

# **An Examination of the Use of the Spiritual Gifts of Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues**

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Of the nine spiritual gifts mentioned in I Corinthians, Chapter 12, those gifts which are purely vocal gifts, the gift of tongues, the gift of interpretation of tongues, and the gift of prophecy are perhaps the most used, and most recognized gifts in operation within Apostolic churches of our day. I believe that there is general agreement in Apostolic ranks to say that they are also among the most *misused* gifts in operation today as well. Apostolic authors contend that “they have the greatest potential for misuse in a church service,”<sup>1</sup> and they were certainly misused in the Apostle Paul’s day—hence Paul’s instruction in I Corinthians.

In this paper I wish to examine both what the Scriptures have to say about these gifts, primarily the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues, and the use of these gifts as generally understood and practiced in Apostolic Pentecostalism from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present time. We shall examine conclusions commonly drawn from some biblical passages to see whether they indeed are supported by the texts—or whether these texts may support some other interpretation. I will *not* take the time to examine the regulation of the use of these gifts; phrases such as “*let it be* by two, or at the

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<sup>1</sup> David K. Bernard, *Spiritual Gifts* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2001) p. 215

most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret” (I Corinthians 14:27) shall not be discussed as these topics are adequately dealt with by other Apostolic authors. I will, however, use this paper to look primarily at the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues *as they are used together*. While the gift of tongues can and should be used in private devotion<sup>2</sup>, this will *not* be the focus of this paper.

### **The Gifts of the Spirit are Vital to the Church**

I will approach these gifts, and their continued and proper use as being *vital* to the growth and health of the body of Christ. It is the Lord who placed the gifts in the church (I Corinthians 12:11). *He* divided the gifts “severally to every man as He will,” I believe, for a purpose. The gifts, as a whole are *needed* in our day—as they were in the first-century church—because the church is ever and always, in this mortal life, in need of “edification, exhortation and comfort” (I Corinthians 14:3)—the stated purpose of these gifts. Therefore, if the gifts are needed in the church today as they were in the early church—and I contend that they are, it would follow that the *proper use* of the gifts should be employed in order to gain the benefit from the gifts *intended* by the Spirit. Misuse of the gifts can, and does, result in confusion, as noted by the apostle in I Corinthians 14:23;33,

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<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 14:4; 14-15; 18-19

and may *also* result in the church *not receiving* what is *intended* by the Spirit when He moves upon the members of His church employed in the gifts. The absence of the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in our churches would indicate ***that real needs are needlessly going unmet within the Church.***

It is my observation that the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit do not mark our services in Apostolic ranks as they used to in the past. Tongues and interpretation of tongues were common in public meetings, including conferences, in the early twentieth century up until perhaps the 1970's. Unfortunately, it is rare that conferences are marked by such manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit in our day. I must ask why that is! Do we no longer have the same needs as the early church? I sincerely doubt it. I see more needs, and ***more profound*** needs, in the church today. If there was ever a generation in need of the benefits that the gifts of the Spirit can bring—it has to be ***this*** generation! As David Bernard said in his book, *Spiritual Gifts*,  
*“When the Lord returns for His church, there will be no further purpose for the gifts of the Spirit. We will not need miracles and healing because in the resurrection we will have glorified, immortal bodies. We will not need the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge because in eternity we will possess the fullness of divine wisdom and knowledge. Until then, however,*

*we need the gifts of the Spirit.*”<sup>3</sup> I believe that we have grown less accustomed to the operation of these gifts because some of us have become progressively uncomfortable with the operation of the supernatural in our midst. There seems to be far less teaching on the Spiritual Gifts than there was in times past. Those who *do* teach on the gifts generally see them manifested more often in their churches.

