they did not edify but confused. Thus even if tongues were genuine there are great dangers with them (see Paul's arguments in 1 Cor 14). If the tongue was false the dangers were immense.

Does being filled with the Spirit lead to speaking in tongues. No!

- Jesus did not speak in tongues (Lk 4:1, 14). Despite telling us about the future indwelling of the Spirit, the Lord never told us to expect to speak in tongues as a result.
- Many people who received the Spirit in the NT did not speak in tongues (e.g. Elizabeth, Lk 1:41-45; Zacharias, Lk 1:67-69; John the Baptist, Lk 1:15).
- Five people in the Gospels were filled with the Spirit (Jesus, John the Baptist, Elizabeth, Zacharias and Simeon); none of these spoke in tongues as a result.
- The baptism in the Spirit is predicted by John the Baptist (Matt 3:11) but without any mention of accompanying tongues.
- When the disciples received the Spirit after Jesus breathed upon them, they did not speak in tongues (Jn 20:22).
- Some of the key historical events of filling in Acts did not result in tongues: NB:
 - a) Those who were converted by Peter's message in Acts 2 were filled with the Spirit immediately upon conversion but did not speak in tongues.
 - b) The Samaritan converts (Acts 8:17).
 - c) Paul (Acts 9:17-19); even if he spoke in tongues later, it is not mentioned here.
 - d) The jailer's household were filled with joy (by which Paul notes they were filled with the Spirit) but they did not speak in tongues (Acts 16:31-34).
 - e) All in all there are nine occasions when people are spoken as being filled with or full of the Spirit when tongues are not mentioned (4:8, 31, 6:3, 5, 7:55, 9:17, 11:24, 13:9, 52).
 - f) There are also 21 places where people are converted but do not speak in tongues (2:41, 3:7-9, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7, 8:36, 9:42, 11:21, 13:12, 43, 48, 14:1, 21, 16:14, 34, 17:4, 11-12, 34, 18:4, 8, 28:24).
- Almost everyone in history who was unquestionably filled with the Spirit did not speak in tongues. Either godly people in history were not filled with the Spirit, or tongues are not necessary for godly living.
- No one taught that tongues were the initial evidence of Spirit baptism until 1901.

Is the apostolic encouragement for tongues applicable now?

What do we say about apostolic encouragement for Biblical tongue-speaking? Paul states,
I wish you all spoke with tongues. (1 Cor 14:5)

Do not forbid to speak with tongues. (1 Cor 14:39)

There are problems in interpreting these verses since Paul knew that all Christians would not speak in tongues even in his day and he had just urged less tongue-speaking in Corinth. In brief, we can say:

- These verses are not universal in application since tongues ceased by 100 AD. The early church fathers confirm this; tongues were said to be absent in the post-apostolic churches, but present in pagan cults. Pentecostal historians also admit that tongues were not present in churches until the Shakers and Edward Irving in the 19th century (both heretical sects).
- During the initial phase of the early church the declaration of God's glory in prayers of unlearned languages is encouraged, but within the parameters of Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 14. Since tongues were mainly a judicial sign to Israel, it is logical that they would cease when genuine Judaism ceased in 70 AD.
- This gift, with other powerful miraculous gifts, was given for the apostolic period only as a sign to Gentiles and Jews in the formation of the church. Paul does not mention them later neither do the other apostles. This encouragement only appears in 1 Corinthians where tongues was a sign in the initial phase of church building; when this was complete tongues vanished – the foundation sign was no longer required.
- In 1 Cor 13:8 tongues are said to cease on their own (Greek) and they did certainly before 100. Knowledge and prophecy continued and the Greek implies they will continue until something makes them cease (the Lord's return). Thus tongues are not mentioned in verse 9 and 12, because they have already ceased. Tongues will have already ceased before the climax of history, ceasing by themselves earlier. As Greek scholar AT Robertson says, 'They shall make themselves cease or automatically cease of themselves.' Before the other gifts end, tongues will long have ceased on their own, and this happened by around 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. They faded away when they ceased to be required as a sign, mainly of condemnation to Israel but also openness to Gentile nations. When tongues ceased, they were finished forever. [Out of interest, the last apostolic miracle was the healing of Publius' father in 58 AD (Acts 28:7-10).]
- Everyone, including Pentecostals, agree that they ceased around 100 or so, if not before. Pentecostals and Charismatics differ from orthodox evangelicals in saying that 1800 years later they re-appeared. But this would contradict 1 Cor 13:8, by teaching that tongues ceased then restarted on their own.
- All appearances of tongues in history have been in aberrant groups or individual mystics. Classic Pentecostalism was rejected by evangelicals for 60 years as heretical. It is only with the Charismatic Movement that there has been widespread acceptance.
- 1 Cor 14:5 and 39 are part of Paul's instructions to the Corinthians, who were to use this gift according to divine order and not descend into chaos. The church was to stand apart from the meaningless babbling tongues that were familiar in local Greek pagan sects and Asian religions that featured ecstatic utterances. Thus, Paul's encouragement to use this gift properly – i.e. speaking human languages by divine inspiration and translating that tongue so that the body can understand how God was glorified in it. It also appears likely that some sober members of the church had called for the prohibition of tongues as a result of the chaos caused by multiple, un-translated utterances. While Paul agrees that this is wrong, he says in verse 39 that they should not be forbidden. Since the gifts were divinely given, they should not be forbidden, just practised correctly.
- The modern Charismatic version of tongues as unintelligible, babbling speech would have been familiar to these Corinthians as pagan behaviour. It may be that some

