

The Heresy of Pentecostalism And Speaking in Tongues



**Treatise of Analysis and Apology by
Rev. Father Serop Azarian**

Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of North America

Introduction

In the last two decades since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the peoples living there experienced the freedom that they were due, but also were exposed to a barrage of western religious cults and heresies, most of which were never heard before; Names like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Hari-Krishna followers, Pentecostals, etc.

One movement of these heretical and cultic groups that came to lay havoc on the traditional churches of Orthodoxy and Catholicism in Eastern Europe and Eurasia is Pentecostalism and its many movements, with their different names. Some Armenians have never even had a chance to rediscover their Holy Apostolic faith, when people popped from every angle of the world in the name of bringing the "ONLY TRUTH" to them, and in the meanwhile, not forgetting to sow the seeds of disunity and biblical heresy among people who were separated against their will, from the truth of Orthodox Holy Trinity because of 7 decades of atheistic Communism.

What Is Pentecostalism?

Pentecostalism is a movement that stresses the importance of tongue-speaking as a "second blessing." People are taught that they receive the Holy Spirit upon conversion, but are not filled with or baptized with the Holy Spirit until they speak in tongues. It is a modern American Christian movement that emerged out of the Holiness Movement at the turn of the 20th Century along with other heretical movements during that period of time in American history. Two key figures in the beginning of Pentecostalism were **Charles Parham** (1873-1929), the founder of Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, and **William Seymour** (1870-1922), an African American Holiness evangelist from Louisiana.

Who Was Charles Parham?



Parham was born in Muscatine, Iowa in 1873. After feeling a call to preach as a young man, Parham involved himself in many of the religious movements of his day, including the Holiness and Divine Healing movements.

In 1898 Parham founded the Bethel Healing Home in Topeka, Kansas as a haven for those seeking divine healing. Shortly thereafter he toured the Holy Ghost and Us Bible School in Shiloh, Maine, where he heard of instances of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) among missionaries.

Parham became convinced the premillennial return of Christ would be preceded by a worldwide revival and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Glossolalia would be the sign of the Spirit's empowerment for this revival and for great missionary endeavors. Therefore he was convinced that the

gifts of the Holy Spirit that were evident in apostolic times are available to Christians in modern times as well. In 1900 he started a Bible school at Bethel; he instructed his students to examine the Bible, particularly Acts 2, to learn the biblical sign of Spirit baptism. On January 1, 1901, one of Parham's

students, Agnes Ozman, spoke in tongues. With a few days, half the school had similar experiences. It was concluded, then, that speaking in tongues was the evidence that one had been baptized by the Holy Spirit, and henceforth came to be the distinctive doctrine of the Pentecostal Churches, differing them from the Holiness Groups.

Parham now began to spread the message of the "apostolic faith," as he called it. He was greeted by hostility from the public and most of the religious leaders of the time, but as news spread among those in the holiness and healing movements, Parham began to pick up converts.

In 1905 he established a Bible school in Houston to train evangelists to aid in the spread of apostolic faith churches.

William Seymour, a black evangelist and subsequent leader of the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles, attended a ten-week training session and took the Pentecostal message westward.



For this reason, the experience has been called the beginning of the modern Pentecostal Movement. Five years later, Seymour, who had studied at Bethel with Parham, led a revival on Azusa Street in Los Angeles that lasted for several months. This led the ground work for the Pentecostal Movement spreading across America. Pentecostal Doctrine came to be known by the term 'FULL GOSPEL' or the 'FOUR SQUARE GOSPEL', which stresses Christ's ministry as four-fold: Christ the Savior, the Sanctifier, the Healer, and the Coming King.

Although the Pentecostal movement began with him, Parham soon lost control of it. Other men took over, and he was unable to regain leadership of the movement he founded. A sodomy scandal involving Parham in 1907 ruined what little chance that remained of his returning to prominence. From then until his death in 1929, Parham spent most of his time outside the mainstream of the emerging Pentecostal movement.

Some of the more common Pentecostal or 'Charismatic' Churches that arose out of this movement were: **Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Churches, Independent Pentecostal Churches, Full Gospel Churches, Four-Square Gospel Churches, United Pentecostal Churches, or 'Jesus Only' (which deny the Trinity); Churches of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) with 890,000 members in 1999; Church of God of Prophecy, Apostolic Faith Churches, Church of God in Christ, Elim Fellowship Churches, Vineyard Churches International (which played a big role in the founding of The Promise Keepers Movement; Church of the Living God, and others.**

What Are The Assemblies of God?

The Assemblies of God was formed in 1914 when a group of churches joined together at Hot Springs, Arkansas. Assemblies of God broke away from the Holiness Churches, because they believed, as other

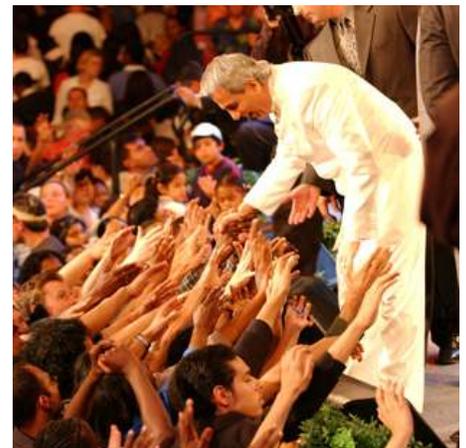
Pentecostal Churches, that The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was evidenced by speaking in Tongues. Assemblies of God are non-Calvinist in their theology and they are Pentecostal in doctrine, stressing speaking in tongues, divine healing, women pastors, slain in the Spirit etc. They are very ecumenical in their associations and cooperation, and encourage the use of the newer Bible versions. Unlike, their Holiness forefathers, they do not hold to the strict guidelines on dress, women's hair, make-up, etc. as do other Holiness Churches.



Pentecostalism, also because of its belief that people today can have the same gifts that the Apostles had... **Benny Hinn** and whoever these "healers" are, he's sort of the prototypical healer today, it started out with **A. A. Allen**, and **Oral Roberts**, and down to **Morris Cerullo**, and on and on it goes...**Jim & Tammy Baker**, **Jimmy Swaggert** (caught multiple times with prostitutes) and **Benny Hinn**. He is the latest edition of con artists in that area. Tele-evangelizing the bizarre idea that they believe that they could do what the Apostles did: they have the power to heal, the power to cast out disease.



On Television and live, people heard and saw **Benny Hinn** say that, "**If you have somebody in your family die. Leave their body in the living room, take their body over to the TV, drape their arms over the TV, because God is going use me to raise**



the dead through the television!" There could not be a more insensitive and bizarre thing for a man to do, than to have some poor bereaved person drag the corpse of their family member and drape them over the television, under some bizarre illusion that **Benny Hinn** is going to heal them through the TV set!!

But that is only the extreme form of cruelty. There is a cruelty that goes along day after day, week after week, with this bizarre expectation of healing, and then this false staging of supposed healings, that continue to raise people's hopes, and all that does is create false hopes that are dashed to pieces. And much of the fallout of that movement is people who reject the gospel, reject Christ, because they didn't get what they were promised they would get.

The defining elements of Pentecostalism and what gives it its identity are unbiblical. Also the leaders of those people who purvey and ply the trade, particularly in the media, know they are deceivers, and they are very effective at it--raising millions of dollars. A con artist and business preacher like Joyce Meyer makes no less than \$900,000 a year... One such preacher alone, **T. D. Jakes**, took in, personally, last year, 63 million dollars! They are trading on certain desperation. That's why Jesus, when He sent out the Seventy, said,



"go and heal, but take no money". Luke 9:3. If you can heal people--you can be instantly rich. People get instantly rich who can't heal, but pretend they can.

It would be fair to say that somewhere in that movement there is a true body of believers, not to be confused with the Movement, which is full of schemers, dreamers, and con men, and people with aberrant theology, and false teachers who take advantage of people. And then people in the middle: there's the heretics of the Word-Faith Movement: People like **Fred Price, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Marilyn Hickey, Joyce Meyer**, etcetera, who have an aberrant view of the nature of Christ. They are the ones who say, that **on the cross Jesus became a sinner**, had to go to hell and suffer for His sins for three days, and then the Father let Him come out of hell, and that is when He was raised. They turned Jesus the Son of God and the second Person of the Holy Trinity into a sinner who had to be punished for sin. This is a true heresy and cultism and a frightening view of Christ. Also, **Kenneth Copeland** once said, "That Jesus wasn't any more God than he is!"

Church services are very informal, avoiding the Divine Liturgy of the original churches. Music is more of a contemporary nature, and absent is the dry, old fashion singing of hymns nowadays. People feel free to dance during the service and go to the altar when desired, and praise God in a heavenly prayer language of 'tongues.' Services tend to be very emotional. Emphasis is put upon Music in Assemblies of God, as well as the preaching.