Are we ministers, generally afraid of the manifestation of the gifts because of misuses or perceived misuses? As Harold Horton said in his book *The Gifts of the Spirit*, “*The very occasion of these chapters to the Corinthians was the fact that believers were making a **disorderly use** of a perfectly authentic and blessedly desirable Gift. It is only where there is no life that there is no danger of disorder. If there is life, there must inevitably be disorder to deal with and regulate. The wrong way to deal with disorder is to slay life; though this is the easiest way, and the way taken by churches generally. ‘Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox!’ (Prov. xiv, 4).*”<sup>4</sup> We need the working of the Spirit through these gifts operating in our churches if we are going to be fully supplied and equipped to meet the challenges facing the church in these last days. We need to study out these gifts, teach about them, teach people to

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<sup>3</sup> David K. Bernard, *Spiritual Gifts* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2001) p. 55

<sup>4</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993) p. 142

use them, and correct misuses in the right spirit as Paul did in his epistle. It will take eternity to understand the benefit of what the Spirit will impart to the Church if we will rise to the challenge.

### **No Examples in Scripture**

It is interesting that there are no examples of the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues being used conjointly in a gathering of believers in the text of Scripture. Paul deals with the use and regulation of the vocal gifts as though their use was just a commonly accepted practice among the churches. He gave the Corinthian church instruction regarding the *purpose* of their use, the *proper motivation* for their use, their *proper* use and *instructions on avoiding misuse* of these gifts in the twelfth through fourteenth chapters of his first epistle to them—yet there are *many* questions that we have regarding the use of spiritual gifts which are *not* answered. Could it be that this is so **by design**? Is the lack of specific examples of these two vocal gifts in Scripture by design as well? Would not a single example of tongues and interpretation of tongues in the Bible serve to *stifle* the use of this gift to maybe one limited form of expression when something much broader may be intended by the Spirit?

I have noted in my study several widely differing uses of the gift of interpretation of tongues in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I would

like to look at these varied uses and compare them with Scripture.

Unfortunately, I will provide more questions than answers in this analysis, *but they are questions that must be asked.*

### **The Most Common Use Among Apostolics Today**

The most common way that I have seen the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues used in tandem in our churches today is that we note someone moved upon by the Spirit to loudly, if not forcefully, speak with other tongues in a gathering of the church. The congregation normally quiets and waits for an interpretation. Someone used in the gift of interpretation of tongues then normally gives an interpretation in our vernacular. This “message” is normally revealed as a communication *from* God *to* the congregation. This use is also supported as the commonly-accepted use of “tongues and interpretation” by Apostolic authors:

Apostolic authors have made statements such as “*by these gifts, God anoints people to communicate thoughts **from** His mind **to** the church<sup>5</sup>;*” and “*God sometimes **speaks to the church** through the combined gifts of tongues and interpretation<sup>6</sup>;*” and “*kinds of tongues [are] **a message from God...to be interpreted**<sup>7</sup>;*” and “*the one who interprets...has knowledge, by divine*

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<sup>5</sup> David K. Bernard, *Spiritual Gifts* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2001) p. 183

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.192

<sup>7</sup> David K. Bernard, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2003) p. 28

*inspiration of what God is saying to the church.*<sup>8</sup>” The general thought is captured well in the following quote from the popular tract, *The Truth About Speaking in Tongues*: “*The gift of tongues, along with the gift of interpretation of tongues, has been given to some in the church to convey a message from God to the congregation as the need requires.*”<sup>9</sup> The Teacher’s Manual for the popular *Search for Truth* home Bible study indicates that the combined gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues can be used to “instruct” the church.<sup>10</sup> We see in each of these quotes and others that the common teaching among Apostolics in our day is that the interpretation of a publicly given tongue is a “message” *from God to the congregation*. Furthermore these interpretations are almost universally given in the “first person.” First person phrases such as “*Thus saith the Lord, I have reached out to you...*” are common, at least here in America. But is it always this way? Has this always been the case? The answer is clearly “no.” Although there are commonalities in the way that these gifts are employed in our day, there are significant differences among Apostolic churches internationally. We should examine some of these differences.