Corinthians had started to adopt this ecstatic method (some churches did this not many years later) hence Paul's lengthy instruction and exhortation.

- So, the encouragement for all to speak in tongues is part of this initial phase in which the Corinthians were, more than usual, abundantly supplied with supernatural gifts (1 Cor 1:5-7), though these did not aid their spiritual maturity. If tongues were to be encouraged in all churches for all time, there would have been teaching and exhortations on them in other letters.

Why should we ignore so much teaching in 1 Cor 12-14 on tongues?

We should not ignore it at all! The bulk of Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 14 is against church abuses of tongues, and in chapter 13 he suggests that, compared to love, they are worthless. Paul's teaching in the main is negative not positive. Charismatics pick out a couple of verses which, on their own, appear to support tongue-speaking, but the argument of Paul overall is negative. In fact he demands that people seek higher gifts instead. This is why Charismatics never seriously expound the chapter. His likely meaning in the couple of encouraging statements is to counter the local argument of some that all tongue-speaking should cease because it was disorderly.

False Charismatic ideas

Are tongues mysteries (1 Cor 14:2)? No, not in the sense of a mysterious noise.

'Mystery' is used to refer to a truth hidden from men but revealed by God to the elect. It is the great works of God in redemption made known through apostolic teaching (Matt 13:11; 1 Cor 4:1). 'Mysteries' refers to an 'unexplained truth' not unintelligible noise. Gospel mysteries include the incarnation of Christ (1 Tim 3:16), the inclusion of the Gentiles in the kingdom (Rm 11:25) and the union of the elect with Christ (Col 1:26-27).

Are tongues angelic speech? No!

This is used to excuse babbling. Firstly, would totally spiritual beings need a physically expressed language? When appearing on Earth they spoke in a known language (e.g. to Abraham, Mary). Also, if tongues were angelic, why do they cease before the end? Why are they not used in heaven? Paul never calls tongues used in a meeting 'angelic'.

Are tongues a private prayer language? No!

- All the gifts are given for the edification of all, not for the benefit of an individual (1 Cor 12:7,24-25; 13:5, 14:3-5, 6, 12, 17, 19, 26, 31; 2 Cor 12:19; 1 Thess 5:11). This is fundamental and destroys the Charismatic argument. A gift may edify personally, but all gifts are primarily for corporate edification. People did not prophesy, exhort or teach alone at home.
- In 1 Cor 14 Paul is criticising the church for wrongly using tongues in various ways (just as they had wrongly used the Lord's Supper in chapter 11). In verse 4 he is being sarcastic; here tongues are being used for self-edification which is opposite to the purpose it was given. The exercise of the gift gave a good inner feeling ('edifies' applied sarcastically), but this was pointless and self-serving; the purpose of the gift was for others. [We should note that Paul repeatedly uses sarcasm to criticise the Corinthians in this book: 4:8. In chapter 11 this occurs several times: v19, 20-21, 22. Paul's sarcasm could be very severe, e.g. Gal 5:12.] Some of the supposedly 'positive' statements about tongues used by Charismatics are claimed by expositors to be sarcasm, meaning the reverse.
- In 1 Cor 13:1, the speaking of tongues without love (i.e. for others) results in a useless noise.
- If they were given mainly for personal edification then all should have them, but not all spoke in tongues (1 Cor 12:30), thus they cannot have been given for personal edification or God has let some people down. If it is claimed that tongues are a special