Local churches are independent in polity and in conduct of local affairs. The government of the assemblies is an unusual mixture of Presbyterian and congregational systems. District officers have a pastoral ministry to all the churches and are responsible for the promotion of home missions, and each district has a presbytery that examines and recommends credentialing of ministers. The 'General Superintendent' and other general church officers serve at the national headquarters in Springfield, Missouri.

What Are Pentecostals Teachings?

The Pentecostal movement continues to be very popular and powerful in this country and, indeed, throughout the world due to the attractive false aspect that one is close to God due to him speaking in tongues. We acknowledge that the phenomenon of tongues-speaking is widespread, and it is likely that no issue in Christendom has caused as wide a split in its ranks in modern times as has speaking in tongues.

Modern Pentecostals believe that their church traces its beginning to the point in history when the Holy Spirit descended unto the Apostles of our risen Lord, and the Apostles began speaking in tongues.



Pentecostal churches teach that Christians receive the Holy Spirit when they are first converted, but that they are not filled with the Spirit until they are “**baptized with the Spirit**”. This baptism of the Spirit is not considered necessary for salvation, but people are encouraged to seek it in order to receive additional power to witness.



Spirit-baptism, Pentecostals believe, always includes “**speaking in tongues**”. Therefore, those who desire Spirit-baptism will seek to speak in tongues. However, any attempts to imitate the tongues of Pentecost are attempts to imitate only one of the miracles of that day. There were other miracles that day, too. God will give what he wants to give.

Some Pentecostals insist however that to be filled with the Spirit, one has to speak in tongues, and that other churches are void of any spirituality, especially those churches with are “dry”, “old”, “ritualistic”, “traditional” etc. They of course mean the original Orthodox and Catholic churches. However it is precisely their profound ignorance and attempt to keep their masses from educating themselves in Christian history, theology, ethics, ecclesiology, Christology and other subjects that keep them blinded into the self-made prison of faith.

To bring forth “evidence” of their “true faith” they usually quote the following verses from the Bible to Apostolic and Orthodox Christians, in the meanwhile calling themselves “apostolic”.

Mk. 16:17 "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues."

Acts 10:46-47 "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

Acts 19:6 "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied."

1Cor. 13:1 "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

1Cor. 14:18 "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than you all"

1Cor. 14:39 "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." Etc.

They emphasize especially that: The Pentecostal movement teaches the Full-Gospel. It does not exclude any of the Scriptures. We believe that Jesus is the “*same yesterday, and today, and forever.*” Heb.13:8.

Furthermore, Pentecostals reject the higher learning about faith and theology and the study of scholastic study of scripture. Pentecostals often quote the religious Jewish leaders statement in reference to the apostles in Jerusalem, "*these are ignorant and unlearned men*" (Acts 4:13) They



often forget some facts in biblical history, such as that God chose Saul to become the Apostle Paul to compose almost 65% of the New Testament. He used a man of high intellect and education.

*"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, **educated under Gamaliel**, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today." Acts 22:3*

*"Although **I myself might have confidence even in the flesh**. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, **I far more**: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless." Phil. 3:4-6*

Paul and the Church of Corinth

On Paul's second major journey to preach the gospel to gentiles, he went into Europe, preaching briefly in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens (Acts 16:12-17:15).

In Corinth, however, Paul spent a year and a half (Acts 18:1, 9-11) — a long stay for an apostle who was *"constantly on the move"* (2 Corinthians 11:26). Corinth was a seaport city with a reputation for immorality. There Paul found both Jews and gentiles who wanted to hear and be taught the Word of God.

After the congregation had been established in Corinth, Paul eventually moved on — to Ephesus in Asia Minor, Caesarea in Judea, Antioch in Syria, and, after a few years, to Ephesus again (Acts 18:18-23; 19:1). While in Ephesus, he heard about the Corinthian church. The news was not good — the new Christians were arguing among themselves about several aspects of Christian behavior. Their example was making Christianity undesirable, even to the immoral pagans,

The Corinthian Christians sent Paul a letter asking him for advice about a number of topics, including the topic of tongues. (A letter similar is still in the Armenian classical Bible appendix). They had been



speaking in tongues frequently, and they asked him about this spiritual gift. Their letter gave him an opportunity to give them the guidance they needed.

In his letter Paul criticized them because their arguments were ruining the unity that Christians ought to have. *"Some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you"* 1 Corinthians 1:11. *"I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it"* 1 Corinthians 11:18. *"Your meetings do more harm than good"* Verse 17.

In their disagreements, some of the people claimed to follow one Christian leader, and some claimed to follow another (1 Corinthians 1:12). The behavior of the Corinthian Christians was wrong, and Paul had to correct them. *"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought"* Verse 10.



In chapters 1-4, Paul tried to help the Corinthians see the problems of disunity. They were acting like unbelievers (1 Corinthians 3:3). He told them what to do about sexual immorality within the Church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:12-20) and lawsuits between Christians (verses 1-8). These subjects illustrate the problems the congregation was having. Paul had to set them straight with strong words. Then Paul began to answer their questions. *"Now for the matters you wrote about..."* 1 Corinthians 7:1. First, he dealt with the topic of marriage in chapter 7. Chapter 8 begins to address their next subject: *"Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies"* (verse 1).



From the way Paul writes his letter, we can tell that the Corinthian Christians were proud of their *"knowledge."* Paul points out that their knowledge, at least the way they were using it, was harmful to their spiritual growth. Their knowledge was causing arguments and divisions in the congregation. Love, he writes, is more valuable, and it is a better indicator of Christian living. Chapter 9 explains Paul's right as an apostle, and chapter 10 continues the subject

of food sacrificed to idols. In chapter 11, Paul comments on some problems the Corinthians had in their worship meetings.

In chapter 12, Paul tells us that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, even though they are all inspired by the same Spirit. God gives these special abilities "for the common good" — so Christians can help one another. Paul lists various gifts, including "*speaking in different kinds of tongues, and...the interpretation of tongues*" (verse 10). The Greek word *charismata* means "gifts."

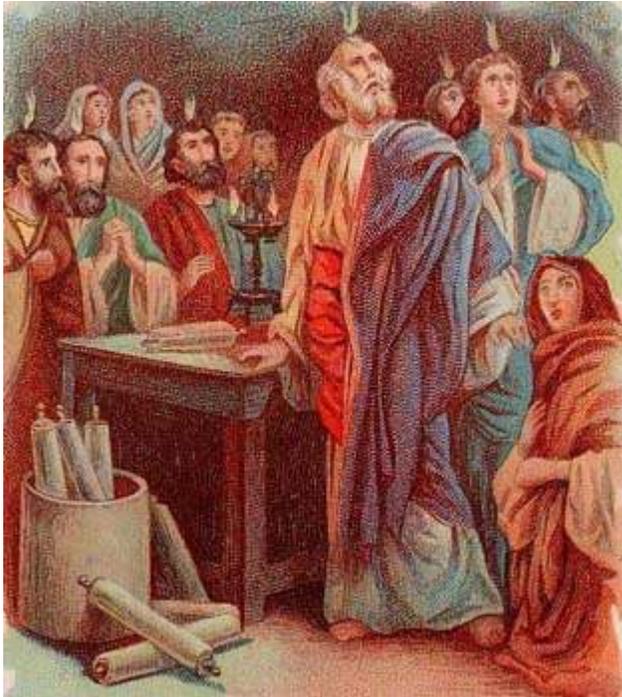
Paul lists similar spiritual gifts in his letter to the Roman Christians (Romans 12:6-8), but that list doesn't mention tongues or interpretation.

Not everyone has the same spiritual gift or ability, Paul notes. "*God distributes them: one power to one person, another gift to the next person, a third ability to another, just as God determines*"¹

Corinthians 12:8-11. By dividing the gifts in this way, God encourages members to work with and help one another. The analogy of a human body illustrates this. Feet, hands, eyes and other parts serve different functions. By contributing to the body as a whole, the various parts serve one another. So it is in the Church, the Body of Christ (verses 12-27). God appoints people with various spiritual functions: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, helpers, administrators and speaking in different kinds of tongues (verse 28). "*Are all apostles?*" asks Paul. (**Of course not!**) Neither are all Christians prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, tongue-speakers or interpreters. (Verses 29-30).

What 'Is' Speaking in Tongues?