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<sup>8</sup> Home Missions Division, UPCI, *My Father’s House, Teacher’s Manual, Level 1* (Hazelwood, MO: Home Missions Division, United Pentecostal Church International, nd) p. 66

<sup>9</sup> Eddie Jones, *Tract: The Truth About Speaking in Tongues* (Huntsville, AL: Know the Truth Literature, nd) p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Marcella Willhoite, *Search for Truth, Teacher’s Manual* (Houston, TX: Search for Truth Publications, 1965) p. 92

### Third Person Interpretations

During the Pentecostal outpouring of the early twentieth century there were not only many manifestations of the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues—but there were also many *written* recordings of those interpretations. In the literature that I have gathered on the subject it seems evident that many—if not most—of those interpretations of tongues were given in the “third person.” In fact, there are records of people speaking in tongues in the late 1800’s in Estonia, one of the Baltic provinces of Russia, where tongues and interpretation were manifested. It was said that “*the gift of tongues was heard often in these meetings, especially in the villages, When they are interpreted, they say, ‘Jesus is coming soon,’ or Jesus is near.’*”<sup>11</sup> In August of 1908, one interpretation of tongues was also in the third-person “*Repent, Jesus is coming. The time is at hand. Get ready!*”<sup>12</sup> Note the phrase was the third-person, “*Jesus is coming,*” rather than the common first-person, “*I am coming.*” The February 1949 edition of the Pentecostal Herald, the official organ of the United Pentecostal Church, had an account of another third-person interpretation of tongues that was similar:

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<sup>11</sup> Frank J. Ewart, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1979) p. 57

<sup>12</sup> Roberts Liardon, *John G. Lake, The Complete Collection of His Life Teachings* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1999) p. 45

“*Jesus is coming sooner than we think He is coming.*”<sup>13</sup> Other third person interpretations were common and many of them seemed to share the theme of the soon return of the Lord for His Church. Early Pentecostal publications of the twentieth century are filled with similar accounts of interpretation of tongues. One interesting interpretation occurred in 1910 and was recorded in the September 1910 edition of *The Comforter*, a publication of the Apostolic Faith Mission Printing Works in Johannesburg, South Africa. It said, in the third-person, “*Christ is at once the spotless descent of God into man, and the sinless ascent of man into God, and the Holy Ghost is the agent by whom it is accomplished.*”<sup>14</sup> Such third-person interpretations, however, are not common today. What has changed except possibly the *expectation* of the church regarding what is considered “normal?” Could it be that both first-person and third person interpretations fall within the realm of acceptability and that both are within the bounds of Scripture? This should be considered, but these are not the only manifestations which need to be considered.

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<sup>13</sup> Missionary George Kelley, *News of South China, The Pentecostal Herald February 1949 Edition* (St. Louis, MO: United Pentecostal Church, 1949), p. 8

<sup>14</sup> Roberts Liardon, *John G. Lake, The Complete Collection of His Life Teachings* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1999) p. 71

## Unto God

As mentioned earlier, the most common understanding among Apostolics today is that the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues, when used together, are messages *from God to the congregation*.

According to the Apostolic authors already cited, these messages are given for the edification of the church and may be instructional in nature. Whether given in the first-person, as is common today, or in the third-person, as was more common several decades back—the “message” seems to be directed *toward the church*. There are however many manifestations of tongues and interpretation that do *not* fit this model. I once attended an Apostolic church that had a strong influence from a Oneness organization called *The Churches of God in Ireland*. Many of us are familiar with Gordon Magee, who once belonged to that organization, and the popular booklet that he wrote entitled, *Is Jesus in the Godhead or Is the Godhead in Jesus*. Two early members of that organization, Stanley A. Herron and James A. Connolly, both of whom I knew, held that tongues and interpretation as practiced in their churches in Northern Ireland, did not follow the model of the interpretation being directed toward the congregation. Rather they practiced interpretation to always be directed *toward God*. They are not alone. Several interpretations of tongues, even near the turn of the twentieth century were actually *praise*

