

What about tongue speaking?

Editorial note:

This paper is an excerpt from a larger work, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. It was felt that there was benefit in reproducing this section separately for those who wished for information on this particular matter. BIS = Baptism in the Spirit.

In this comparatively short paper we cannot fully evaluate all the spiritual gifts or consider all the questions that have been raised in recent years. However, it is necessary to understand the foundational principle of spiritual gifts in the church and give special consideration to some questions about the gift of tongues, since these matters have a direct connection with our study on the BIS.

THE GIFTS IN GENERAL

What are gifts called?

1. *Ton pneumatikon* (1 Cor 12:1). This means 'the spiritual things' (if neuter, e.g. 1 Cor 14:1) or 'the spiritual men' (if masculine e.g. 1 Cor 14:37). 'Spiritual things' refers to the gifts and their exercise, while 'spiritual men' refers to the gifted men, the men exercising the gift. Just as scripture identifies sin with the sinner, so it identifies the gifts and the gifted man. *Pneumatikon* emphasises the divine, supernatural origin of the gift.
2. *Charismaton* (1 Cor 12:4; Rm 12:6). This means 'grace gifts', which emphasises that they are given freely by God and are not founded upon man's wisdom or strength.

These words reveal that gifts are freely given by God, through the Holy Spirit, for the use of the church in edification.

Key passages which list gifts and gifted men are:

1 Cor 12:8-10	1 Cor 12:28-30	Rm 12:3-8	Eph 4:7-11
Word of wisdom	Apostles (1 st)	Prophecy	Apostles
Word of knowledge	Prophets (2 nd)	Ministry (service)	Prophets
Faith	Teachers (3 rd)	Teachers	Evangelists
Healings	Miracles	Exhortation	Pastor-teachers
Miracles	Healings	Giving	
Prophecy	Helps	Leading	
Discerning of spirits	Administrations (government, leadership)	Mercy	
Tongues	Tongues		
Interpretation	Interpretation (mentioned as an afterthought to the list in v30).		

What is noteworthy is that tongues/interpretation always appear last or are ignored altogether. Also note that the gifts are all related to divine revelation in some way, either in mental reception or required action. Even giving requires divine revelation as to what to give to whom and when. Thus the gifts are divine means of directing and building the church.

As an aside, there is a correlation in the first three gifts in all cases (or four in Ephesians where the emphasis is upon leadership to equip the saints). Words of wisdom, knowledge and the gift of faith are not the supposed supernatural means of achieving miracles, as in Charismatic churches. Healings and miracles come later in the list and are less important. No, these gifts are bundled up with apostleship, prophetic ministry and teaching. When Paul starts listing gifts he begins with these foundational gifts. Thus in 1 Cor 12:8 he still has these in mind but emphasises their effect rather than their office. Paul's concern is establishing the church, not impressing outsiders by telepathy.

Good leadership always involves the use of wisdom and knowledge, even in secular situations (cf. Solomon), In the church, leadership also requires faith and a deep understanding of 'the faith'. For instance, an apostle's ministry is to bring wisdom to lay a foundation for a church. Prophetic ministry brings divine knowledge. Teaching is the explanation of the workings of faith. Other scriptural references to these gifts confirm this: Prov 1:2, 19:27, 23:9, 12; Dan 2:14, 21; Mal 2:7; Lk 21:15.

The Charismatic use of a supposed word of knowledge to identify unknown sickness or sin by prescience or telepathy is a common occult technique. Also notice how many famous Pentecostal users of this 'gift' required the presence of an angel to do it rather than God's Spirit (William Branham, Paul Cain, Todd Bentley etc). Without this fallen angel Branham could not minister at all; co-workers who later left him openly wrote that his ministry was occultic.

Prescience is revealed in scripture (Matt 9:4; 12:25; Mk 2:8; Lk 5:22, 6:8, 9:47, 11:17; Jn 6:61, 64, 16:19; Acts 5:3, 9), and it is based upon divine knowledge not angelic communication or human intuition (Ps 44:21, 139:2; Heb 4:12; Rev 2:23). This is never called 'the word of knowledge' but is part of the ministry of being a prophet.

Why are gifts given?

Gifts are given at the discretion of the Spirit for the edification of the church,

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ... But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Cor 12:4-11)

Note this: the Spirit gives gifts for the body, not for the enjoyment of the individual, and the Spirit gives gifts as he sees fit. This means that no one can categorically state that he gives according to a formula.

- It is false to say that the Spirit always gives people tongues.
- It is false to say that the Spirit always gives either tongues or prophecy.
- It is false to say that the Spirit always gives a supernatural spiritual gift after a special experience (whatever it may be called). [The Spirit does give every believer a gift and function to perform in the body (1 Cor 7:7; Eph 4:7; 1 Pt 4:10).]

He does what he wishes and his purpose is the edification of the body. If the body in a place does not need special gifts, then he will not give them. If the body in the early church had no Bible and rarely saw an apostle, then they needed many gifts – particularly revelatory gifts like prophecy.

The most important gifts the Spirit gives to the church are the ministry gifts of teaching, shepherding, prophetic ministry, true apostleship and evangelism (Eph 4:11-16). These bear no resemblance to the false Charismatic expression that is called by these names. For

instance, today prophetic ministry is speaking God's words with clarity, and is thus *primarily* Biblical teaching with spiritual power, 'if anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles [divine inspired utterance] of God' (1 Pt 4:11). This is not new revelation additional to scripture, but an encouragement from scripture given with divine energy, or 'unction' to use a favourite Puritan expression. A genuine apostle is someone who is *sent* from a home church to plant a new work. He has no special authority as an apostle in his home church, nor in the new work once it has appointed elders.

The extraordinary offices of prophet and apostle, with the power, authority, direct revelation and inspiration to lay the foundations of the church (Eph 2:20), have ended. The ordinary offices continue. For instance the 12 'apostles of the Lamb' (Rev 21:14) or 'apostles of Christ' (1 Thess 2:6; Jude 1:17) are superlative to the 'apostles of the churches' (1 Cor 12:28; 2 Cor 8:23 Greek). Paul and the other apostles laid the foundation and it does not need to be re-laid. Their temporary nature is confirmed by their qualifications: they must have seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 9:1), have been commissioned by him directly and do genuine wonder working deeds (2 Cor 12:12). Prophets in the apostolic age were inspired to write scripture, but in the church prophecy is for encouragement in fellowship (1 Cor 14:3-4). Modern Charismatic apostles and prophets seek to emulate the extraordinary gifts that have ceased.

This is not the place to discuss all the gifts mentioned in the NT (about 28 of them can be discerned); what is necessary is to seek to be filled with the Spirit at all times and let him do as he chooses. Our obedience is what counts, not whether we have this or that gift.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Tongues are singled out by Pentecostals and Charismatics as being the main gift that everyone can and should have. Hence, we need to give special consideration to this gift here. It must be stated at the outset that if the Pentecostal/Charismatic doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit is wrong, and if speaking in unintelligible, unknown tongues is the initial evidence (or the normal natural result) of this experience, then modern tongues-speaking will also be wrong. An unbiblical baptism in the Spirit will result in an unbiblical speaking in tongues. We will examine here why this is true.

Being filled with the Spirit does not necessarily lead to speaking in tongues.