edifying gift for only some to speak to God, then this denies the priesthood of all believers and the open heaven for the elect (Heb 4:16, 10:19-23).

- Babbling or unintelligible gibberish is forbidden in prayer (Matt 6:7 – ‘repetitions’ is literally ‘babbling’, i.e. *battologeō* = ‘to stammer’, ‘to prate’, ‘to babble’, ‘to repeat the same words over and over’). This is a very important argument against personal tongue speaking.
- Thus speaking in tongues without an interpretation of the human language in a meeting does nothing but harm to the church. Also it is not designed for private use.
- Many believe that the Corinthians had descended into the ecstatic gibberish of the pagans around them manifest in the many heathen clubs and cults. Focusing on such a mystical experience would do nothing but harm.

Should everyone be able to speak in tongues? No!

The teaching on the gifts in the body in 1 Corinthians 12 demands that there is a balance of gifts in different people throughout the church. Not all have the same gift and a variety is necessary for effective working (not all are a hand or an eye). Charismatics teach that everyone should have tongues and may have prophecy but few (if any) have the other gifts. This teaching the opposite of Paul’s instructions and is effectively teaching that everyone is a hand and no one is an eye. Is it not odd that everyone has the least gift and few have the higher gifts? Since it is affirmed that we should seek the best gifts (1 Cor 12:31) and also that tongues were the least of the gifts (which even need another gift to be of any value in the assembly), then the modern situation which focuses on tongues is opposed to the emphasis of the Spirit.

Apart from this, even when the genuine gift was operating, Paul stated that not all speak in tongues (1 Cor 12:30).

Do tongues need testing? Yes!

- We know that there are similar pagan utterances. How do Charismatics know that there tongue is not of this sort?
- There is no doubt that many tongue-speakers have subsequently been proved to be unbelievers, have committed serious sins, and have sometimes been dis-fellowshipped as a result. What then of the tongues they spoke in worship?
- Paul considered this when he said that, ‘concerning spiritual *gifts* ... I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.’ (1 Cor 12:1-3). In other words, if the utterance was not under the Spirit’s control or made by an unbeliever, the result could be blasphemy. John also refers to this when he says, ‘Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world’ (1 Jn 4:1). Gifts must be tested; prophecies must be tested; utterances must be tested.
- Can genuine Christians be led astray? Absolutely, the NT teaches on this almost more often than anything else, giving many warnings and demanding discernment. Can a believer utter something satanic? Certainly, if they are not walking in the Spirit; Peter did this (Matt 16:23). Can people manifest apparent spiritual gifts and yet be false? Absolutely, as Jesus warned (Matt 7:21-23). Therefore, it is crucial that people test these things – but Charismatics fail to do this (and probably wouldn’t know how to). This is not quenching the Spirit in fact, the Holy Spirit inspired the multiple commands that we test everything (e.g. 1 Thess 5:21).

Are there occasions where tongues have been shown to be false? Yes there have been many.

To give but one example: an African man prayed the Lord’s Prayer in his native dialect, whereupon it was ‘interpreted’ as a message about the imminent Second Coming. There are many occasions when interpretations have differed.

Are Charismatic tongues gibberish? Yes!