Here is the passage from the New Testament regarding the first instance of speaking in tongues:



"1. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8. Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9. Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10. Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of*

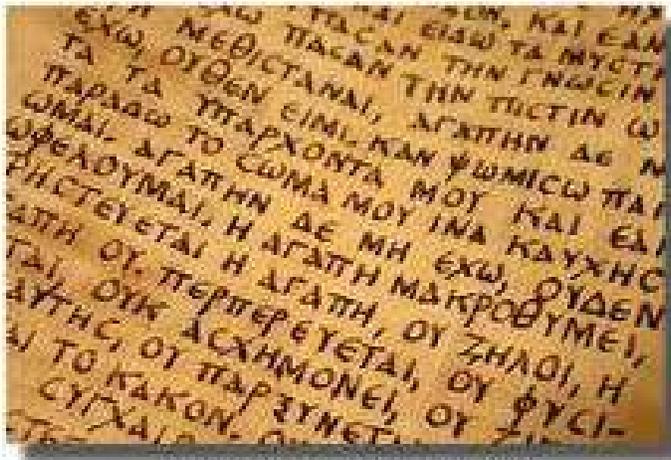
* Some Church fathers such as St. Augustine and Tertullian mention the word "Armenians" instead of Judea(ns) here in the New Testament.

Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11. (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13. Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." Acts: 2:1-13

All Apostolic, Catholic and Orthodox Christians who study the scriptures, are in agreement that the gift of tongues is present in the inspired Scriptures. In the New Testament two lists of gifts appear in which the gift of tongues is included. In 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 "**kinds of tongues**" and "**the interpretation of tongues**" are said to be freely bestowed gifts of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 "tongues" appears in the list of gifts. We call them "spiritual gifts" from the Greek word 'charisma', suggesting that the gift is a bestowment of God's grace. It is not a natural ability that one might develop, but rather a special gift as those appearing in the above mentioned passages in First Corinthians.

The Holy Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of these gifts. Following the listing of the gifts, Paul adds, "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." 1 Corinthians 12:11. No one person has all the gifts, nor are we to seek the gifts. We must be careful that we do not confuse the **Spirit as a gift** to the **believer with the gifts the Spirit gives to believers**. Every believer has received the gift of the Spirit, but not every believer has received the gifts which the Spirit bestows. They are two different things.

The term that is used to identify the tongues movement is "**glossolalia**," made up of two Greek words, γλωσσα (*glossa* - language or tongue) and λαλια (*lalia* - speech). It therefore means speaking in languages or tongues. 'Glossology'¹ is that department of anthropology which has to do with the study and classification of languages and dialects.



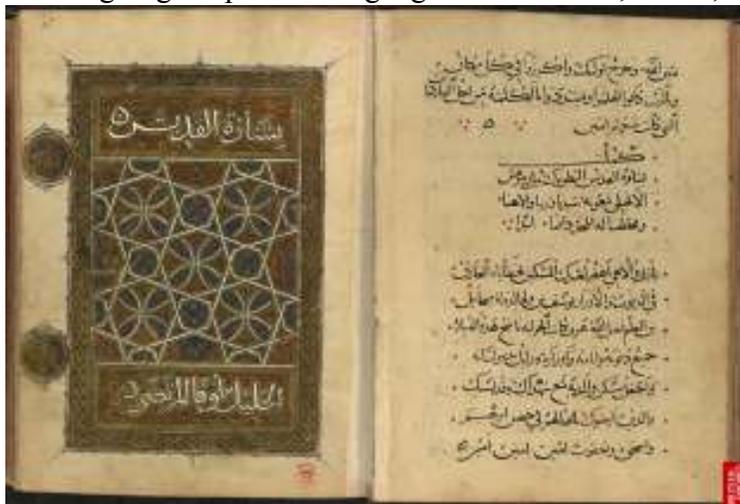
Greek Manuscript of 1st Corinthians 13

The word *glossa* appears in the Greek New Testament not less than fifty times. It is used to refer to the physical organ of the tongue as in James 3:5 "Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark"; once in reference to the flames of fire shaped like tongues, "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." Acts 2:3; at least once in a metaphorical sense when referring to speech as in the statement, "my tongue (speech) was glad (joyous)", "David said about him: "I saw the

Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope" Acts 2:25-26. As far as I understand the remaining usages of the word it always means a language.

¹ Or Linguistics – dictionary.reference.com

When our Lord predicted the gift of tongues (the only mention of tongues in the four Gospel records) He said, *“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues”* Mark 16:17 KJV. The adjective “new” (Gr. *kainos*) can only mean they were going to speak in languages new to them, that is, languages they had not learned or used until that time.



If I say **“the Chinese language is ‘new’ to me”**, I do not mean that I never knew there was such a language or tongue as Chinese, but rather its use by me is new to me because I can neither speak it nor understand it when I hear others speak it. On the other hand the Arabic language is not altogether “new” to me because I can both read and speak it with an excellent degree of understanding.

In Acts 2:4 Luke uses a different adjective when he says, *“they began to speak with other tongues.”* The word “other” (Gr. *heteros*) simply means that they spoke in languages different from the normal language they were used to. The context totally supports this. Notice the surprised reaction on the part of the hearers—*“And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how we hear every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?”* Acts 2:7-8 KJV.

Every man heard them speak in his own language Acts 2:6. Here the word “language” is the translation of *dialekto* from which our word “dialect” comes. The two words *glossa* (tongue) and *dialektos* (language) are used synonymously, making it clear that the disciples were speaking in known languages other than the language native to them like Hebrew or Aramaic. In verses 9-11 the languages are then identified. It was a miraculous phenomenon which enabled the disciples to speak in languages which they had never learned. Here in this Acts passage we have tongues-speaking in its pure and unperverted form as God gave it.

In Acts chapter 2, we read that the Apostles spoke in tongues (languages). Is there a gift of tongues? Yes, there is a legitimate gift of speaking in tongues, but it is not the foolish jibber-jabber nonsense of the Pentecostals or Assemblies of God and their heretical wayward ministers. The Bible could not be clearer if you read the biblical verse. Acts 2:6 clearly reads that **“...every man heard them speak in his own language.”** As the Apostles spoke in tongues, the multitudes of people from at least sixteen different nations each heard the gospel presented **IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE...**

“And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” Acts 2:7-11.

Notice the phrase in Acts 2:11, "**our tongues**". The crowds heard the Apostles preach in their own native tongues, not some unknown heavenly jibber jabber. There was never any heavenly languages spoken that no one understood and required an interpreter. There is a drastic difference between Biblical tongues and the heretical speaking in tongues of the Assemblies of God churches.

The following verses in the Book of the Revelation should be examined carefully: Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15.

Rev. 5:9. *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue (gloossees) and people and nation,*

Rev. 7:9. *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (gloossoon), standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

Rev. 10:11. *And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues (gloossais), and kings."*

Rev. 11:9. *Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues (gloossoon), and nations will see their dead bodies three and a half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.*

Rev. 13:7. *And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue (gloossan), and nation.*

Rev. 14:6. *Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue (gloossan), and people.*

Rev. 17:15. *And he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. (gloossai)*

In each passage where the word "tongue" is mentioned it means one of the languages associated with the various nationalities and races. I see no reason why anyone should raise a question as to the tongues in those passages in Mark, Acts and Revelation meaning languages.

"Tongues" in 1 Corinthians

The more serious problems arise in the interpretation of the twenty-one references to tongues in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14. There are those who tell us that the tongues in First Corinthians are ecstatic utterances not known in any country on earth. They base their conclusion on the term "unknown" which appears in 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19, and 27. But the reader of this chapter in God's Word must not fail to observe that the word "unknown" in every place where it appears is in italicized letters, which means that it **does not occur in any Greek manuscript but was inserted by translators**. The Holy Spirit did not inspire the Apostle Paul to write that the tongue is unknown.

I find no warrant for changing the meaning of tongues in First Corinthians. In every other place where the word is used it means languages. Why then should the meaning be changed in First Corinthians? I know of no textual license that will warrant changing the meaning of the word. All the usages of tongues in Paul's treatment of the



subject refer to foreign languages. *“So likewise you, 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.”* 1 Corinthians 14:9.

There is no reason for anyone to speak except to converse intelligibly. The Greek word *laleo* means “I speak.” The word is never used for mere sound or noise. Nor is it used for a mere mumbling or muttering of unintelligible gibberish. The tongues-speaking in the New Testament was in the native languages of hearing people.

The supernatural phenomenon which took place at Pentecost was the exercise of a gift, whereby many people from many countries, gathered at Jerusalem, heard God's message in their own language. That was a miracle of God, just like He did so but only confusing their languages and speech at the Tower of Babel. (Genesis 11:1-9). The difference is that in Genesis God suddenly punished the wicked with languages not to understand each other, and thus collapses their plan, while in the New Testament He blesses the Church with the knowledge of languages, to communicate the Holy Gospel of the risen Lord Jesus and edify the faithful.

It would be an arbitrary and strange interpretation of Scripture that would make tongues-speaking in the New Testament anything other than known languages. There is no trace of Scriptural evidence that tongues were ever heard by anyone as incoherent, incomprehensible babbling.