- Jesus did not speak in tongues (Lk 4:1, 14).
- Despite telling us much about the future indwelling of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus 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).
- There are good exegetical reasons for affirming that only the apostles spoke with tongues in Acts 2, not the 120 disciples.¹ [As an aside, there is no support here for

¹ For example: A) The closest antecedent of 'they' (2:1) is the apostles (1:26). B) We do not need to believe that the 120 were always present or that the appointment of Matthias immediately preceded the outpouring of the Spirit (Luke often summarises events). C) Christ promised the apostles specifically (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:2-8). D) The report of observers was that Galileans spoke in tongues (Acts 2:7 cf. 1:11, Mk 14:70). E) It was

Pentecostal ‘tarrying meetings’ (long prayer meetings, sometimes all night, seeking the BIS). The apostles were not even praying but were sitting and waiting as commanded. There was no praying for the BIS, no laying on of hands, no praying over others for an experience, but simply waiting.]

- 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.²
 - 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).³
- 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 the BIS until 1901.

Why were tongues given?

There is reason to suggest that the Spirit gave tongues as a sign of being filled in situations where the Spirit’s presence may otherwise have been questioned during the time of transition in Acts. For example,

1. *Pentecost* - where it was a sign of Joel’s prophecy being initially fulfilled (its complete fulfilment is at the end).
2. *Cornelius* – since the Jewish believers were still not convinced that salvation was for Gentiles.

In Acts, not having the Spirit equates to not having Christ (Acts 19:2, cf. Rm 8:9). However, in normal situations the fruit of the Spirit (proof of having the Spirit) is Christ-like character, not tongues (Gal 5:22-23).

Tongues, with other sign gifts, were given to authenticate the Gospel message and its messengers and also to declare the universality of the Gospel (Acts 2:32-36; Rm 15:17-19; Heb 2:3-4; see later).

Paul affirms that, ‘tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers’ (1 Cor 14:22). This has two aspects; the first is a sign to Gentiles, as in Acts 2 – an authenticating sign. The second aspect is towards Jews as a sign of judgment for rejecting Christ’s message and an affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah of a universal kingdom. [More on this later.]

Problems with the Charismatic/Pentecostal idea of tongues

1. **IN ACTS ‘TONGUES’ REFER TO REAL HUMAN LANGUAGES.** In Acts 2 we see ‘tongues’

unlikely that women would have been charged with drunkenness. F) There is no mention of the 120 in Acts 2, but there is of the apostles (2:14, 37). [See RG Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Mvt.* p83-84.]

² Note that Pentecostals insist that Acts 2 is a pattern for all believers and point to the apostles receiving the BIS and tongues subsequent to being converted under Jesus’ pre-cross ministry. They ignore another example in Acts 2 – that of three thousand people converted under New Covenant conditions (as we are today) who repented, believed, were baptised and filled with the Spirit at the same time; furthermore they did not speak in tongues. If there is any pattern for us today, it is that of these 3,000 not the apostles and 120 disciples whose position is unique in history as they straddle the Old and New Covenant ministry of Jesus.

³ I acknowledge a debt to Gromacki for this information.

(*glossa*) and ‘language’ (*dialektos*) being used to refer to intelligible human languages. Not only does *glossa* suggest this on its own, but it is especially true when *glossa* is qualified by *heteros* (‘other’, ‘different’). These two Greek words (*glossa*, *dialektos*) are here used interchangeably; the *heterais glossais* (other tongues) that are spoken are heard in the pilgrim’s own dialect (Acts 2:8). Academically speaking this is xenoglossia (speaking unlearned languages) not glossolalia (speaking unknown or abnormal sounds). The apostles not only spoke various languages new to them (e.g. Persian, Arabian, Latin, Mesopotamian), but also spoke in dialects. The Phrygians and Pamphyliaans both spoke Greek, but in different idioms; Medes, Elamites & Parthians all spoke Persian, but in different forms (Acts 2:9-11). Luke went out of his way to emphasise that these are different languages and variations of languages. This clarity sets the foundation for interpreting later instances. For instance, in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), this is clearly a human language since a) the same terms are used; b) Peter’s later report says that it was the same gift (Acts 11:15, 17); c) listeners understood what was said – that God was glorified.

2:3	Tongues	<i>glossa</i>
2:4	Tongues	<i>glossa</i>
2:6	Language	<i>dialektos</i>
2:8	Tongue	<i>dialektos</i>
2:11	Tongues	<i>glossa</i>

2. **THE GREEK WORD ‘TONGUES’ (*GLOSSA*) ALWAYS MEANS A GENUINE LANGUAGE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.** So much so that it is used to denote nations, ethnic groups and tribes (Rev 5:9, 7:9). This is simply because ethnic groups are chiefly determined by the language that they speak and the nations were formed by the confusion of tongues at Babel. What about the ‘new’ tongues of Mk 16:17? Firstly, if we accept this passage as textually genuine (which many do not; see later), 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.
3. **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. The sign was an understanding that multiple languages were being uttered by peasants. Note that the giving of humanly understood tongues to the apostles was a reversal of the judgment at Babel.
4. ***GLOSSA* MEANS AN IDENTIFIABLE HUMAN LANGUAGE IN THE OT.** The Septuagint (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Old Testament used by the apostles and commonly by Jews everywhere since Greek was the lingua franca of the Mediterranean. *Glossa* in the LXX always means a human language.
5. **ECSTATIC MYSTICAL SPEECH WAS A PRODUCT OF CONTEMPORARY CULTIC GROUPS** (and had been for thousands of years right up to today) and this was shunned by the early church. There is no apostolic evidence to support the idea that the tongues in Acts or 1 Corinthians has any similarity with these. Montanism (though it had some good points) fell into serious error and was condemned when it emphasised ecstatic tongues, ecstatic prophecy, and women leaders, just like modern Charismatics.
6. **EARLY PIONEER CHARISMATICS AGREED THAT NT TONGUES WERE GENUINE LANGUAGES** and not gibberish or ecstatic speech; such as David Watson, Larry

Christenson and Michael Harper.⁴ Some Classic Pentecostals also accept that tongues are real languages.⁵ However, the most common Charismatic view is that foreign languages were involved in Acts, but ecstatic speech in 1 Corinthians.