directed toward God. A portion of one interpretation on October 10, 1909 started, “*Jesus thou King! Glorious and eternal! Mighty and loving! Powerful and grand!*”<sup>15</sup> It was a lengthy interpretation and praised God throughout; that is, it was directed **toward God**—and it edified the people present. The church I attended that had this strong Northern Ireland influence often had tongues and interpretations where the interpretations were an intense, almost Psalm-like, torrent of praise that went forth unto God. They were always edifying. Are such interpretations of tongues manifested in accordance with Scripture? I believe that they very well may be.

Let’s consider some verses from Paul’s instructions in his first epistle to the Corinthian church. “*For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries*” (1 Corinthians 14:2) . Note here that the one speaking in an unknown tongue is speaking “unto God.” That is, the **direction** of the speech is **toward God**. This naturally prompts the question, “If the person speaking in an unknown tongue is speaking ‘*not unto men,*’ but is rather, speaking ‘*unto God*’ would not the interpretation be

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<sup>15</sup> Roberts Liardon, *John G. Lake, The Complete Collection of His Life Teachings* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1999) p. 50

*likewise* directed ‘unto God?’” It seems to be a logical conclusion. But is this conclusion supported by other scriptures?

Let’s look a little further into I Corinthians 14, for here Paul uses a *hypothetical* example of the gift of tongues being employed in the church and what would happen if an interpretation does not follow—and then contrasts this with the benefit if the interpretation *does* follow. He is instructing them, that when they come together, they should “*seek that [they] may excel to the edifying of the church*” (I Corinthians 14:12). That is, in a public setting, to attempt to assure that the gift of tongues is interpreted so that the congregants might be edified.

Let’s look at his instruction: *Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*

*Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I **pray** in an unknown tongue, my spirit **prayeth**, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt **bless with the spirit**, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at **thy giving of thanks**, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? **For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.** (I Corinthians 14:12-*

17). Please note here that in this one-and-only hypothetical example of a tongues and interpretation the person used in the gift of tongues is “*bless[ing] with the spirit*” and “*giving...thanks.*” Note also that, if an interpreter were present and used in the gift of interpretation of tongues, that the visitor would be able to say “*Amen at **thy giving of thanks.***” It seems clear that a “giving of thanks” is directed toward the One to whom the thanks is due, and that is unto God. Therefore the interpretation in this one hypothetical example is likewise *directed unto God* and **not** unto men. It seems logical *to at least ask the question*: if the context states that those speaking in tongues are “pray[ing]” or “giving...thanks” in a public worship setting [with those present who “occupy...the room of the unlearned”], then would not the interpretation likewise be a “blessing of the Lord” or “a prayer” or a “giving of thanks” as well?

Men are undoubtedly edified by this “giving of thanks” just as they are by hearing a rousing testimony, or the reading of a Psalm that pours forth a torrent of praise! Think of the rapture of our souls when we hear words like, “*O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens*” (Psalm 8:1), and “*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man,*

*that thou visitest him?” (Psalms 8:3-4).* When praises are made to God in a supernatural manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, it edifies the church tremendously.

When I first heard interpretation of tongues used in this manner it seemed quite foreign to me. I was used to interpretation always being directed toward men—and conversely *their* interpretations were directed toward God in a giving of thanks. Yet, I could not discount that the church was “edified” through this giving of thanks—for I was edified! Furthermore, I had trouble poking holes in their exegesis. I have thought about it much in the intervening years.

### **There is Much to Consider**

We have looked at three distinctly different manifestations of the conjoint use of the gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues: First, we looked at the way tongues and interpretation of tongues is used through much of Apostolic Pentecost today—as a message from God, toward the people, given in the first person style—such as, “Thus saith the Lord...;” Second, we looked at the way tongues and interpretation was used primarily in the early twentieth-century Pentecostal movement—as a message toward the people, given in the third-person style—such as, “Jesus is coming soon...,” rather than, “I am coming soon...;” Lastly, we looked at the way

tongues and interpretation was used in some instances in meetings of early twentieth-century Pentecost and is still used in some Apostolic churches today—as a praise or giving of thanks to God, directed from the speaker toward the Lord. Which of these is correct? Is it possible that none of them are correct? Is it possible that two or more of them are correct?