Tongues of Angels

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” 1 Corinthians 13:1. The common Charismatic interpretation of this verse says that tongues is a heavenly prayer language spoken by angels.

We need to make a distinction between the word "tongue" and the word "tongues". When the word tongue (singular) is used, it is a reference to a single language. When the word tongues (plural) is used,

it refers to more than one language. So, we must remember to define our terms properly according to the Bible.

Tongue = one language.

Tongues = more than one language.

To say that, "**Tongues is a heavenly prayer language.**" doesn't make sense. To use proper English, we would have to say, "**Tongues are heavenly prayer languages.**" But no one says that tongues are prayer languages (plural). They, misunderstanding the terms, use the word **tongues** as if it were the same as the word **tongue**. This results in a twisting of scripture.

This passage says "tongues" (plural), not "tongue" (singular). It says "tongues of men and of angels". There are tongues (plural) of men and there are tongues (plural) of angels. This passage does not say that angels speak in "a tongue" (one language). It says that angels speak in "tongues" (more than one language as they did so many times in the Old and New Testament pages). This passage, then, does not say that angels speak in a heavenly language.

What, then, is this passage saying? It says that if I were able to speak with all the tongues (languages) that a man might be able to speak with (some men know over a dozen) and even with all the tongues (languages) that angels are able to speak with (in other words know 'Everything' be all knowledgeable) but if I do not have charity (love), I am just making a lot of noise. This verse is making the point that love is far more important than speaking in tongues (languages), and that is its acute and precise meaning.

Did God Ever "Speak in Tongues"?

Now the Pentecostals claim that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. If you were to ask some Pentecostals why they speak in tongues they would hesitate or reply for power, the pastor tells them to or because they see everybody else doing it.

The God of Orthodox Christianity is the one and only God of the Universe, who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent and consists of the Holy Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When God spoke to the prophets and people in the Old Testament, we never come to any instance where He spoke to them in languages that were foreign to them or in the Pentecostal understanding of "tongues", but he spoke to them like a human, with an audible voice, and with the intent to convey the Divine message to the intended person in order to fulfill His holy commands.

His messengers and angels also spoke in the same manner to **Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos**, etc. In the New Testament they spoke to **Mary, Peter, Paul,**



Phillip, John, James, John the Theologian etc. We never see any prophet of God or apostle or biblical saint, and **not even Jesus Christ himself (in his human body) speaks in tongues**, as Pentecostals and charismatic movement followers would love to see. However Jesus spoke in the “tongues” of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and probably Latin. God spoke to people and they understood very well what He said, because he spoke in their language and even wrote on walls in their language. (Daniel 5:24-25). Languages themselves were the creation of God at the Tower of Babel and are thus His miracle.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever, *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”* 1 Corinthians 14:33. If God allowed us to worship Him through the means of language, and spoke to humanity in their understood tongues, there is no need to act “holier than” what God prescribed us to be.

Therefore the same argument should be used in authorship and writing of the Holy Scriptures, if “speaking in tongues is “holier” that speaking in common languages or tongues, then why did God inspire the holy authors to compose the Scriptures in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek? *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”* 2 Peter 1:20-21. The Holy Spirit inspired the holy authors to write in languages, not jibber jabbers.

What is “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”?



John the Baptist predicted that Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:6-8). In Acts 1:5, Jesus told his disciples that they would receive this baptism in a few days. On the Festival of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the disciples (Acts 2:4), fulfilling the predictions of John the Baptist and Jesus. Peter said the Spirit had been poured out on them. Acts verses 17 and 33.

Years later, the Holy Spirit came on Cornelius and other gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). This was the same as the Holy Spirit being “poured out,” or having “received” the Holy Spirit (verses 45, 47), or being “baptized”

with the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:15-17). These baptisms of the Spirit were usually immediately followed by the baptism of water fulfilling the word of Christ: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”*** This cleanses the soul and the body of all ill and sin, and transforms the believer into being **born anew or again**.

All these terms refer to the same thing: The Holy Spirit is given to God's people. The promised baptism is available to all who believe (Acts 2:38-39). Paul indicated that people usually received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2). The book of Acts records several instances when people

were filled with the Holy Spirit. In all instances, **baptism of Water and Spirit** came together into the life of the believer.

When an individual believes in the Lord and His redemptive work, he receives the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together as the one, holy, inseparable God. But does every Christian who receives the Holy Spirit speak in tongues? The book of Acts records **many healings and other miracles**, but only **three incidents of tongues** as we shall see in this study. This suggests that tongue-speaking was not a common occurrence, but rather an extraordinary event as the apostles preached the gospel and established the church.

It is clear that the absolute majority of New Testament Christians did not speak in tongues. This was again the factor connected to the usage of language familiar to them and not a foreign tongue or language of communication. Several verses tell us that people were "filled with the Holy Spirit," but without any mention of tongues. Let's notice the following events:

Not long after Pentecost, the apostles were praying for God's help. After they finished praying, *"the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly"* (Acts 4:31). The apostles had already been filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Here they are filled again. Miraculous shaking is mentioned, but speaking in tongues is not. There is no mention of tongues when the Holy Spirit came on converts in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17), when the Ethiopian eunuch was converted (Acts 8:38), when Saul, who became Paul, was converted (Acts 9:17-18), when he confronted a sorcerer (Acts 13:8-11) or when Paul first preached in Asia (verses 44-52). This doesn't prove that tongue-speaking did not occur, but it does indicate that it was not important to mention it. **Lastly, we note again that the Gospels never describe Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as speaking in tongues.**

The evidence, so far, is limited. The Book of Acts is primarily a story of what happened; the book doesn't contain many commands or promises. Like many histories, it focuses on unusual or groundbreaking events. There is little attempt to describe ordinary practices. The book of Acts gives us only a limited picture of speaking in tongues for the primary reason in using the term was to mean language, means of communication.

Paul and the other New Testament writers do not use the phrase "**baptism of the Spirit**", but they do write about the Holy Spirit being given to God's people. The Spirit is available to all believers as "*a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*" Ephesians 1:13-14.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul writes that all believers are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, the Church. In Ephesians 5:18 he tells us to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" In Greek, a writer could use a different form of a word to indicate whether a command was for a onetime event or for a continual activity. Paul used the continual form, indicating that Christians should always live according to the Spirit. He was not writing about an unusual experience that initiates people into a new status.

Nothing in Paul's epistles suggests that the gift of the Spirit comes in two steps or blessings. He does not suggest that the gift of tongues, for example, is evidence of having more spiritual power. Romans chapter 12 doesn't even mention tongues as a gift of importance. Church leaders were not required to



have the gift of tongues. Instead, they should be able to teach in a language that could be understood (1 Timothy 3:1-2, Titus 1:5-9).

What is the evidence of God's Spirit? What can prove that God is in us? **Only His love!** If we love others, if we love even our enemies, that is enough evidence that God's Spirit is guiding us.

If we are inspired to live God's way, if our lives show the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), we are giving evidence that God's Spirit is filling our minds and hearts. A good Christian example is a powerful witness to faith in Jesus Christ.

Tongue Speaking in Other Faiths:

The Holy Spirit can inspire language speaking, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and as we see in the book of Acts.

But tongue-speaking can happen in other ways too. Non-Christians, both ancient and modern, have spoken in tongues. Several ancient religions included tongue-speaking, usually not a real language, but simply strings of syllables, also called ecstatic speech:



There are records of ecstatic speech and the like in Egypt in the eleventh century B.C. In the hellenistic [Greek] world the prophetess of Delphi and the Sibylline priestess spoke in unknown or unintelligible speech. Moreover, the Dionysian rites contained a trancelike state as well as glossolalia. Many similar phenomena is exhibited by magicians and sorcerers of the first century world.²

Descriptions of ecstatic speech are common in the study of comparative religions.... The Delphic and Pythian religions of Greece understood ecstatic behavior and speech to be evidence of divine inspiration by Apollo.³

How did these ancient pagans speak in tongues? Perhaps they were given supernatural abilities by demons, but perhaps they did it simply from human ability. Modern investigations have found that tongues — or at least something that sounds like tongues — can come from a natural source, the human brain:

The tongues phenomena can be explained on psychological, sociological, physiological and linguistic ground alone.... The consensus of most social scientists is that glossolalia (tongue-speaking) takes place when a person is functioning in some type of altered mental state....

² G.R. Osborne, in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984, page 1100.

³ C.M. Robeck, Jr., in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, 1988, page 872.