7. **IN ACTS 2:11 WE SEE THAT WHAT WAS UNDERSTOOD BY THESE TONGUES WAS THE ‘WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD’.** The testimony of the tongues was intelligible and glorifying to God. We do not know exactly what was said. However, note that it did not substitute for the preaching of the Gospel, which came later in the common language of that area (Aramaic, Acts 2:14-40); neither did tongues produce conviction of sin, which came as a result of the preaching.
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. The extensions of Pentecost to Samaria, Gentiles and John’s disciples confirm this universality. God has now poured out his Spirit on all nations. Note that the tongues spoken by Cornelius’ household were understood without interpretation; i.e. they spoke foreign languages understood by certain people present (Acts 10:46).
9. **THERE IS NO EVIDENCE IN ACTS FOR THE IDEA OF MEANINGLESS OR MYSTERIOUS TONGUES THAT ARE NOT HUMAN LANGUAGES.** Indeed, this was the position of the earliest Pentecostals who, believing that they had this same gift, went to foreign mission fields without learning the indigenous language (and failed miserably).
10. **IN 1 COR 12-14 TONGUES ARE ALSO KNOWN HUMAN LANGUAGES.**
 - Paul uses the same words (*glossa* and *laleo* = ‘speak’) as appears in Acts, where it certainly means human languages. 1 Corinthians was written about 55 AD; Luke wrote Acts afterwards in about 60 AD. Luke deliberately used the same terms as Paul since he was familiar with his teaching, as a colleague, and probably with this letter. Since Paul was writing to people who knew what the gift was he did not explain it. God ensured that we understood by giving us Luke’s writing of the Acts where it is described fully.
 - 1 Cor 14:7 – Tongues are compared to flutes and harps, instruments that use a known language (musical notation; in fact the Greeks developed several scales still in use today).
 - 1 Cor 14:8 – Tongues are compared to a trumpet, which gives a recognisable message (a warning call to arms).
 - 1 Cor 14:10, **There are ... many kinds of languages [*phone*] in the world** – Paul’s compares tongues to intelligible human speech (*phone* = speech, tone, sound, language). All forms have significance and are understood. What is spoken, just like flutes and trumpets, must have an understandable meaning to others.
 - 1 Cor 12:10, **different kinds of tongues; 12:28 varieties of tongues** – Paul uses *genos* for ‘kinds/varieties of tongues’. *Genos* refers to a family, offspring, race, kind, sort or class in the NT and always describes the subject as relating to something else. Thus there are many sorts of languages, but they are still languages. Unintelligible, unknown speech is not related to known human languages.
 - I Cor 14:21; **‘In the law it is written: “With *men of other tongues* [Assyrians] and other lips I will speak to this people [Jews]; and yet, for all that, they will not hear me,” says the Lord.’** – Paul’s discussion of tongues involves a quote from Isa 28:11ff where tongues are decreed as part of the means of judgment on rebellious Israel by another nation they did not understand [i.e. Assyria, Isa 33:19; note also Babylon later, Jer 5:15]. Israel did not listen to God when he spoke clearly through prophets, so he will now speak through

⁴ Michael Harper, *Life in the Holy Spirit*, Fountain Trust (1973) p9; David Watson, *One in the Spirit*, Hodder (1973), p93; and Larry Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues a gift for the Body of Christ*, Fountain Trust (1970) p12.

⁵ For example Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, Redemption Tidings Bookroom (1946), p159-160.

a foreign invader. The apparent babbling of the barbarian Assyrians was not understood by Jews but was nevertheless a language, just as tongues in Corinth. Since foreign languages are definitely mentioned in v21, the use of 'tongues' in v 22 must equally refer to a human language; the Greek construction of words insists upon this.⁶

- In Acts 2 there were representatives present of the national languages used, therefore, this was understood as a divine sign. If, within a church meeting, there are many tongues with no representative of the language present, a visiting unbeliever would consider the tongues as babbling and say that the tongue-speakers were mad (1 Cor 14:23). Care was needed in Corinth to preserve order.
- The gift of interpretation is required (1 Cor 12:10, 14:26-28). This means either expounding the OT (either from Hebrew or Greek texts Lk 24:27) or more often, translating from one language to another (Jn 1:38, 41, 42, 9:7; Heb 7:2). It is always to make understandable something from a genuine foreign language.
- In none of these is there any indication of a nonsensical gibberish noise. Paul's whole point in 1 Cor 14 is that what is said in the gathered church is intelligible, edifying and understood: 'in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue' (1 Cor 14:19).⁷

Summary of Paul's arguments in 1 Cor 14 proving that tongues are a human language	
Tongues compared to musical instruments.	Instruments use a recognised musical language.
Tongues compared to battle trumpets.	These give a recognisable message.
Tongues compared to intelligible speech.	Human speech uses language.
Tongues included in the family of speech.	This family refers to human languages of which tongues are a variety.
Tongues compared to Assyrian speech as a sign.	The Assyrians spoke a human language.
'Interpretation' insisted upon.	Interpretation/translation implies human language.
<p>Paul's overwhelming counsel is that only what is intelligible is spoken in church meetings. Babbling that is not understood is condemned. 'Unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ... I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.' (1 Cor 14:9, 19)</p>	

11. **THOSE SPEAKING WITH TONGUES UNDERSTOOD WHAT THEY WERE SAYING.** The tongue was understood by the speaker (at least in a general sense) and by others able to interpret.

- This forms part of the important sign of tongues being a reversal of the judgment at Babel. Babel was judicial sign of tribal dispersal, confusion, separation, and degeneration. The Gospel is announced at Pentecost with a sign of inclusion and

⁶ For the technically minded: 'Foreign languages' in v21 = *heteroglossais*; 'tongues' in v22 = *hai glossai*. This uses the article of previous reference (*hai*) and the function of the inferential conjunction 'wherefore' (*hoste*). 'If Paul considered speaking in tongues to be in an unknown utterance, he would not have used the same word twice in these two verses, especially since the meaning of *glossa* was clearly established in the first usage.' Robert G Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Mvt.*, Presbyterian & Reformed (1972), p64.

⁷ There is an eccentric argument by John MacArthur in *The Charismatics* (p159-160) that in 1 Cor 14 the word tongue in the singular means pagan gibberish but tongues in the plural means gifts of languages. This is influenced by the wrong use of the KJV which adds 'unknown' to the text in vs. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19. He even notes an exception to his own case in v27. The translators did this because they thought that tongues were ecstatic speech and this addition to the text by human wisdom only damages the interpretation. This interpretation of MacArthur's has no validity and is not supported by the vast majority of sound commentators. Sadly this book, while having some useful passages, has some terrible exegesis based on wrong theological presuppositions, such as his Dispensationalism.

universal understanding through tongues instead of confusion.

- It is not said in 1 Corinthians that the speaker did not understand his tongue; the need for interpretation was for the benefit of others in the assembly to hear his declaration of God's glory.
- Since the tongue was not planned in the mind but received by inspiration, even the tongue-speaker needed the gift of interpretation (Greek - 'translation'). Though he understood the general meaning by spiritual intuition, it would be impossible to translate it exactly as inspired, especially if it were long [*'Let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret'*, 1 Cor 14:13]. To even remember all the component parts of a long tongue would be a huge feat. As a divine communication inspired by the Spirit, it had to be translated exactly and thus a special gift was required to do this.⁸
- 1 Cor 14:4 [*'if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful'*] does not mean that the speaker did not understand what he said. He did understand in his spirit, but his intellect was unfruitful in that it did not help others; his understanding bore no fruit; his ministry did no good to others.⁹ Praying in tongues was not an unconscious act; they knew that they spoke, knew that the Spirit moved them and they knew that they uttered spiritual words. The *nous* was involved in the action, being at the joint of the human spirit and human soul, but produced no rational words from its ideas. There was thought involved, but the ideas formed did not develop further into communication to others. Any edifying benefit (if any, since the *nous* only produced unfulfilled general impressions) remained internal. There was no passivity in tongue speaking; no abandoning of rationality. Note that every example of prayer in scripture, and all exhortations to pray, involves rational thought and understanding.
- Paul equates personal tongue-speaking with prophecy in 1 Cor 14:4 and both edify. In the NT edification is always rational and not merely emotional or passive; the building up involves rational thought (1 Cor 14:5; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 1:4). Just as a prophet understands his prophecy, so the speaker understands his tongue, even if only in generalities.
- Worship is rational and not passive (Rm 12:1, 'reasonable' = 'logical', 'rational', *logikos*). God does not give gifts to be used in meetings that promote irrationality.
- In 1 Cor 14:16-17 the tongue-speaker knew that he was giving a blessing and giving thanks.
- Scripture nowhere encourages us to be irrational; passivity is a feature of pagan religion. One fruit of the Spirit is self-control; the same Spirit that promotes self-control would not promote irrational passivity in tongue-speaking. Compare this with many Charismatic/Pentecostal statements such as, 'This phenomenon [tongues] necessarily violates human reason. It means abandonment of this faculty for a time. ... The human mind is held in abeyance fully in this exercise'.¹⁰