### A Closer Look

I believe that the Lord *wants* us to understand these things—and that they *can* be understood. The Apostle Paul said, at the beginning of his instruction on spiritual gifts, “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant*” (*I Corinthians 12:1*). Most of us come to the discussion table with some biases—based on both experience and on commonly-held teachings. As Oscar Vouga stated in the early 1950’s in an article entitled *Spiritual Gifts*, “[T]here has been much attention given to the gifts of the Spirit, and how those gifts are received. In this connection, as in every other matter of scriptural teaching, there are some who claim to know perfectly. To this we can only point to the words of the Apostle Paul (*I Corin. 13:12*), ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.’ This is not an admission that we do not know the will of God or that we do not understand His word, but it is a clear statement that during this life we

*only know and understand in part...Let us therefore study the Word of God to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"<sup>16</sup>

That's good advice. In an earlier article entitled, *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, he also gave a warning we would be wise to heed, "*Let us be sure that we do not make claims which are not scriptural, for if we do we will be confounded.*"<sup>17</sup> Let us therefore take a closer look at the Scripture and at some interesting manifestations of tongues that may be able to shed light on the subject.

*"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal"*

*(1 Corinthians 12:4-7).* The word translated diversities is the same word that is translated differences.<sup>18</sup> The meaning is clear—there are different gifts, different administrations and different operations. The text goes on to enumerate the different gifts, but not the different administrations or operations—or does it? "Administrations," are services rendered as by a

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<sup>16</sup> Oscar Vouga, *Spiritual Gifts, The Pentecostal Herald, December 1950 Edition* (St. Louis, MO: United Pentecostal Church, 1950), p.2

<sup>17</sup> Oscar Vouga, *Gifts of the Holy Ghost, The Pentecostal Herald, April 1948 Edition* (St. Louis, MO: United Pentecostal Church, 1948), p.7

<sup>18</sup> James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., *Abingdon's Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980) p.12 of the Greek Dictionary

servant—“ministrations.”<sup>19</sup> It seems that these different “administrations” are ways that the gifts of the spirit *minister* to the church in the work of edification, exhortation and comfort. God uses these gifts to *minister* in diverse ways to His people. This interpretation fits within the context of the scripture which said that, “*the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*” (1 Corinthians 12:7). The term “operations” indicates a “working;” that is, there are different ways that these gifts work—*different “outward manifestations and results.”*<sup>20</sup>

As the description of the use of the gift of tongues unfolds in I Corinthians 14 it becomes clear that this gift indeed operates in more than one way. Please note the following passages:

*“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church”* (1 Corinthians 14:4). *“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also”* (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). These passages show that the gift of tongues may be used privately in times of devotion to God. When we pray in tongues—“our spirit prayeth”—and that can only be considered a good thing.

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<sup>19</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Franklin, TN: e-sword, 2008), np

<sup>20</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies*, (Franklin, TN: e-sword, 2008), np

According to this passage we can pray “with the spirit”—*in tongues*; and we can “pray with the understanding also”—*in our vernacular*. Yet, “in the church” (I Corinthians 14:19), that is, “when ye come together” (I Corinthians 14:26) Paul instructs the person used in the gift of tongues to “*pray that he may interpret.*”<sup>21</sup> He teaches that when they are gathered together and “*there be no interpreter, let him* [the person with the gift of tongues] *keep silence in the church*” (I Corinthians 14:28). This understanding that there are two distinct operations of the same gift of tongues—one for private devotion and another for public use in church gatherings is generally accepted as recorded in Apostolic literature.<sup>22,23, 24</sup>

Since it is generally understood that there is more than one “operation” of the gift of tongues, does it not stand to reason that there could be more than two “operations” as well? Might there be more than one “operation”—“*outward manifestation and result*”—of the gift of interpretation of tongues as well?

