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TONGUES: AN EXPERIENCE FOR ALL IN THE PAULINE CHURCHES?

Max Turner

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Cor 12:30, Paul poses the question, "Not all speak in tongues do they?," in a grammatical form which invites his reader to respond with a firm negative. For many, that settles the question implied in the title, once and for all. Unfortunately, few issues are that easily dealt with. Some of my Pentecostal friends would immediately respond that by starting with 1 Cor 12:30 we have begun at the wrong place. It is implicit, they would say, from the narrative of Acts that *Luke* thought tongues was universally received as initial evidence of a Spirit-baptism promised to all believers. And Luke clearly belonged to the Pauline churches, at least in the general sense that he knew them well, and considered Paul as prominent among the apostles. Nor (they would claim) is Paul himself univocal on the issue. In 1 Cor 14:5 does he not explicitly state, "I want every one of you to speak in tongues"? So in the fight between 1 Cor 12:30 and 1 Cor 14:5, we cannot grant a knockdown victory to the former without more careful assessment. Closer scrutiny of the context (it is claimed) suggests 1 Cor 12:30 deals only with *public manifestation* of tongues in the congregational worship of the church. Not all receive this gift. But Paul knows another kind of gift of tongues which is related to private prayer (cf. 1 Cor 14:4a). It is the latter gift which Paul believes to be widespread and at least potentially universal (so 1 Cor 14:5).[1] While Luke tells us nothing about tongues in congregational worship, and Paul provides no hint of glossolalia as "initial evidence," we may harmonize their evidence with little fear of

[1] This position has most recently been defended by Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), ch. 13.

distortion. From the New Testament perspective provided by the apostle and his co-worker, we should conclude that all believers in the Pauline churches normally manifested tongues on reception of the Spirit's empowering, and Paul encouraged all believers to re-activate this as a form of private praise and prayer (1 Cor 14:5). At the same time, he was aware that *some*, but perhaps a minority, exercised a "ministry" of tongues in the assembly - that is, these people were specifically prompted and inspired for the special manifestation of tongues which (when coupled with interpretation) edified the congregation. And all this (it would be added) is in complete accord with experience in the majority of classical Pentecostal churches, and it may be supported by more general considerations from biblical and systematic theology.

It is not the purpose of this paper to re-investigate the potential contribution of the Lucan evidence. I have argued elsewhere that if anything Luke poses something of a challenge to this sort of construct.[2] I think it has to be read *into* the texts before it can be read *from* them.

> I suggest it cannot be demonstrated with any degree of certainty that Luke thought Spirit-reception would *normally* be attested by an immediate charismatic manifestation. In the Judaism out of which Christianity arose such would usually only have been *expected* where some form of public legitimation before the people of God was particularly appropriate (as at Num 11:25; 1 Sam 10, etc.). Given this, it is then hardly surprising charismatic fireworks feature at Pentecost, in the case of the first admission of *Samaritans* [cf. 8:14-19]), and in the (implicitly even more controversial) conversion of the first *Gentiles* to be admitted to the people of God (Acts 10-11 [cf. 15:8]). Otherwise the conversion-initiation accounts in Acts are silent about such "initial evidence," even where much other detail is given (most notably in the case of Paul, but also in that of the Ethiopian eunuch). An exception is Acts 19:1-6. But as the question whether these "disciples" had received the Spirit or not was the *whole issue* in the incident, it does not come as a surprise that when the gift is given it is also *attested* by some charismatic manifestation. The point is that, for Luke, reception of the Spirit of prophecy brings not merely "prophetic empowering" (for mission, or whatever), but *also* God's self-revealing, restoring and transforming presence, especially in spiritual wisdom and understanding,[3] and that

[2] Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), pp. 393-97; 446-49; idem, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), pp. 225-26.

[3] Some have disputed this: most notably R. Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of Saint Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984); Menzies, *Empowered*; John

would normally be self-attesting to the recipient and to the community (at least over a period of time), and in a wide variety of ways.

Furthermore, while Luke *may* have considered Spirit-reception to have been accompanied occasionally (perhaps often?) by an immediate flush of charismata, it cannot be demonstrated that he considered tongues had an especially privileged place in this respect. Invasive charismatic praise or some other form of prophetic utterance were just as characteristic of the Spirit of prophecy (cf. 10:46, "extolling God"; 19:6, "prophesying"), indeed, *arguably more so*. The majority of Pentecostal interpreters have read Acts 10:46 and 19:6 to mean each individual *both* spoke in tongues *and* "extolled God"/"prophesied," but in the first-century context these texts would as naturally be taken to mean that some experienced glossolalia while others experienced invasive praise or prophetic utterance. It would thus not be possible to demonstrate that Luke expected tongues in each and every case of Spirit-reception - at best such a construct represents one "possible" reading in the marketplace of competing and often more plausible readings.