12. SUPERNATURAL GIFTS (TONGUES, PROPHECY, HEALINGS, MIRACLES) WERE GIVEN AS A SIGN TO:

- a) Authenticate Gospel preaching to Gentile nations with a preparatory witnessing sign (1 Cor 14:22). This also symbolised to Jews the universality of the kingdom (who had believed that salvation was restricted to Israel, Acts 11:18).
- b) To confirm to Jews that the Holy Spirit had been outpoured on all believers as

⁸ For a sustained defence of this see Victor Budgen, *The Charismatics & the Word of God*, Evangelical Press (1986), p47ff. Some who dispute this (such as Max Turner) fail to remember that there are many godly men who understand Biblical doctrine well, but have no gift of teaching and are hopelessly befuddled when they try to preach. Knowing something and communicating it are different gifts.

⁹ The human spirit is an organ of knowing (Mk 2:8); it knows things of God by intuition and it incorporates the higher faculties of the intellect (the '*nous*', Gk 'higher mind' or 'understanding').

¹⁰ Frank Bartleman, a Pentecostal pioneer, quoted in FD Brunner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Eerdmans (1976), p120.

promised by Joel (Acts 2).

c) To act as a judicial sign to Israel, pointing to the end of the Judaic (Old Covenant) system.

- Note that Jews require a sign (1 Cor 1:22).
- The first occurrence of tongues was a sign to devout Jews in Jerusalem.
- In the OT 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).
- In the NT 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; the New Covenant is now made with the elect in the whole world as Isaiah also prophesied and Jesus stated (Matt 21:43). The curse was literally fulfilled when Romans (speaking various other tongues) destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.
- Thus unknown tongues are a sign of judgment to Jews.

God's people speaking with other tongues (languages) was a sign to demonstrate the new order established by the cross. [This still necessitates preaching intelligibly after the sign, as Peter's sermon in Aramaic after the tongues demonstrates in Acts 2.] The Pentecostal idea that tongues are to be used to proclaim the Gospel to the unconverted without learning their language is absolutely false.

13. **TONGUES ARE LESS IMPORTANT THAN PROPHECY AND TEACHING.** This is the sustained argument of Paul in 1 Cor 14. The church at Corinth was very immature 'I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people*', (1 Cor 3:1). [see: 1:10-13, 3:1-4, 5:1-8; 11:18-22 etc.] and one evidence of this immaturity was that good teaching was lacking, which had resulted in errors and divisions.¹¹ Whilst sound teaching and edifying prophecy were minimised, the more obviously supernatural gift of tongues was over-emphasised. Paul confronts this head on and teaches that tongues are not to be a prime focus of ministry at any time. Corinth is a warning to us in this regard, it emphasised tongues yet at the same time tolerated incest within.
14. **CHARISMATICS REFER TO TONGUES BEING 'MYSTERIES'** (1 Cor 14:2) in the sense of a mysterious noise. But this contradicts what the Bible teaches us about this word. It uses 'mystery' 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'¹² 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).
15. **CHARISMATICS ALSO REFER TO ANGELIC TONGUES** (1 Cor 13:1) to excuse speaking gibberish. 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 here, to emphasise the need of love, lists a number of superlatives which are less important than love – such as understanding all mysteries and having all knowledge. These are not ordinary human attainments but the imagined height that a man could gain – but all are worth nothing if there is no love. Therefore, the mention of angelic tongues is not in connection with his teaching on tongues in chapter 14, but an unconnected poetic superlative; part of a hyperbole or hypothetical argument. Paul

¹¹ Ethical problems included: severe immorality (5:1), lawsuits between brothers (6:1), fornication (6:15), abusing marriage vows (c7), rebellion of women (11:2), abuses of the Lord's Supper (11:17ff). Doctrinal errors included: misunderstanding how to break bread (11:17ff), errors about women's place in church (11:1ff, 14:34-35), errors about the resurrection (c15); errors about relationships with the world (1:19ff, 3:19), errors about leadership ministry (3:5-4:21), errors about church fellowship (c14) and so on. The proliferation of spiritual gifts did them little moral or spiritual good.

¹² Robertson's *Word Pictures*; in. loc.

never calls tongues used in a meeting as ‘angelic’. This is the only verse that can possibly be used as a defence of gibberish, and it has nothing to do with tongues in churches.

16. **CHARISMATICS EMPHASISE THE USE OF TONGUES FOR PERSONAL EDIFICATION**, (a ‘private prayer language’) based upon 1 Cor 14:4. This is a wrong, though popular, interpretation.¹³

- For a start, 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 speaker may be personally edified by understanding his tongue, but this is misusing the gift; it may have encouraged the person declaring God’s glory in praise to the Lord, but its purpose was to make that prayerful declaration public (as at Pentecost). The interpreted tongue then has the value of a prophecy. Paul’s exceptional use of the reflexive form ‘edifies’ implies an ironical use of contradiction. A comparison would be if we said someone ‘served himself’; not meaning it is good to serve oneself, but that he fails to serve others. Paul uses irony and sarcasm to make a point on many occasions. What was going on with tongues in Corinth was that the actual 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. This chapter mentions edification numerous times and ‘church’ eight times; the whole purpose is building others up not yourself.
- 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. *battologeo* = ‘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.

17. **THE METHODS OF GENERATING / RECEIVING TONGUES IN CHARISMATIC CIRCLES ARE UNBIBLICAL**. Typical are (and these are taken from Charismatic books):

- People are urged to open their mouths and force tongues out.
- ‘Make your mind blank; don’t think. Don’t question the result.’
- ‘Take a deep breath, open the mouth wide and tell yourself that you have the gift.’
- ‘Begin to speak, don’t speak in English or a known language.’
- ‘Speak the sounds God gives you and shape them into a language, but take no thought about what you are saying.’

¹³ For support of tongues for private use see Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit & Spiritual Gifts Then and Now*, Paternoster, (1996) p232ff. I believe his argument is slender and unconvincing.

- ‘Continually repeat words or phrases, such as “Praise Him”, “Hallelujah”, or “Glory” without stopping or breathing until tongues come forth.’

All of these methods are the result of human and psychological manipulation; indeed studies have shown that non-Christians can speak in tongues after saying, ‘La la la’ repeatedly. We do not see this forced manipulation in Acts 2, 10 or 19. Finally, it is categorically stated in 1 Cor 12:11 that gifts are given upon God’s sovereignty; they are dispensed by the Spirit ‘as he wills’ not as man tries. Any attempt to generate a gift by human activity will result in a dead work, a false sign and will open the way to satanic temptation.