Apart from everyone's experience which demonstrates it (we've all heard the sounds made), linguistic professors have studied this carefully and declared that these tongues are not languages but 'linguistic nonsense'. [Prof. William Samarin, linguistics professor at Univ. of Toronto, *Tongues of Men & Angels*, Macmillan (1972) p103-128. Other scholars include: William Welmes, Robert L Dean and Eugene Nida. Claims that Pentecostals have spoken in a genuine foreign language have been repeatedly refuted by such linguists. Modern tongues feature unknown sounds, no distinguishable vocabulary or grammar, simulated foreign features and an absence of language characteristics. If they are not languages, then they are not Biblical.]

Patients suffering from brain disorders (e.g. trauma, tumours, stroke) as well as those suffering from schizophrenia can produce exactly the same speech patterns as those speaking in Charismatic tongues. Whenever conscious control is by-passed, either through injury, degeneration or choice, the same speech patterns are produced. This is why most tongues fit into a very few stereotypical types.

Are gibberish sound acceptable? No!

The use of unintelligible noises or prayers in a church meeting is not only absent from scripture, but is condemned. We are to speak clearly that which is understood for building each other up.

What about singing in the Spirit?

1. Charismatics teach that singing in the spirit is an ecstatic and unintelligible rhapsody of singing in tongues. This was common in the Greek mystery cults, just as it was in oriental religions and just as it is today in occult groups and shamanism.
2. What does the Bible actually say? – A literal translation is, **What then is it? I will pray with spirit [i.e. my spirit], I will pray but also with understanding (reason, discernment). I will sing a song of praise with spirit, I will sing a song of praise but also with understanding.**
3. *It cannot be singing in gibberish or unintelligible speech* if it is singing a tongue, since we have proved that tongues were real languages. We are told not to allow chaos and disorder in a meeting, but if everyone sung in a genuine tongue, it would be a cacophony of a multitude of human languages all sung at once. This cannot be what Paul is implying since it would deny his own commands.
4. *It is not a corporate hymn* sung in unison. Paul says 'I will sing', not 'we will sing'. Just as tongues-speaking was individual, so singing with spirit must be individual.
5. *The Charismatic practice is not singing a song of praise at all*, but rather improvised sound-making in harmony with others. Most people ungifted in song or music will simply utter one note, either using sound words (such as 'la' types of words or humming) or speaking in tongues on one note as in a chant. This is chanting like the oriental chanting of a mantra rather than singing a song. Singing in the Spirit is the Charismatic characteristic that bears the closest comparison to obvious occult practices. It follows no scriptural norms but very closely mimics pagan chanting.
6. *What is it then*, means that Paul is here drawing his argument to a conclusion. The following verses are the practical application of what he has argued and instructed earlier. What is said here is connected with the idea of being intelligible, not something that is unintelligible.
7. Praying and singing must benefit others (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16).
8. What Paul has in mind is an improvised song, directed by the Holy Spirit through his spirit. This is as opposed to a composed song.
9. Since Paul commands that there must be no multiple speaking in tongues simultaneously (1 Cor 14:23, 27), then the practice of a congregation singing in various tongues all at the same time is also forbidden.
10. It cannot be definitely stated that singing in the Spirit/spirit is singing in tongues. In comparative passages (Eph 6:18 and Jude 1:20) this is not the case, but refers to

praying in the power of the Spirit. It is also not unconscious singing without any mental capacity being used (see earlier).

11. In verse 14 'spirit' = the human spirit. Praying in tongues is the human spirit praying. However, Charismatics teach that singing in the Spirit is a corporate singing in the Holy Spirit. They cannot have it both ways. If 'spirit' in verse 15 is the human spirit, then there cannot be a corporate song/melody. If it is the Holy Spirit, then the best interpretation is that it refers to the power of the Spirit in praying and singing.
12. So, singing in spirit is something that must be made intelligible and is something done for corporate edification. It may well be a spiritually improvised song. In Paul's time this may have been a sung tongue (an unlearned but real language); but if it was then it was required to be interpreted; i.e. it is subject to the rules he has just laid down for spoken tongues. It cannot be multiple singing in tongues or unintelligible tongues.