...psychologists consider them [tongues] to be explainable in terms not necessarily supernatural or spiritual.... The psychological state of the glossolalist is altered in some way.⁴

Glossolalia is not language in the ordinary sense.... It is, rather, a willed and welcomed vocal event in which, in a context of attention to religious realities, the tongue operates within one's mood but apart from one's mind in a way comparable to the fantasy-languages of children.... Glossolalia is regularly both taught...and learned, and is in fact easy to do if one wants to.⁵

Glossolalia is a **learned skill**, however unconscious its mechanism. The occasions on which it is manifest are to a high degree dependent upon expectations of a specific group, expressed in part through ritualized procedures. Even the characteristic bodily motions accompanying dissociation and some aspects of modulations in the utterances are specific to a particular group and even to the leader who has "taught" the glossolalist. And the interpretation given to glossolalia depends upon the belief system of the group.⁶

Ecstatic speech⁷, although unusual, is a natural ability that can be taught. Tongue-speaking is not necessarily a miracle, so it cannot be proof of the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian Christians, however, had been assuming that tongue-speaking was proof of supernatural inspiration. From the way that Paul writes, we conclude that some of the Corinthians had a real spiritual gift for speaking in tongues. However, others were imitating the gift. Some of the Corinthians emphasized tongue-speaking as a visible evidence of being spiritual, perhaps influenced by the importance given to ecstatic sounds in pagan religions,. In doing so, they were neglecting the more important parts of Christianity, such as love. "Brothers, stop thinking like children" says Paul to them in verse 20. Paul did not mean that tongue-speaking was childish, but rather that the Corinthian emphasis on tongues was childish. Paul quoted a passage from Isaiah 28:11-12 to point out that speaking in strange tongues is not always an effective way to bring people to God.

Paul redirected their thoughts to help them see a better way. He started by reminding the Corinthians of their pagan past (1 Corinthians 12:2), and he gave an extreme example to show that not every saying is inspired by God (verse 3). Messages need to be examined before they can be accepted (1 Corinthians 14:29, 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21). God would not inspire a message that would contradict His commands or the way of love. Since the message needs to be evaluated, it also has to be understood. That is why Paul says the gift of tongues, if there is no interpreter, is only for private use (1 Corinthians 14:28).

Tongues are a sign "for unbelievers." People who don't yet believe in God look for miraculous proofs (1 Corinthians 14:22). But even if they see tongues, they may scoff, perhaps saying the people are drunk, crazy or even demon-inspired (verse 23, Acts 2:13). This happened in my case, when some years ago I was a student in an evangelical college in Pasadena, and it happened that we were invited

⁴ Klemet Preus, *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 46, 1982, pages 280-281.

⁵ J.I. Packer, *Churchman*, Vol. 94, 1980, pages 108-109.

⁶ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 1983, page 120.

⁷ Non-language syllables produced when the brain sends signals to the organs of speech (throat, tongue and lips) but the language center of the brain does not organize the signals. The person can be conscious or in a trancelike state.

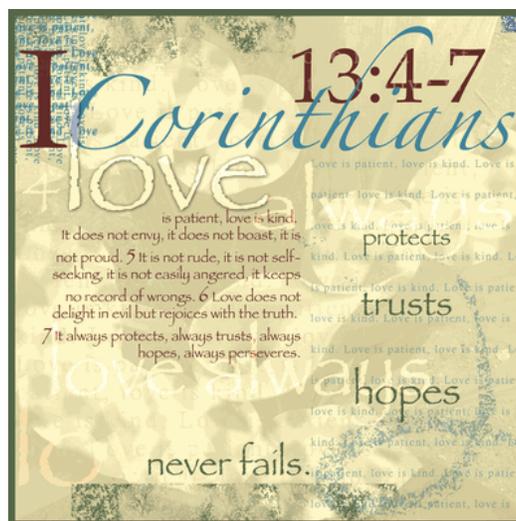
to an event that was spiritual and we had an Arab Muslim student along with us. After making it to that “event” we found out that it was a Pentecostal prayer meeting, and you could surely imagine the reaction of our friend.. He said “No way for me! I am million times better off in my faith of Islam if this is your so-called “Christianity”.

Tongues, as a sign, do not lead people to the obedience and faith in Jesus our Lord. Christians, who already believe, need to look for the less spectacular but more important change in the human heart, a change Paul describes as the way of love. Speaking in tongues can be self-induced. It could also be group-induced. Lastly, speaking in tongues can be satanically-induced.

1 Corinthians Chapter 13

We come now to the question, ‘**Is the gift of tongues a part of God’s program for the Church today?**’ If it is, then we would be wrong if we closed our minds to it. If it is not, then we are wrong if we insist upon the exercise of tongues-speaking.

Let us turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Now keep in mind the fact that the subject in Chapters 12-14 is spiritual gifts with the main emphasis on tongues, because tongues was the one gift that the Corinthians were abusing.



1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5. does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6. does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7. bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

*8. **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**. 9. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.*

*11. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, **I put away childish things**. 12. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. 13. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; **but the greatest of these is love.***

Chapter 12 concludes with “tongues” (12:30) and Chapter 13 begins with “tongues” (13:1). Obviously from the behavior of the Corinthians they were lacking in the fruit of the Spirit, namely, love. And so in Chapter 13 the Apostle dwells upon the essential ingredient of love which supersedes the gifts, and without which the Christian is nothing at all.

Among the Corinthians there were quarreling and division, but the needed fruit of the Spirit, love, was missing, so Paul writes, *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (or love), I am become as sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal”* 1 Corinthians 13:1. In Corinth the tongues-speaking amounted to so much noise because carnality had invaded their exercise of the gift. Even today there is a kind of spiritual prestige associated with tongues-speaking. For a Christian to show off any gift that God has given, manifests pride that is lacking in love, and where love is lacking, the exercise of any gift is worthless.

If Christians would take seriously, within context, all of the teaching about tongues in 1 Corinthians, they could not fail to see that tongues-speaking would cease. Paul writes, *“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.”* (13:8). There will always be the need for love; therefore love will never drop off. But when the canon of Scripture is made “perfect” (or complete), there will be no further revelation from God, neither in predictive prophecy nor in divinely revealed knowledge other than prophecy. The gifts of “prophecy” and “knowledge” will be entirely unnecessary with the completion of the Scriptures.

Now what about tongues? *“Whether there are tongues, they will cease”* 13:8. Tongues shall cease (Gr. *patio*), that is, they shall come to a complete halt. Who needs tongues? Only the untaught, carnal babes in Christ, for Paul added, *“When I was a child, I spoke as a child... but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”* (13:11). The word “spoke” in context can only refer to speaking in tongues. So that Paul himself came to the place of Christian maturity, through God’s revelation to him, where tongues were no longer necessary. And so in the same tongues context he admonishes the Corinthians, *“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.”* (14:20). Experientially, tongues cease when the Christian matures on a diet of the meat of God’s Word, whereas tongues is baby talk.

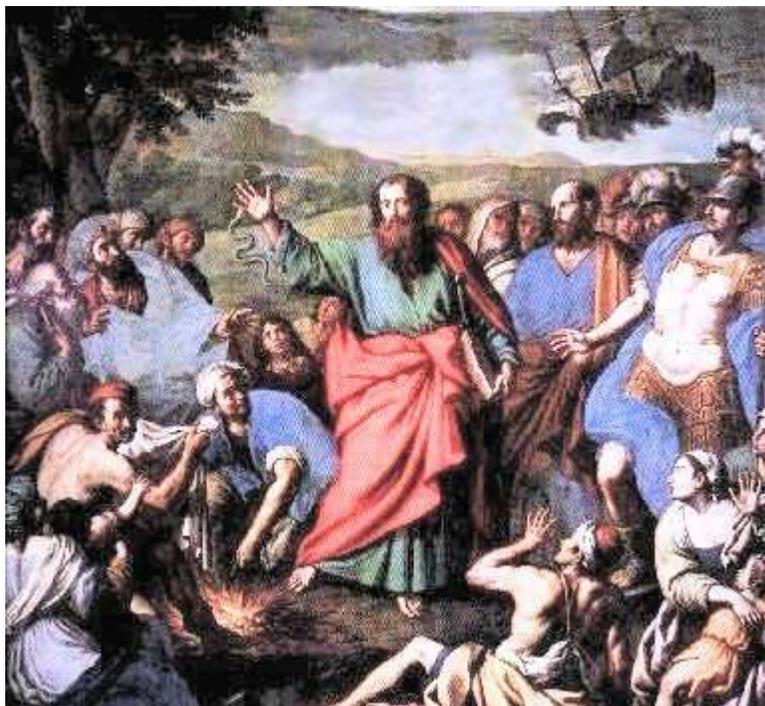
Why Did Some Speak in Tongues?

1) Communication of the Message of the Gospel:

With unmistakable clarity Paul says, *“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not . . .”* 1 Corinthians 14:22.