Would Luke have considered such tongues to be "available" to be "re-activated" by the believer, beyond the initial manifestation? Again, we have no way of knowing. But if one were to judge by the analogous traditions in Judaism, he was as likely to have thought that when the Spirit came upon Cornelius' household, or on the Ephesian "twelve," "they spoke in tongues and prophesied. But they did *not do so again*" (cf. Num 11:25, one of the more influential biblical stories in Judaism). In short, he may have thought "initial evidence/legitimation" (where appropriate) was just that, with no further implications for repeated experiences beyond the initial event. I am not saying this *is* the case; merely that Luke provides no sure ground for the hypothesis that those who initially experienced tongues received this as a permanent possibility.

All in all, the Lucan evidence is simply too ambiguous to provide a firm foundation for traditional Pentecostal teaching that "initial tongues" is normative and provides the basis for ongoing universal availability of tongues for private prayer.[4] Indeed, it would be difficult to explain the

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Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). But others have felt that their position represents an unacceptable narrowing of the gift: cf. G. Haya-Prats, *L'Esprit Force de l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1975); Turner, *Power*; James D. G. Dunn, "Baptism in the Spirit: A Response to Pentecostal Scholarship on Luke-Acts," *JPT* 3 (1993), pp. 3-27.

[4] This is increasingly recognized even by Pentecostal scholars seeking to defend some form of "initial evidence" doctrine. Thus, for example, Menzies notes "it is difficult to argue that Luke, through his narrative, intended to teach this doctrine... This does not appear to be his concern" (*Empowered*, p. 246). Similarly Simon Chan insists Luke's position is too ambiguous to provide the

> relative silence concerning tongues in the sub-apostolic church if Luke thought this gift was commonplace, and was even commending it as normative, in the closing decades of the first century.[5] It is little wonder that other Pentecostals and Charismatics (not to mention virtually all scholarship outside those streams) have come to quite different interpretations of Luke's narrative.[6]

It would also be methodologically dangerous to use Luke's account to flesh out Paul's, when one of the issues in dispute is precisely the extent to which Luke and Paul shared similar perspectives on pneumatological issues.[7] In this study we shall attempt, rather, to assess the *Pauline* evidence bearing on our question. Did Paul, or did he not, distinguish two types of gift of tongues - one universally available for private use and one for public "ministry" to the church. But we will go on (in Part 2) briefly to assess the significance of some arguments from systematic theology which have been brought to bear on the topic. May I clarify at the outset that this inquiry is a genuine one. While writing the article there came a significant phase when I was unsure where the evidence was leading (and realized how inadequate were my earlier comments on the matter).[8] If this study has taken the wrong track, I hope contributors to this journal will be able to guide me back, through further dialogue.

PART 1: THE PAULINE EVIDENCE

The relevant evidence is restricted to 1 Cor 12-14 (with the possible addition of Rom 8:26), and we may divide our discussion under different heads.

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foundation for a doctrine of "initial evidence," and that such a reading is only one of many possible readings. ("The Language Game of Glossolalia or Making Sense of the 'Initial Evidence,'" in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, eds. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], pp. 80-105, esp. pp. 82-83).

[5] But see Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), pp. 75-84.

[6] For a brief (and rather one-sided) review of the debates within Pentecostal/ Charismatic movements, see V. Synan, "The Role of Tongues as Initial Evidence," in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. Mark W. Wilson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 67-82.

[7] Cf. Menzies, *Empowering*, ch. 12.

[8] Turner, *Holy Spirit*, esp. pp. 234-35.

1.1 The Setting - Tongues as a Problem at Corinth?

It is important at the outset to recognize that 1 Cor 12-14 is not simply pastoral advice in answer to some Corinthian general question about "spiritual gifts" (cf. 12:1). Rather, from start to finish it is intended as a *corrective* to what Paul considers problematic in the Corinthian attitude to and use of tongues. If Paul starts with more general considerations, that is simply to provide the theological backdrop for the issue which emerges explicitly in chapter 14. Tongues appears in each of the samplings of gifts in these chapters (12:8-10, 28-30; 13:1-3; 14:6, 26). Furthermore, as Fee observes, the placing of tongues,

> at the *conclusion* of each list in ch. 12, but at the beginning in 13:1 and 14:6, suggests that the problem lies here. It is listed last *not* because it is "least," but because it is the problem. He always includes it, but at the end, after the greater concern for diversity has been heard.[9]

What then was the problem? The simple answers are: 1) some Corinthians gave pride of place to tongues over other gifts (hence 1 Cor 12 asserts the divinely ordained diversity and distribution of spiritual gifts, and 1 Cor 14 sets tongues below the intelligible gifts of prophecy and interpretation); 2) there were too many incidents of glossolalia (hence Paul's restriction to two or at the most three in 1 Cor 14:27); 3) some outbursts of glossolalia were perhaps concurrent (the "if all speak in tongues... [the outsider] will say 'you rave'" of 14:23 may well be an overstatement of a real scenario, and cf. the corrective "and each in turn" of 1 Cor 14:27);[10] 4) the tongues were not being interpreted, so their use (in

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[9] G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 149. For a similar analysis see G. Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), p. 272.