The only manifestations noted in the New Testament of the gift of tongues appear to be directed toward God, and not toward men. Likewise, the only hypothetical tongues and interpretation would be directed toward

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<sup>21</sup> I Corinthians 14:13

<sup>22</sup> Eddie Jones, *Tract: The Truth About Speaking in Tongues* (Huntsville, AL: Know the Truth Literature, nd) p.5

<sup>23</sup> David K. Bernard, *Spiritual Gifts* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2001) p. 188

<sup>24</sup> David K. Bernard, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2003) p. 28

God as well—as a “giving of thanks.” But does this mean that these are the *only* such manifestations or operations? Not necessarily.

As Harold Horton intones in his fascinating treatment of the subject, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, the gift of tongues “*is a manifestation of the Mind of the Spirit of God employing human speech organs. When a man is speaking with tongues his mind, intellect, understanding is quiescent.*”<sup>25</sup> This view is even supported by modern science. A 2006 study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania indicates that the parts of the human brain connected with the creation of speech are relatively inactive when people are talking in tongues. Dr. Andrew B. Newberg, the leader of the study team said, “*The amazing thing was how the [brain scan] images supported people’s interpretation of what was happening...The way they describe it, and what they believe is God is talking through them.*”<sup>26</sup> The gift of interpretation of tongues is no less supernatural! Again, as Horton says, “*Interpretation of tongues is the supernatural showing forth by the Spirit of the meaning of an utterance in other tongues. This interpretation is not the operation of the mind of the interpreter but the mind of the Spirit of God...The interpretation is just as much a miracle as the original utterance in tongues. Both are utterances equally direct from the mind of the Spirit of*

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<sup>25</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993) p. 132

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Carey, A Neuroscientific Look at Speaking in Tongues, New York Times, November 7, 2006 (New York, NY, 2006), np

God.” He rightly tells us that “*In the mind of God, of course, the two operations [of tongues and interpretation] are exactly and most blessedly linked; in the mind of men the two utterances are quite independent and equally directed from God.*”<sup>27</sup> It is an interpretation—not a translation which is “*a rendering from one language to another in equivalent words or grammatical terms.*” An interpretation is different. It is, rather, ***the rendering of the meaning*** supernaturally. “*It may be pictorial, parabolic, descriptive or literal, according to the urge of the Spirit or the character of the one interpreting.*”<sup>28</sup>

Could these differing operations or manifestations, which seem to be allowed, account for the diversities that have been seen in modern times? As one author rightly states, “*Many varieties of expression might be employed and many details added without materially altering the sense of the words so far as the simple message is concerned.*” This could explain why sometimes the utterance in tongues is much shorter or longer than the utterance of interpretation.<sup>29</sup> “*The temperament, natural gifts and training...of the possessor of the gift*” will influence the interpretation—yet this does not make the gift any less supernatural. As Horton states, “*The Lord equally entrusts His revelations to sanctified farm-hands and God-*

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<sup>27</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993) p. 147-148

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150

*fearing philosophers. The farm-hand will deliver his message with the blunt forthrightness of an Amos; the philosopher with the refinement of an Isaiah.*”<sup>30</sup>

Could the diversities of administrations and operations *also* account for why some tongues and interpretations seem to be directed toward man and others toward God? Could they account for some interpretations being given in the first-person and others in the third-person? In the absence of actual recordings of tongues and interpretations being used conjointly, these questions are difficult to answer from Scripture.

### **Are More Diversities of Administrations and Operations Possible?**

The scripture indicates that there are diversities in the ministrations of the Spirit through the gifts as well as diversities of the manifestations and effects of the gifts—but it does *not* indicate how many or what these different ministrations and manifestations are. That may well be by design so that *He* could minister to the body as He sees fit, according to the need.