The word “sign” (Gr. *semeion*) in the New Testament is often associated with the conveying of a Divinely-given message to unbelievers. This is the emphasis in John 20:30-31 where we read, *“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name”*. The signs (miracles) were never performed without purpose, but because of the message they communicated.

The true function of the gift of tongues is “*for a sign . . . to them that believe not.*” To exercise the gift when unbelievers were not present would be exercising the gift above the purpose for which it was given. The gifts were never given for the self-satisfaction or self-glory of the recipients. The one upon whom the gift was bestowed was merely an instrument through whom God wanted to communicate His message.



Because of the abuse and misuse of tongues in the Corinthian Assembly Paul states its purpose. The spiritual immaturity of the saints in Corinth called for instruction, so in the middle of his discourse on *tongues* he writes, “*Brethren, be not children in understanding: however in malice be babes, but in understanding be men*” 1 Corinthians 14:20. The Greek word for “men” (*teleios*) means mature. In their misuse of speaking in tongues they were showing their immaturity, a behaviour pattern which characterized the believers at Corinth. The Apostle reminded them that they remained “babes in Christ” (3:1).

Their failure to grow up spiritually resulted from their neglected study of the Scriptures. The Epistle to the Hebrews stresses this point. “*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*” Hebrews 5:12-14. Peter wrote, “*as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*”. 1 Peter 2:2. One will find confusion and license where the study of God’s Word is neglected.

The Three Mentions of “Tongues” in the Book of Acts

Speaking in tongues was a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit. **But it, or any other gift, can be misused.** Speaking in tongues was no mark of spirituality, because the Corinthian church was unspiritual, having manifested carnality (3:1-3) and even gross sin (5:1). And so Paul points them to a Scripture they should have known, saying, “*In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, says the Lord*” (12:21).

Paul is here referring to a prophecy God had given through Isaiah. The nation of Israel had failed to heed God’s message which He gave through their own prophets, so the Lord told them that at a future time they will hear His message through tongues (languages) other than their own. “*For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people*” Isaiah 28:11. Thus Paul sees in this Isaiah prophecy the gift of tongues as a sign to Israel. The words “*this people*” in the verse, in its

context, can refer only to Israel. The abuse of tongues-speaking in Corinth did not arise from the belief in speaking in tongues, but rather in the neglect of the Scriptures which teach its proper use.

This purpose of the gift of tongues, namely to communicate God's message to Israel, is verified in the three passages in Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned. In the **first mention** of tongues in Acts chapter 2, tongues-speaking was used as a missionary or evangelistic tool in fulfillment of Isaiah 28:11. There was no need for the disciples to learn other languages before they could communicate the Gospel. God overcame the language barrier through the miracle-gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost there were "*Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven*" Acts 2:5. And when the disciples "*began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*" Acts 2:4, the hearers responded with the question, "*And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?*" Acts 2:8. Observe that they were "**Jews**" from other countries who spoke many languages and dialects, and yet each heard the Gospel in his own tongue. Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled.

In Acts 10:46 the **second mention** of speaking in tongues occurs. The occasion again was to communicate the Gospel, this time for the purpose of effecting the conversion of Cornelius and his house. This event cannot be totally disassociated from Pentecost because Peter, when relating this experience, said, "*And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning*". Acts 11:15. At the house of Cornelius tongues-speaking was a sign to Jews at a time when the Gospel was being communicated (Acts 10:44-46).

In Acts 19:6 there appears the **third mention** in Acts in which speaking in tongues is recorded. Again its purpose was missionary and evangelistic. When Paul came to Ephesus he encountered twelve disciples of John the Baptist. He asked them, "*Did you receive the Holy Ghost when (**not since**) you believed?*" Acts 19:2. These at Ephesus considered themselves to be Christians because they had heard through Apollos the message of John. For, there is a belief to salvation, and a belief that does not result in salvation. The latter is a mere academic, intellectual belief that even Satan and the demons have (James 2:19. cf. Mark 5:7). Doubtless there are people today who have an historical faith in Jesus Christ as a man and even the Son of God, but who have not been saved. Paul suspected that such was the case with the disciples of John whom he met at Ephesus. When he learned they were not saved, he told them they must trust Christ for their salvation. "*And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.*" Acts 19:6. Again the purpose for speaking in tongues is obvious, namely, to communicate the Gospel message.

These are the only instances of tongues-speaking recorded in the Bible, except the passage in First Corinthians. None of the later Epistles mention speaking in tongues. The gift was used only in the transitional period between Law and Grace. The sign gifts continued through the period of the Apostles while the New Testament was in the process of being written.

2) To confirm the message of the Gospel:

It was not merely a *communicating* sign but a *confirmatory* sign as well. When the Apostles used the gift of 'tongues', it was because they did not have what you and I have today, the completed Word of God, God's full and final revelation to man. The biblical canon was not full yet. There wasn't even a written New Testament. Paul was not even called to apostleship. Therefore, when they went about preaching the Gospel, their message was confirmed by the exercise of the sign gifts. Tongues-speaking vindicated both the message and the messenger. "*Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished*

among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds". 2 Corinthians 12:12. If one could find an Apostle living today who saw the bodily-resurrected Lord Jesus, he would not be exercising the sign gifts because he would have what you and I have, and what Peter, Paul and John did not have, the completed written Word of God. Now that we have the Scriptures, we do not need miracles to confirm God's message.



Signs were for the Jews rather than for Gentiles. "For the Jews request a sign . . ." 1 Corinthians 1:22. Repeatedly it was the Jews who asked for a sign. "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." Matthew 12:38. Again, "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven." Matthew 16:1. "So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" John 2:18. "Therefore

they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do?" John 6:30. All these who asked for a sign were Jews, and their insistence upon signs will at last be their sad end.

Let us who are Christ's not be seeking signs as did the unbelieving Jews. We who are the Lord's have the Holy Scriptures, so let us "*walk by faith, not by sight*" 2 Corinthians 5:7. Whenever the gift of *tongues* was exercised, Jews were present, tongues-speaking being used either to communicate the Gospel or else to confirm to the Jews that the Gentiles were worthy of salvation and should therefore have the Gospel also. Such confirmations are seen in Acts 10:45 and 19:6. "*And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.*" Mark 16:20.

If anyone denies the message of God's written Word today, there is no other court of appeal. In the days of the Apostles, (the New Testament being yet non-existent), the Holy Spirit supported their message by accompanying it with signs. But after those holy and inspired men completed writing the New Testament, such confirmations were no longer necessary.

A significant New Testament passage which adds to the fact that the sign gifts were given to confirm the Gospel message is Hebrews 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?*" If the Epistle to the Hebrews was written between 63 and 70 A.D. it

would be obvious that the people to whom the message was “confirmed” with signs and gifts were that generation immediately following our Lord’s death.

Why is it Wrong to Speak in Tongues?

One has to see Paul’s introduction to the subject of spiritual gifts. And incidentally, this is the only place in the entire Bible where spiritual gifts are discussed. The Apostle writes, “Now concerning spiritual **gifts**, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” 1 Corinthians 12:1. In the Authorized King James Version the word “gifts” is in italicized letters, telling us that it did not appear in any of the Greek manuscripts but was inserted by translators. In the NRSV version, the word “gift” has a second choice of “spiritual persons”. Paul actually said to the Corinthians, “I don’t want you to be ignorant about *pneumatica*” (the spirituals), meaning of course the spiritual gifts.

Now the Corinthians were not ignorant of the *fact* of the spiritual gifts, for the Apostle had already said to them, “so that you come short in no gift” (1:7). When he said, “I do not want you to be ignorant”, he was not speaking about their ignorance of the *existence* of the gifts, but rather about their **ignorance** of the right **exercise** of the gifts. They were well informed as to what the spiritual gifts were, but they were ignorant about the proper use of the gifts, as is evidenced by the mistakes they made in their exercise of them.

Before Paul goes into a discussion of the spiritual gifts, he reminds them of how easily they were led astray. He says, “You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led” (12:2). In essence he is saying, “Before you tell me about your experience let me remind you of your lack of spirituality”, and therefore your inability to differentiate between the Holy Spirit and false spirits” (2:15). Because they were carnal, “babes in Christ” (3:1), their exercise of the gifts were self-induced by fleshly energy, not by the Holy Spirit. All Christians do not use their gifts properly, so that a Christian’s use of a gift might not be in accord with the Word of God. Mistakes can be made by any of us in the exercise of a gift.

1) Speaking in tongues is not synonymous with the baptism of the Holy Spirit: It is unscriptural teaching which says that all who are baptized by the Holy Spirit will speak in tongues. The Scriptures state emphatically that all baptized and saved persons have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*”. 1 Corinthians 12:13. All the believers at Corinth received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, however all did not speak in tongues. The question asked in verse 30, “***Do all speak with tongues?***” is so phrased so as to convey the expected answer, “**No.**”

The baptizing work of the Spirit is not an experience in the believer after salvation. Rather it is that act of the Holy Spirit which joins the believing sinner to the Body of Christ. More emphatically, there is no other means whereby one can become a member of the Holy Church which is Christ’s Body. All saved persons have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, but not all saved persons speak in tongues. The baptizing work of the Spirit places the believer in the Body of Christ.