18. **THE FOCUS ON TONGUES IS OPPOSED TO THE EMPHASIS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** 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? Does this not smack of people being fooled? If the Holy Spirit, through Paul’s writing, affirmed that we should seek the best gifts¹⁴ and stated 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. Paul stated that he would rather speak five understandable words than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue in a meeting (1 Cor 14:17-18). This is tantamount to saying that tongues are worthless in church – this is because they were a sign to outsiders and of little value in meetings.
19. **THE UTTERANCES IN CHARISMATIC CIRCLES HAVE NO SELF-AUTHENTICATION AND ARE NOT TESTED.** In other words, everyone simply accepts that utterances are spiritual and holy – but how can they be sure? We know that there are similar pagan utterances. 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; the Holy Spirit inspired the multiple commands that we test everything (e.g. 1 Thess 5:21).
20. **THE RULE OF ALWAYS INTERPRETING TONGUES IS VERY OFTEN VIOLATED BY CHARISMATICS.** This happens in many meetings - either when spoken aloud when no one interprets (admittedly less common in some Charismatic/Pentecostal churches), or when spoken quietly under the breath by many in worship and no one sees a need to interpret. It always occurs during singing in the Spirit, and again no one cares to obey an apostolic command. Indeed, to obey the scriptural command would result in chaos in many of these cases, which is in itself a sign that this is wrong. It almost always

¹⁴ 1 Cor 12:31 - *krei,twn kreitton* (Strong’s 2909) meaning: ‘more useful, more serviceable, more advantageous, more excellent’. In other words, what best serves the body.

occurs when someone speaks in tongues after being 'baptised in the Spirit', and no one sees a need to interpret a tongue spoken in private devotions. Finally, the apostolic instruction is that only one person interprets (*heis* = 'one'; it is not *tis* = 'a certain one, someone') even if two or three speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:27-28). While some Pentecostal churches practice this (the leader interprets) many others do not, and virtually no one teaches this requirement. These verses also teach that the knowledge of an interpreter being present was necessary before anyone spoke in tongues to ensure edification [**'But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent'**].¹⁵ All of these cases demonstrate flagrant disobedience to God.

21. **THE DEFENCE OF TONGUES BY CHARISMATICS IS UNBIBLICAL.** It is amazing that virtually all published defences of tongue-speaking today fail to properly exegete 1 Cor 14. The reason is that if they did, people would soon see that Paul is warning about their abuse and downplays their value. Most Charismatic books highlight only four verses 1 Cor 14:4, 5, 18 and 39 for support; but verses 4 and 5 are followed by a *'but'* while verse 18 (with 19) is followed by a *'yet'*. Only verse 39 is positive, but even this means 'don't prohibit them altogether'. Thus Paul's warnings about tongues abuse are used as support for emphasising them. This is deception. The meanings of Greek words, such as *glossa* ('tongues') or 'mysteries' are completely ignored, as is the absence of mention in the rest of the NT. No one tells you that false religions and occult groups use this gift in the same way, generated by the same methods, and uttered in similar sounds. Most of the arguments presented in this paper are completely ignored also. Often, the chief Charismatic support is anecdotal stories about people who came into this gift. All this is, at best, academically weak; at worst it is sheer deceit.
22. **THE PRACTICE OF TONGUES IN CHARISMATIC CIRCLES IS UNBIBLICAL.** Verified stories about false interpretation of tongues are legion, but are always dismissed nonchalantly by Charismatics. For instance, one African man prayed the Lord's Prayer in his native dialect, whereupon it was 'interpreted' as a message about the imminent Second Coming. But any sincere witness of modern tongues can see that the same sounds are being made week after week, but are frequently given different interpretations. This has also been documented. Charismatic interpretations are very loose and general as a rule. How often does an interpretation vary considerably from what was thought to be the meaning by others present who said nothing? Due to the obvious problems regarding all this, tongues and interpretations are now infrequent in modern Charismatic churches; yet they still emphasise the need to speak in tongues privately. In Pentecostal circles tongues are often interpreted only by the leader or perhaps another strong figure. These are usually given as brief exhortations or prophecy and run into one another. The very different tongues thus get melded into the single frame of thought and personality of the interpreter and are obviously very questionable as a result.

THE PROBLEM OF UTTERING UNINTELLIGIBLE SOUNDS

The idea of speaking some kind of babbling noises or gibberish (usually copied from hearing someone else first) is absent from scripture. There is no command to speak in obscure sounds unknown to men; indeed the reverse is the case, we are to speak clearly that which is understood for building each other up. Is it fair to say that Charismatic tongues are gibberish? Yes it is. Apart from everyone's experience which demonstrates it

¹⁵ 1 Cor 14:13 says, 'Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret'. This is not an excuse for disobeying this command but in the context Paul is saying that Corinthian tongue-speakers should ask God for the gift of interpretation. This was to balance the chaotic situation then prevailing where many spoke in tongues and none interpreted. The principles laid down by Paul in 1 Cor 14 imply that tongues must always be interpreted by a different person to the tongue-speaker (v26, 29). If Paul expected tongue-speakers to always pray for a sudden gift of interpretation, this would void his regulation in verse 28 in the first place.

(we've all heard the sounds made), linguistic professors have studied this carefully and declared that these tongues are not languages but 'linguistic nonsense' – and thus are not Biblical.¹⁶

Tongues, as the speaking of babbling nonsense, are evidenced in many false religions, occult groups and heretical sects; for example: witchcraft, Mormons, the original JW's, Roman Catholic mystics, Islamic Sufis, aboriginal shamanism, certain Hindu sects, some Buddhist cults; Edward Irving's church and even Innuits. Indeed this type of tongue-speaking is a central feature of satanic works. Some primitive demonised shamans even speak in ecstatic tongues that are recorded as being genuine languages unknown to the speaker. How does any modern Charismatic know that what they are passing on is not the same sort of satanic technique used by these rogue groups? They certainly sound the same. I challenge any charismatic to prove that their tongue is different.

Even more worrying are studies that show 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 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, and disciples copy them e.g. kala lala ...; baba raba...; shama lama shala ...; kiandara shandria ...; curianda sundera ...; yashikai ya ... etc.; this is also why they are confirmed as not being structured languages. When people are instructed to stop thinking, open their mouth and let speech flow without thought (as Charismatics and cults are), most will end up pronouncing similar types of sounds.

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 clearly problems in interpreting these verses, not least since Paul knew that all Christians would not speak in tongues even in his day when they were available (1 Cor 12:30), and he himself had just urged less tongue-speaking in Corinth. We can say that these verses are not universal in application since tongues ceased by 100 AD (see later), so they are of no value in defending Charismatic practices. Furthermore, Paul had also urged believers to covet the best gifts not the least gift. How then do we understand these verses?

Here Paul is strictly speaking to the Corinthians regarding the gift given by the laying on of his apostolic hands (something that cannot be repeated today). He had spent 18 months in Corinth and had brought this church into a greater experience of the supernatural than others. This was in the early part of Paul's ministry and the initial phase of Gentile church building; authenticating signs were necessary to demonstrate the divine origin of apostolic ministry and churches. 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.