I’ve noticed in my study how tongues—not merely interpretation of tongues—sometimes seem to be directed, not toward God, but toward men as well. Perhaps the “prayer” and the “giving of thanks” expressed in I Corinthians 14 is merely *one example* of the manifestation of tongues. In

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 151-152

Acts, chapter 2, representatives from at least 17 different tongues heard Galilean's speaking in their own languages wherein they were born—"the wonderful works of God."<sup>31</sup> We Apostolics know, of course, that this manifestation of speaking in other tongues was the initial evidence of them receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We also know that it was a sign. Some will try to say that this was a supernatural ability to "preach the gospel" to those then present. We Apostolics categorically reject that premise as incompatible with other biblical accounts of the same phenomenon as well as many biblical proof-texts. What the scripture does not tell us is whether these utterances in tongues were directed toward God (in praise, declaring the "wonderful works of God"), or toward men (declarative statements (first or third-person) regarding the "wonderful works of God"). In more recent times there have been many manifestations of speaking in tongues where the speaker did not know English, but spoke in perfect English when they spoke in tongues. On March 22, 2006 I preached in Guadalupe, Costa Rica when a young girl named Ada Padillo received the Holy Ghost. When she spoke in tongues she spoke excitedly, in perfect English, *"It is peace, it is peace, it is joy, it is joy it is peace, it is love, it is peace..."* Several in our group heard her as did the missionary who

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 2:8

questioned her afterward and was assured that she does not know English. Her words were either directed toward God or toward men—grammatically, they could be taken either way. In 1927 a seventeen year old Chinese student named Wang received the Holy Ghost in Luh Hsi, China and spoke in tongues, in the third-person, clearly in English, *“Those that walk with Him in white and are faithful will ascend at His appearing. Behold, He is coming very soon!”*<sup>32</sup> It is said that this young man knew nothing of the coming of the Lord and that he did not understand English at all. David Bernard wrote of something that he experienced in 1972: *“At a prayer camp near Inchon, Korea, in 1972 I heard a Korean Methodist minister who was sitting next to me speak in tongues as he received the Holy Spirit. He repeated rapidly in English, with perfect diction and no discernable accent, ‘Jesus is coming very soon. Jesus is coming very soon.’ Afterwards I asked if he knew any English, but he did not.”*<sup>33</sup> Could not *interpretations* of tongues likewise range between being spoken toward God and toward men; and between being spoken in the first-person and the third person—all based on the dictates of the Spirit of God and the character and understanding of the person used in the utterance?

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<sup>32</sup> Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1993) p. 145

<sup>33</sup> David K. Bernard, *Spiritual Gifts* (Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2001) p. 185

## Closing

Perhaps I have posed more questions than answers; yet it is *important* to ask *important questions*. It is important to think about important topics. In this presentation I have attempted to broaden our thinking and ask vital questions regarding an equally vital topic. As David Bernard wrote, “*supernatural gifts should be normal, not abnormal; expected, not unexpected.*” He also rightly intimated that they do not operate continually or even to the point of dominance in a service—but are given to meet specific needs within the church.<sup>34</sup> Yet I must ask, are they in operation in your services? Does the supernatural make you uncomfortable? Are you quick to discount an interpretation because of a lack of eloquence or because of who was used?

If the Lord, in His divine wisdom and foresight, thought to impart these spiritual gifts to the church for the meeting of spiritual needs—had we not ought to *understand* them, *use* them and *encourage* their use in our congregations?

Abuses of these gifts have occurred, such as open rebukes and other manifestations that violate the principles and purposes of the gifts laid down by the Apostle—yet these abuses do not make the gifts any less *real*, any

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 35

less *marvelous* or any less *needed*. Let's do our best to answer the questions that remain and encourage the use of these gifts in our midst. In doing so, perhaps the next visitor that we have will "*be convinced of all...and so falling on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> I Corinthians 14:24-25