Be careful that you do not confuse the baptism of the Spirit with the command to be “*filled with the Spirit*” in Ephesians 5:18. All believers share equally in this position in Christ and thus share equally in union with Him. There is only ONE experience of baptism by the Holy Spirit but there can be many

experiences of being filled with the Spirit. Paul said that not all of the Corinthian Christians spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5), and yet he stated clearly that all had been baptized with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13).

2) Speaking in tongues is an evidence of being filled with the Spirit: All believers are commanded to “*be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit*” Ephesians 5:18, but nowhere in Scripture are believers commanded to speak in tongues. A Christian can be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit and not speak in tongues. There are numerous instances when the disciples were filled with the Spirit but did not speak in tongues. See Acts 4:31 and 13:9-11. To be Spirit-filled is to be Spirit-controlled. Are we to believe that the thousands of mightily used men and women of God who were among the world’s best apostles, saints, hermits, martyrs, virgins, missionaries teachers and godly people of Christ’s Gospel were never filled with the Holy Spirit because they never spoke in tongues? Nonsense!

Can one know if one is filled with the Spirit? Look at one verse in the Bible where the command to be filled with the Spirit is recorded. “*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.*” Ephesians 5:18-21. To sum it up in one word, *Christlikeness* is the manifestation of being filled with the Spirit, and the Scriptures do not tell us that our Lord ever spoke in tongues.

3) Speaking in tongues is not the fruit of the Spirit: The fruit of the Spirit results from being filled with the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is mentioned in Galatians 5:22 and 23 includes nine characteristics. “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*”. The Christian who is filled with the Spirit will manifest the fruit of the Spirit apart from ever having spoken in tongues. As a matter of fact, in Ephesians and Galatians, where the fullness and fruit of the Spirit are discussed, tongues-speaking is not even mentioned once! Moreover, in the list of gifts mentioned by Paul, gifts that the ascended Lord bestowed upon His Church, the sign “gifts” is missing. “*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*”. Ephesians 4:11-12.

Spirituality does not depend on speaking in tongues. God’s goal for every child of His is to be Spirit-controlled, but that goal does not include speaking in tongues. No Christian need ever feel that he is lacking in spirituality because he has not spoken in tongues. Quality of life is the best evidence of the fullness and fruit of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptizer was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15), yet this Spirit-filled man did no miracles and never spoke in tongues (John 10:41). But he was so Christ-like that people who were looking for the Messiah were led to ask of him, “Are you the Christ?”

4) Speaking in tongues is not an evidence of one’s faith: To the contrary, the persons who seek signs and sign-gifts show their lack of faith. It is a sin for any Christian to seek for signs before he will believe God’s Word. What does the Word of God say about this? “*Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers*” 1 Corinthians 14:22. So you see, the Christians at Corinth were showing that they were weak in faith, and possibly some who identified themselves with the believer had never been saved. The person who seeks any sign, whether it be speaking in tongues or any other sign-gift, is either a babe in Christ or an unbeliever.

Thomas is an illustration of a disciple weak in faith who would not believe without seeing. After our Lord arose from death, He appeared to the disciples. *"But Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*" John 20:24-25. Thomas was like the Corinthians, weak in faith, demanding to see the sign (miracle) before he would believe.

Eight days later the Lord appeared again. *"Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing".* John 20:27. The doubting Thomas needed a sign, so the Lord appeared to him so that he would not continue without faith. And then He said to Thomas, *"Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"*. John 20:29. The Apostolic Christian who will study the Bible and believe what it says will walk by faith, not by sight or sound.

5) Speaking in tongues is not essential: It is clear that not all in the church at Corinth spoke in tongues. Why didn't they? The Apostle says, *"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit... 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 Corinthians 12:4, 8-11.

Please note that the gifts were given *"as He (the Holy Spirit) will,"* not as we will, *"just as He pleased"* (vs. 18), not us. The reason why all the Christians did not have the gift of tongues is because all of the gifts are divinely bestowed. The Spirit divides and distributes to each believer his own gift. Not one of us is capable of choosing his own gift. The Spirit will not give a gift according to our desire and the way we pray. Don't try to tell God which gift He should give to you and which He should not. We are but members of the Body, and no one member has any right to tell the Head what to do!

It would have been a mistake for the Corinthians to seek the gift of tongues because it is the least of all the gifts. Where the gifts are listed twice in 1 Corinthians 12, in each instance tongues and their interpretation are placed last (verses 8-11 and 28-30). Note the careful wording in the latter passage: *"First . . . secondarily . . . thirdly . . . after that . . ."* The least to be desired comes at the bottom of the list, the scale being according to importance and usefulness. The minor place of tongues is further stressed in 1 Corinthians 14:1, 5, 6, 19. The modern cult of tongues would have you believe that this gift is the only one that really counts and that every Christian ought to have it. The Corinthians were mistaken in overemphasizing the gift of tongues as the most coveted gift of all. To them tongues was the prestige gift, hence its misuse and abuse at Corinth.

Paul charges them with such misuse of the gifts in 12:31. When he writes, *"But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."* he is not exhorting or commanding them, as the imperative mood might indicate. Rather he is issuing a statement of fact, as is suggested in the indicative. In substance he is saying, *"You are selfishly desiring the more spectacular or demonstrative gifts."* And *"You are not satisfied to be a foot, concealed in a stocking and shoe; you want to be an eye. You want to be seen and heard."* And then the Apostle adds, *"And yet I show you a more excellent way"* 1 Corinthians 13:1.

6) Speaking in tongues is wrong for women: *“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak.”* (14:34). If speaking in tongues is a gift of the Spirit, then it was to be given to all Christians, whether male or female, young or old. But if there is a command from the Apostle for women to be silent in churches as he indicates also in verse 35, even calling it shameful for her to talk in a church, then why and how could they or modern day Pentecostal heretics, majority of which are women, speak in tongues? This action counters the biblical commands and if this admonition were heeded today, much of the present tongues movement would be eliminated.

Pentecostal women are the worst offenders of the Holy Bible in the modern confusion of tongues. The word “speak” in 14:34 is the same word used in verse 28, therefore it cannot mean mere “chatter” that would disturb a service in the church. The purpose of this entire section on speaking in tongues is to curb the wrong use of the gift. And if any women wanted to take issue with Saint Paul, he would ask them one question, “Which book in all the inspired Scriptures was written as the result of the Holy Spirit revealing the woman?” (Verse 36). It is a mistake for a woman to speak in tongues. *“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”* I Timothy 2:12. The point of this passage is that a woman’s ministry must not use authority over the man. She may teach women or children, and be humble and obedient.

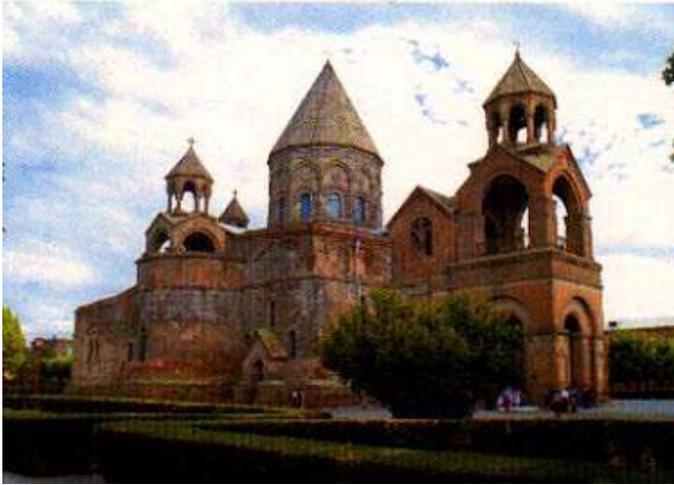
Pentecostals Seeking after Signs

Jesus said: "These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." Mark 16:17-18

Some people have taken these verses as a requirement, as if it were a commission that Christians ought to try to fulfill to prove their authenticity. Some groups attempt to pick up poisonous snakes without being harmed. The handlers usually avoid being bitten, but sometimes they are bitten and die. There were many instances that truly faithful Pentecostal people held poisonous snakes and were bitten immediately, some others jumped from second or third stories and died. But some others went through the experiences unharmed. The success rate does not matter. What is important is whether God wants his people to be doing this.