The first letter to the Corinthians is amongst Paul's earliest, and the book of Acts appeared

¹⁶ E.g. Prof. William Samarin, linguistics professor at Univ. of Toronto, *Tongues of Men & Angels*, Macmillan (1972) p103-128. Gromacki gives quotes from several linguistic scholars, all proving that Charismatic tongue-speaking is meaningless gibberish. The 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.

afterwards written by Luke, Paul's fellow worker. Paul does not mention tongues in his later letters to other churches; neither are they mentioned by James, Peter, John or Jude. 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. 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 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. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the old system had 'vanished away' as the writer to the Hebrews promised. Tongues had vanished, or were vanishing, by that time.

1 Cor 13:8 is interesting in this connection. It says, 'Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.' Prophecies and knowledge will become idle, inoperative, cease to be employed, done away with (*katarghōsontai* – *katargethesontai*, the future passive voice from *katargeō*; i.e. made obsolete by something else) – and this will obviously occur after the Lord's return and the restoration of all things in a new heaven and earth. When the perfect is come the partial is 'done away with' (verse 10, *katargethesetai*). However, the word affecting 'tongues' is a different one. 'Cease' means 'to cause to stop', but in the middle voice (as here) it means that tongues will stop on their own (*pausontai* – *pausontai*, future middle indicative of *pauō* - *pauō*). Thus tongues are not mentioned in verse 9 and 12, because they have already ceased.

What this means is that prophecy and knowledge will end at the Second Coming of Christ, with the consummation of the Kingdom of God in fulness, when the church is perfect (i.e. 'complete', 'finished' - *teleios*). However, tongues will have already ceased before this climax of history, ceasing by themselves earlier. As Greek scholar AT Robertson says, 'They shall make themselves cease or automatically cease of themselves.'¹⁷ The implication is that before the other gifts cease at the end, tongues will have already stopped working on their own. This happened in the 1st century. They faded away when they ceased to be required as a sign, mainly of condemnation to Israel but also openness to Gentile nations.¹⁸ In terms of edification tongues were of much less value than prophecy (1 Cor 14:1-3 ff.), hence their fading away.

Since we are told that tongues would cease of themselves, when this cessation is observed in history, then we can be sure that this cessation is permanent. This is what happened in the church after the death of the apostles, and certainly by 100 AD. Tongues had ceased by that time, as the church fathers testify, and did not re-appear for centuries, as church historians will testify. Any later manifestation of claimed tongues cannot be the genuine gift, since when it ceases it ceases - **whether *there are* tongues, they will cease**. This proves that modern tongues are not the genuine gift or it would make this verse false. For Charismatics to be right, this verse must read, 'whether there are tongues, they will cease for a few centuries and then re-appear'. The fact that the modern manifestations of tongues have always been in aberrant or heretical groups proves this point, from Catholic mystics, enthusiast fanatics, the Shakers and French prophets to Irving's Church, the Mormons, Holiness groups and Pentecostals, Charismatics and the Toronto excesses. Tongue-speaking has a mired history.

¹⁷ Robertson's, *Word Pictures* on 1 Cor 13:8.

¹⁸ Out of interest, the last apostolic miracle was the healing of Publius' father in 58 AD (Acts 28:7-10).

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.

Perhaps Paul is speaking ironically in verse 5; if everyone spoke in tongues then there would be less confusion and the gift would have less novelty value. He is saying that if everyone spoke in tongues (not in church at the same time) there would be no status problem, i.e. some thinking that they were better than others since they had an obvious gift.

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. When Paul talks about the equipping of the saints through gifts in Ephesians there is no mention of tongues; when talking about the service of gifts in Romans tongues are absent – but he does emphasise prophecy, teaching and exhortation (Rm 12:ff).

SUMMARY OF INDISPUTABLE FACTS

1. Tongues are human languages given by divine inspiration.
2. Tongues are not gibberish (unintelligible sounds).
3. Tongues are not angelic speech.
4. The tongue speaker understood his tongue in his spirit.
5. Interpretation is a translation of the foreign tongue into the local language.
6. Tongues declared the wonderful works of God, usually in prayer form.
7. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers; they are not primarily for use in the church.
8. This sign to unbelievers is foremost towards Israel as a sign of judgment and as proof that the Spirit has been outpoured on all nations.
9. Tongues must not be centred on and are of much less importance than teaching gifts.
10. Tongues cease on their own long before the cessation of other spiritual gifts.
11. Tongues are not mentioned in the NT outside of Mark, Acts and 1 Corinthians – all early books. The passage in Mark is of dubious authenticity.
12. Tongue-speaking was said to have died out by the post-apostolic fathers.
13. Pagan religions and occult groups speak/sing in tongues as gibberish.
14. If the apostolic regulations regarding modern tongues were practised carefully and strictly, many teachers believe that the gift would vanish shortly afterwards. They are evidence of complacency regarding Biblical instructions.

CONCLUSION

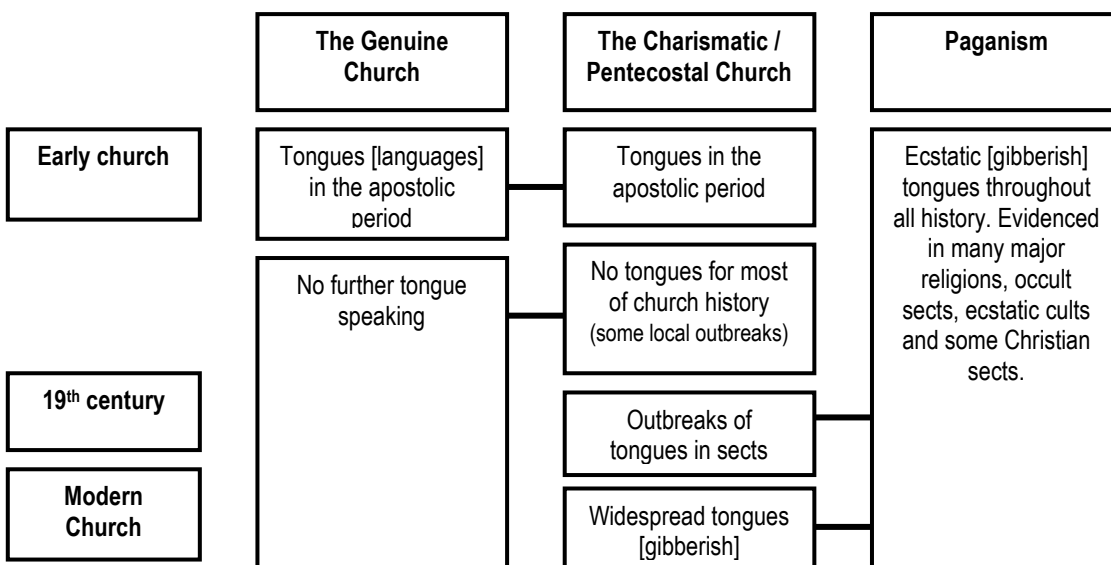
There are no mention of tongues outside of Mark, Acts and 1 Corinthians. If tongues are vital for personal edification, as Charismatics insist, then why are there no instructions about them in all the apostolic letters (which are full of instructions on the devotional life) apart from 1 Corinthians? No other book encourages their use, either personally or in meetings. The sign of tongues was relevant to the early part of church history, as a sign to Gentiles and particularly Jews, that God’s kingdom was amongst them.