Church matters

An insult to historical saints

If tongues are as vital as claimed by certain groups, and if tongues ceased for centuries (as all admit) then it means that the vast majority of great saints, theologians, preachers, teachers, missionaries, plus godly men and women throughout church history were seriously deficient in their walk with God. This is an insult too far. No practitioner of tongues has even done anything like the great works or led a life as godly as the Lord's favoured people in the past. To suggest that modern Charismatics are better or more equipped than such is a great sin.

Have tongues done any good?

The answer is unequivocally no! Despite the many promises from Charismatic groups of global revival, super powered saints, multiplication of churches and the reformation of society, the historical evidence is certain. During 40 years of Charismatic history in the UK we have seen a massive fall in the numbers of church-goers, the rapid deterioration of society, a huge rise in the number of heresies plaguing the churches, a big drop in giving to missions, a reduction in the number of charitable works done by local churches in the community, a big increase in selfishness and hedonism amongst supposed Christians, a rise in scandals amongst church leaders and a growing worldliness in the people.

Worldly matters

Do others speak in tongues? - Occult practices

Charismatics must be able to give sound reasons why their tongue is different to those commonly found in false religions and occult groups. Examination of occult manifestations reveal that these tongues sound exactly the same as those found in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. They are also generated in the same way by an adept passing on the gift to a novice by the laying on of hands; plus they also lead to the same excesses (such as falling over or laughing).

Ancient references to occult tongues include: the Greek philosopher Plato who mentions those who worshipped with tongues, sometimes which accompanied physical healing ['Phaedrus' in *Dialogues of Plato*, see also 'Ion' and 'Timaeus']. The Roman poet Virgil describes the Sibylline priestess of Delos speaking in tongues [*Aeneid*]. The church father Chrysostom describes the Pythoness of Delphi speaking in tongues that required interpretation [*On 1st Cor.*]. Another father, Lucian of Samosata, tells of tongues spoken by the worshippers of Juno in Hieropolis (Syria). The mystery religions of Greece practised tongue-speaking; in fact the Christian terms for tongues (*pneuma* and *lalein glossais*) derive from the old Greek words

Modern groups that practise tongue-speaking in various forms include: certain Muslim cults; various medicine men (shamans) including Eskimos and Native Americans; Tibetan monks; Hindu cults; and many witches. Sometimes these occurrences have included speech in unlearned human languages uttering blasphemous and profane statements. Many heretical sects have used tongues: Mormons, the original Jehovah's Witnesses, Roman Catholic mystics, Edward Irving's Victorian church. It is true to say that tongue-speaking (often accompanied by as healing) is a central feature of intense satanic movements. How does any modern Charismatic know that what they are practising is not the same? They certainly sound the same.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt. The testimony of scripture is that tongues were an early feature of the church that testified to the impact of Pentecost on the world. Gentiles were included in God's people and Israel was now under judgment. They were especially prominent in Corinth, but they did not do that church any good, since it suffered from more problems and immaturity than many others.

Tongues do not appear to have been a strong feature elsewhere and gradually died out; certainly by 100 but most likely by the destruction of the temple in 70. The testimony of the early fathers is that only pagan and heretical groups used tongues after this. They appeared in various heretical cults and mystics in the Middle Ages and after the Reformation, but were not widespread at all until the late 1800s. After this they became a feature of the later Holiness Movement in the US and thence in Pentecostalism. Despite this, most evangelicals shunned tongues as heretical until adopted in the Charismatic Renewal, along with a number of other false doctrines and practices.

Some folk are stymied by the seeming endorsement of tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians, which appear to have universal application. But this is answered by the fact that many things in Acts were transitional and the apostles only gradually understood the fulness of the Spirit guiding them into all truth. Thus casting lots, dietary regulations and communal living were practised early on but later discarded. Even elders do not appear in Judaea in Acts until chapter 11, though certainly needed before then. Thus statements that appear on the surface to be plain and universal, must be interpreted according to later apostolic instruction and precedent. A study on tongues in the NT establishes that they have now ceased and were never unintelligible sounds. The Charismatic practice is an error.

For more information on matters discussed here, see my papers on *Tongue Speaking* or on *The Baptism in the Spirit*.

Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version*
© Thomas Nelson 1982

Paul Fahy Copyright © 2009
Understanding Ministries
<http://www.understanding-ministries.com>