Should God's people do dangerous things so God will rescue them with a miracle for all to see that God approves of them? Say, for instance, if one is jumping out the window, should he jump from a flying airplane without parachute? And if they are to hold poisonous snakes, why not enter the den full of Komodo dragons or King Cobras? Walk in a fiery furnace like the three young boys, Shadrack Meshach and Abednego? Or jump into a lake full of Piranha fish? Are miracles necessary to prove that Christianity is right?





Faith does not come from seeing miracles. The Israelites who crossed the Red Sea saw numerous miracles, but they did not have the faith to obey God. And many Christians have believed without seeing anything dramatic. Take our **Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church** for example, when we gave countless upon countless priests, clergymen, martyrs, hermits, saints, virgins, doctors, deacons, laymen, women, elderly and children throughout the centuries, who did not see the Lord with their eyes, neither they perhaps witnessed any miracle and indeed did not “speak in tongues” in the sense that Pentecostals interpret the texts erroneously today. Yet they had iron

faith in the Lord and died in Him.. Were they not acceptable in the eyes of the Lord? Faith comes when God allows someone to believe the Gospel (Romans 10:13-14; John 6:44). **The primary miracle is in the heart and mind, not necessarily anything that can be seen.**

Moreover, God does not want us to do dangerous things in order to prompt his intervention. Satan tempted Jesus with such a challenge, and Jesus answered, "*Do not put the Lord your God to the test*" (Matthew 4:5-7). We should not try to force God to do anything. Such conduct shows a lack of faith.

The scripture in Mark 16 is a prediction, not a command. It simply says that some Christians would experience these miracles; it is not a promise to protect all Christians, or to heal all, or that all would speak in tongues, or that all would cast out demons. It indicates that various miracles would happen; it does not say how often they would happen.



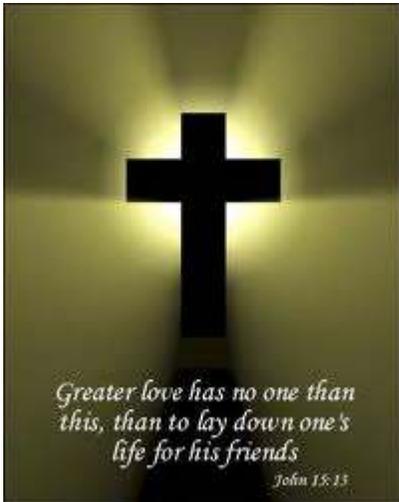
Miracles still occur today — healing, for example, it happens every day in thousands of situations at the hands of numerous Apostolic, Orthodox, Catholic priests and Evangelical ministers. Demons have been cast out. Christians have been miraculously spared from accidents. But others have died in faith and were not healed. So does that mean that the one's not healed had ‘no faith’?

The real proof of Christianity is **not miracles**. It is **the love of God, the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in us, motivating us to love one another and to love and obey God** (cf. Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; John 13:34-35; Romans 8:14; Acts 5:32).

Conclusion

Since the creation of man Satan's insidious master-plan has been to put a veil between the Church and Christians. Our present generation is witnessing the growing menace of satanic activity in the realm of the miraculous. Where the Devil does not succeed in taking the Bible from us, he works hard at taking

us from the Bible. And he succeeds in getting Christians to focus their attention on the claims of men and women to some supernatural experience, and in so doing those seekers after the experiences of others have neither time nor interest in searching the Scriptures for God's truth.



God does have a plan in His dealings with the human race, and that plan does not necessarily include the continuing repetition of the same miracles in every succeeding century of human history. The miracles of God are rare occurrences in history. Enoch's bodily transition from earth to heaven was a uniquely recorded miracle by God before the flood.

For the past 15 years since my college days, I have made it my practice to ask many of the leading Bible teachers and scholars, some of whom having a rich working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek and biblical knowledge, if they have ever "spoken in tongues". Among them are college and seminary presidents and professors. To date I have not had one of about sixty men tell me that he ever spoke in tongues!

I have been asked if I ever spoke in tongues... No, I have not... God and I have gotten along well for the past forty-one years of my life in Armenian but also in Arabic and English. I speak to Him in **Armenian**, and He hears and understands me. He speaks to me in Armenian through His Word, prayer books and life, the Armenian Bible, a miracle done with the hands of St. Mesrop Mashtots, St. Sahak Partev and King Vramshabouh of Armenia, and we Armenians understand Him through our sacred language, which itself is the gift of the Holy Spirit to our people.

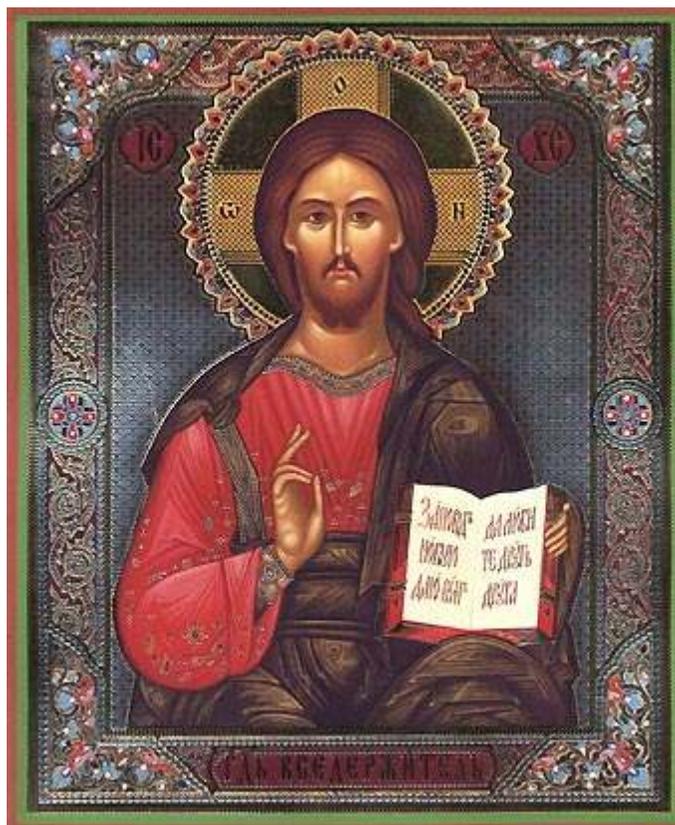
The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church **does not** need a new Bible, nor new apostles, nor new faith-healers, nor new charismatic movements, nor self-styled miracle workers. What the Armenian Church needs is to return to the Word of God and proclaim by living the life giving Divine Liturgy in the power and love of the Holy Spirit. By receiving the Lord every time we experience salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved". Romans 10:13.

My dear Pentecostal brother and sister, the real lesson of Pentecost is not in the miracles, phenomenon of unusual pictures or confusion, but in Peter's message: "Repent and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Loosening the tongue does not necessarily require a miracle, but loosening the heart in real repentance does. Whoever believes, repents and is baptized will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. No further steps or tarry jumping meetings are needed.



Look into the historical and truthful context of the scriptures and come to your roots, come back to the Armenian **APOSTOLIC** Church, come to your mother with open hearts and minds, a spirit full of joy and knowledge that the speaking in other languages or tongues is not the greatest of the gifts of God, neither are faith or hope, the church is not a phenomenon, the church is not a menu of miracles, the church is not a place of do's and don'ts, it is not a place that people should show certain events in order that their spirituality be known to others.

Put away the secondary, the unimportant, the unnecessary and come to the **ESSENTIAL**. Put away the childish way and be a man, a grown Christian, a soldier, a warrior, putting on the full armor of God, for all the apostles, saints, hermits, martyrs, virgins and godly people who went ahead from us, did not need the secondary, they had the first, the essential, the **LOVE** of God and were duly accepted by God into His Kingdom.



Bibliography

The New King James Version Bible: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2006.

Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987, pages 569-712.

Gaffin, Richard B., Jr. *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1979.

Green, Michael. *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

Hoekema, Anthony A. *Tongues and Spirit-Baptism: A Biblical and Theological Evaluation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Holdcroft, L. Thomas. *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Interpretation*. Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1979.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. "Tongues, Gift of." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, edited by David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992, pages 596-600.

Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. Vol. 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, pages 389-390, 440-441.

Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, page 120.

Osborne, G.R. "Tongues, Speaking in." *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, pages 1100-1103.

Packer, J.I. "Theological Reflections on the Charismatic Movement." *Churchman*, Vol. 94, 1980, pages 7-25, 103-125.

Preus, Klemet. "Tongues: An Evaluation From a Scientific Perspective." *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 46, 1982, pages 277-293.

Robeck, C.M., Jr. "Tongues, Gift of." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988, pages 871-874.

Roberts, Phil. *The Gift of Tongues: An Evaluation*. Hatfield, Pennsylvania: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1991.

Unger Merrill F., Vine W. E. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words: With Topical Index*: Thomas Nelson Publishing, Aug. 1996.