What we can say is that the Charismatic version of this – unintelligible noises - is to be condemned. Genuine tongues (languages) are not for believers in any case, but are for convincing unbelievers, ‘tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers (1 Cor 14:22). They are an unusual occurrence that points to something else (primarily that God has now opened the door of salvation to all nations). Why highlight this gift today in church since it is not primarily for the benefit of believers? Why make it a central feature of leadership ministry (as with Charismatics) or the central feature of your denomination (as with Pentecostals).

Charismatic claims that tongue-speaking brings spiritual power, is vital for private devotions, is essential for a daily walk with God, is necessary for walking in the Spirit, have absolutely no Biblical basis at all. Paul never says that tongues are a doorway into a better spiritual experience. Centring a meeting or an experience on them is utterly opposed to Paul’s teaching that they are the least of the gifts (even if they were not obsolete today).

Finally, the idea of people speaking lots of tongues (other languages) in a meeting is wrong and manifests insanity (1 Cor 14:23). In any case every tongue must be interpreted or it should not be given at all.

Consider the danger of the Charismatic/Pentecostal position – they teach that the tongue by-passes the mind and is not understood in any way by the speaker (not even spiritually). They teach that the utterance is an unintelligible sound (claiming it is angelic). They teach that this gives the speaker a good feeling inside that edifies him – though he knows not why. They teach that the interpretation is the essence of what was said, not what was actually and exactly said. All this is mystical nonsense and enables anyone to say anything and then someone to interpret it as anything. This is just what occult groups do. This is a recipe for disaster.



Note that the late appearance of tongue-speaking in the church correlates with a number of degenerative factors in religion and world history such as: liberalism, evolution, modernism, scientism, humanism, atheism, many cults and sects appearing, re-emergence of witchcraft and magic, popularity of Eastern religions, growth of paganism, hedonism, New Age and its precursors etc. These all began or were initially developed in the late 19th-mid 20th century, just as the 'tongues movement'.

The Charismatic version of tongue-speaking is to be condemned.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CHARISMATIC TONGUE SPEAKERS

1. How do you know that your gift is from God?
2. How do you explain why your tongue is no different from those appearing in demonic religions and the occult?
3. Since tongues are a sign to unbelievers, how can an unintelligible tongue be a sign? Ecstatic, unintelligible speech was a characteristic of pagan religions and relatively common. There is no sign value in a tongue being expressed like a pagan. It can only be a divine sign if it is a known but unlearned language.
4. Since Biblical tongues are genuine human languages, how do you explain what yours is?
5. If tongues are a gift from God to all the church, why did you need to get this gift from a man just as in occult religions? [I have never heard of a Charismatic receiving this gift alone, except in one or two cases where it followed an earlier meeting with a person who already had this gift.]
6. Since all spiritual gifts are given sovereignly by God as he wills, why are people exhorted to seek tongues specially, to pursue after them, get hands laid on them for it, and get coached into uttering something?
7. Biblical tongues are said to cease before the end; Charismatic tongues are claimed to continue until the end. How can you defend something so clearly anti-Biblical?
8. Since everyone admits that tongues ceased for hundreds of years, and since scripture tells us that once they ceased they were finished, how do you explain what you utter?
9. If tongues are for corporate edification, why do you use them for personal benefit?
10. If a tongue is a prayer (1 Cor 14:2, 14), why do you disobey Jesus' command not to pray in gibberish (i.e. an unknown, unintelligible sound)?
11. Since meetings must be conducted in decency and good order (1 Cor 14:40), how can you incorporate tongues, which can't be tested as to their origin by anyone. A person could bring a pagan tongue and no one would know.
12. Since Biblical tongue-speakers understood what they uttered, how do you defend what you speak if you do not understand what you utter?
13. Why is the requirement to always interpret a tongue often violated? This happens in many meetings (either spoken aloud or quietly under the breath in worship), during singing in the Spirit, almost always when someone speaks after being 'baptised in the Spirit', or in private devotions.
14. If tongues are part of God's empowering for witness, why has the UK church dramatically declined in the period when tongues-speaking became widespread?

WHAT ABOUT SINGING IN THE SPIRIT?

Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?

(1 Cor 14:13-16)

This has caused problems to commentators for hundreds of years. No one can be absolutely certain what Paul meant here. There are many suggestions:

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. Some have suggested that it means singing from the heart as well as the mind.
3. Others that it means singing from the higher powers of reason, but also communicating with understanding to make the improvised song comprehensible.
4. Others, that I will sing spiritually but also so as to be interpreted and understood.
5. Praying /singing in tongues privately but in Greek at church.
6. A solo improvised song (comp. v26).

Let's see what the Greek text of verse 15 actually says.

ti, ou=n evstiĒ proseu,xomai tw/| pneu,mati(proseu,xomai de. kai. tw/| noi<\ yalw/
tw/| pneu,mati(yalw/ de. kai. tw/| noi<Å

This translates literally as,

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.

WHAT SINGING IN THE SPIRIT CANNOT BE

1. *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.
2. *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.
3. *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.

These three fairly clear and simple, conclusions obviate the Charismatic form of singing in the spirit.

WHAT IS DEFINITELY TAUGHT HERE:

1. *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.

2. 'Sing' (yalw/ - *psalo* from *psallo*) means 'to sing' or 'to sing a song of praise' in the NT (it originally meant 'to touch', then 'to touch the strings of a harp').
3. Praying and singing must benefit others (Eph 5:19; Col 3:16). This is the clear contextual meaning of 'with understanding', or 'rationally'. He has just said, 'Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is *the conclusion* then ...'; in other words, if I pray in a tongue without interpretation, then my understanding is unfruitful, there is no benefit to the assembled body. The whole context of 1 Cor 14 is about edifying the body.
4. With praying or singing with spirit, the principle moving cause is the spirit, not the mind (though the understanding is still involved). This suggests that 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. The best ministry is when these are combined: i.e. something inspired by the Spirit but manifested in an intelligible manner.
5. If singing in spirit means one person singing in tongues (since praying in a tongue is my spirit praying), then this improvised sung tongue must be translated so that all may benefit. There is no countenance for singing in tongues (even if by all) with no interpretation.
6. 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.¹⁹
7. 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).
8. 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.

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.

There is no evidence here for the practice (pagan in origin) of a corporate, improvised series of sung unintelligible tongues around a musical keynote.

¹⁹ The simultaneous declarations in tongues by the apostles in Acts 2 was a sign to unbelievers; a once-off unusual event to inaugurate the Kingdom of Christ. Paul in 1 Cor 14 is referring to the practice of tongues to edify the gathered saints within a congregational meeting. Charismatics cannot claim support for simultaneous tongues from Acts 2.

WHAT ABOUT MARK 16:15-18?

And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

This passage has long proved to be a very thorny problem for everyone. For this reason some have discarded the whole context as spurious and it does not appear in some versions, or it appears as a footnote (e.g. RSV).

Charismatics champion this passage as teaching that all believers should manifest some of these signs. But the signs include not only tongues but also snake-handling and being impervious to poison. For this reason there are still Pentecostal sects that handle rattlesnakes in church meetings in front of children; many have been bitten repeatedly. Some of these sects also drink poison (strychnine) and handle fire; Pentecostal history books state that over 60 people are known to have died as a result. The fact that only small sects do this proves that virtually everyone believes that this is not operational today. However, the text does not suggest believers will do a few of these things only but all of them.

To use this passage to teach that all believers should speak merely in tongues is twisting the words. All believers should also do the rest. So these verses are of no use in supporting Charismatic doctrines at all.

Some have suggested that those believing are not all disciples but only the apostles. For example: since the word 'believe' in verse 17 is an aorist tense verb, it only refers to those who have already believed as a past event – i.e. the disciples Jesus was talking to. Others have said that the antecedent of 'them' in verse 17, is not 'he' in verse 16 but 'them' in verse 14 – i.e. the apostles. These certainly manifested most of these signs, including surviving snakebite (Acts 28:3-6) but there is no apostolic case of surviving poison.

However, this is not the way the passage reads at all. Those who have believed in verse 17 are clearly identified with those who will believe as a result of the Gospel in verses 15-16. The aorist need not apply to those who had believed at the time Jesus spoke these words, but those who had believed for some time when they manifested the sign (i.e. in the future). The argument for the distant antecedent is clearly unfounded. I know of no Greek scholar that suggests this and the antecedent reads normally as 'he that believes'. Why would Jesus say 'them' to refer to the people he was actually talking to?

What do we do?

There are two solutions:

1. **TEXTUAL:** Mark 16:17-18 is peculiar only to Mark, which is odd in itself, since the context is parallel to Matthew 28:16-20 and Luke 24:44-49 where such powerful statements are not found. If Matthew and Luke based their Gospels on Mark, as many believe, why ignore such powerful promises? This is one reason why many textual scholars believe that these two verses were added later and are spurious. Very many others dismiss verses 9-20 -
 - Many ancient mss. and some versions do not contain these verses.
 - There are four possible endings to Mark in various mss.

- Many esteemed scholars (such as Dr N B Stonehouse, and William Hendriksen) omit them.
- Eminent Greek scholars, such as AT Robertson, also argue against including all these verses.
- The church historian Eusebius (260-340) wrote that the most accurate and almost all copies then available of Mark's Gospel ended at verse 8. Jerome, Origen and Clement of Alexandria agreed with him.
- There are also very strong internal arguments against including v9-20, such as the sudden appearance of 11 words and two phrases that do not appear in the rest of Mark's Gospel or the sudden appearance of Mary Magdalene's background - despite having been mentioned earlier (see Hendriksen, *NT Comm. on Mark*).

With so much doubt about these verses, it would be extremely unwise to build doctrines upon them without corroboration elsewhere in the NT.

2. **EXEGETICAL:** The signs following those who believe is a general, not specific, promise regarding the events after Pentecost; note that in the same discourse the Lord commanded they wait for the promise of the Spirit (Lk 24:49). Thus in the church (i.e. those who had faith) these signs would all be manifested as God gave grace in the period after Pentecost. Thus some, not all, would manifest them and then only for the time of the miraculous signs, not for all time. God himself supervises these signs as he sees fit to testify to the Gospel message. In fact, all these signs accompanied the establishment of the early church.²⁰ The passage is referring to those who had faith to believe in Christ for salvation and is not referring to a special group of believers who have faith to speak in tongues etc. The book of Hebrews refers to this in 2:3-4,

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Here the writer explains that:

- a) God confirmed the witness of the apostolic era ('at the first', 'those who heard him') with signs.
- b) This stopped after this foundational age ('was confirmed' not 'is still being confirmed' in the second generation of hearers).
- c) The writer goes on to argue in detail for the superiority of Christianity to Old Covenant Judaism; he does not merely refer to miracles for proof. (Hebrews was probably written just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, i.e. between 64-68.)

To say any more necessitates complex arguments. People have written entire books on this problem and still not convinced people. Either way, there is very good reason for not applying these verses to believers today.

What is certain is that you cannot use this passage to teach that all believers can speak in tongues, exorcise demons and heal the sick, unless you add that they can all drink poison and handle snakes also. It is of no value in supporting modern tongue-speaking or healing.

²⁰ Papias reports that Barsabas Justus, who was put up with Matthias for the apostleship, consumed a poisonous drink but was not hurt (Apud Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* l. 3. c. 39.). Jewish rabbis also speak of 'a son of R. Joshua ben Levi, swallowed something hurtful; and one (a Christian – PF) came and whispered to him in the name of Jesus ... and he did well.' (T. Hieros. *Sabbat*, fol. 14. 4. & *Avoda Zara*, fol. 40. 4. & *Midrash Kobelet*, fol. 81. 1.)

CESSATIONISM

A brief word must be said about cessationism at this point. Many evangelical scholars, appalled by the excesses of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement, have developed a doctrine that all the sign gifts and the experience of power as given by the reception of the Holy Spirit passed away after the apostles died and the canon of scripture was completed. This is not the way to combat error and excess.

It is impossible to make a scriptural case for this doctrine as there is no indication that all supernatural spiritual gifts would pass away by the 2nd or 3rd century. The case is only made by rationalising at the expense of scripture and history as gifts continued to be observed by church fathers like Irenaeus and Augustine for hundreds of years.

The rationale for this idea is totally spurious, being mainly based on a flawed interpretation of 'perfect' in 1 Cor 13:10. Cessationists usually claim that 'perfect' here refers to the completion of the canon of scripture and that when the Bible was complete the need for gifts vanished. However, there is not an ounce of this thought in 1 Cor 13 and 'perfect' clearly refers to events at the Second Coming when God restores all things. *Teleios* ('perfect') almost always refers to the church (e.g. Eph 4:13) which is slowly maturing and becoming complete with every elect person converted. At the end the church will be perfect, both in holiness and fulness. That is what is being referred to here. In any case the canon was not finalised until the Council of Carthage in 397 AD, but cessationists want the gifts to end at about 95 AD when the apostles died out and the last Bible book was written. On this argument the church was be without agreed revelation for 300 years. Furthermore, apart from a few people with some scrolls of scripture portions most did not have access to any scripture and there were also many false gospels circulating. All this confusion is hardly 'perfect'.

In addition, most believers did not have Bibles for hundreds of years until printing was invented just before the Reformation. Bibles only became available (and then to the well-off) in England in the mid-1500s. Even in the 1700s many poor English Christians did not have a personal Bible. Under the cessationist argument supernatural gifts needed to be evidenced until this time.

We dare not make rational arguments to suit our predilections, but must draw our arguments solely from clear scriptures. On this test the cessationist argument is found to be very faulty. We may deny the validity of the rogue gifts evidenced in the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, not only due to their unbiblical nature but the bad fruit that arises from them, but we cannot say that God has withdrawn all supernatural gifts. Like Calvin, I prefer to say that this whole matter is in the hands of God and he can do what he wishes. If there are no gifts manifest, it is because he chooses not to grant them; if some gifts begin to be evidenced in the church, it is because there is a need for them. At the moment, I do not see genuine supernatural gifts of the Spirit being evidenced in the Charismatic Movement – but there are many false ones.

The exception to this is the case of tongues and interpretation of tongues. We have already explained that this gift was particularly for the initial period of apostolic church development and missionary work. A word is used for its ceasing in 1 Cor 13:8 which is different to that applied to knowledge and prophecy, which clearly identifies that tongues will cease on their own before the others end. Thus there is no instruction or mention of tongues/interpretation in any other letter and the testimony of early church history is that they had ceased by 100 AD.

We can also add that the extraordinary offices of apostle and prophet have also ceased, as we explained earlier. The specific miraculous gifts associated with apostolic ministry and the initial development of the church have thus expired also.

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