[10] Theissen sees traces of "uncontrolled collective ecstasy" or "ritual *mania*" behind 14:23 ("if you are all speaking in tongues" when an outsider enters), influenced by typical hellenistic attitudes. 1 Cor 14:27 would then be Paul's corrective: see Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, p. 281. While the language of "ecstasy" may be inappropriate unless carefully understood (see Turner, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 235-38 [cf. pp. 200-204] and Forbes, *Prophecy*, chs. 5-7), Theissen may be right that there was corporate and relatively uncontrolled tongues at Corinth by the self-styled "spirituals" (cf. also Fee, *Presence*, p. 243). Against the view, however, stands the parallel in the following verse. Paul does not envisage "uncontrolled collective prophecy": the "all prophesying" would need to be serial, rather than concurrent, to elicit the outsider's response envisaged in vv. 25-

contrast to prophecy) did not build up the church in any way (cf. 14:2, 4, 5, 12, 17, 19, 26); and indeed, 5) they were being used in a way that failed to express the cardinal virtue of love (hence ch. 13).

But the simple answers probably do not take us to the heart of the matter. More probably, as Fee suggests, "the crucial issue is their decided position over against him as to what it means to be pneumatiko"6 "(spiritual)."[11] For them it means to belong essentially to the order of the Spirit as opposed to the material world, and Paul sees this as a failure to recognize our relation to both creation and new creation. It is an over-spiritualized and over-realized eschatology.[12] Fee thus suggests:

> The key probably lies with 13:1, where tongues is referred to as the "tongues of angels." The Corinthians seem to have considered themselves to be already as the angels, thus truly "spiritual," needing neither sex in the present (7:1-7) nor a body in the future (15:1-58). Speaking angelic dialects by the Spirit was evidence enough for them of their participation in the new spirituality, hence their singular enthusiasm for this gift.[13]

This perhaps allows too much place for the "tongues of angels" (1 Cor 13:1; inspired "tongues of men" also need explanation),[14] and, as Forbes has argued, the Corinthian understanding probably involved a more hellenistic appraisal of tongues (along with prophecy) as both "direct communion with God" and also as thereby "speaking divine mysteries" brimming with "knowledge" and "wisdom" (14:2, cf. 13:2,8 and the whole Corinthian focus on wisdom/knowledge in 1:18-3:23; 8:1-11; 14:6).[15] On either view, the Corinthians exalt it because it has become for them perhaps *the* sign of the "spiritual" believer (hence, in part, Paul's reversal of such an affirmation at 14:22?) and of participation in heavenly existence.

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[11] Fee, *Presence*, p. 150.

[12] For the over-realized eschatology, see A. C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *NTS* 24 (1978), pp. 510-26, and the standard Introductions.

[13] Fee, *Presence*, p. 150.

[14] See Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 14-16 and 182-87; Turner, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 227-29.

[15] Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 171-75, 260-64. His point is that over-realized eschatology does not itself explain the Corinthian focus on tongues, because there was no significant pre-Christian expectation of participation in angelic languages (especially ones unintelligible to the speaker).

What is less clear is whether the Corinthians as a whole thought this way (as Fee argues),[16] or whether the church itself was divided on the issue (as Theissen and Forbes have argued).[17] The latter is the more generally held view.

Certainly only "some" at Corinth denied that the spiritual order would involve any form of bodily existence (cf. 15:12), and the evidence suggests there was a self-styled "strong" group of "spiritual people" (cf. 1 Cor 2:4-3:2; 12:1) who thought of themselves as "perfected" in spiritual knowledge (8:1, 4; cf. the irony in 2:6; 14:20), and correspondingly thought of others as the "weak" (8:7, 9, 11-12). Those who claim "we 'all' have (revelatory) knowledge" (8:1) turn out to be but a segment of the church. Paul has to remind them that not all at Corinth have the "knowledge" that "an idol is nothing" (8:4, 7), and this very "knowledge" is threatening to destroy not merely the "weak" (who do not have it), but also the "strong" themselves (for they have terribly misunderstood, when they deduce they are safe to eat and drink in the cultic setting of pagan temple/restaurants: so chs. 8-10).

If Forbes is correct, there is the probability that tongues was used to reinforce the elitism of the "spirituals," partly because it was especially associated with the authoritative founder of their congregation (14:18, and with the Jerusalem apostles at Pentecost [if they knew of it]), but also because it pointed to their participation in divine knowledge/mysteries.[18] Regular manifestation of the gift would then be explicable as part of the minor power games "the spirituals" were locked into (and which, by the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, had substantially alienated them from Paul). Such an understanding of the Corinthian abuse of tongues would give especially sharp point to Paul's insistence that *all* believers have the Spirit manifest in a wide *variety* of gifts (1 Cor 12), and to the implicit charge of loveless use of tongues (1 Cor 13). *But if such a view is anything like correct, it suggests that tongues was a relatively restricted phenomenon.* After all, if all or most could speak in tongues - if only as private prayer and doxology - then manifestation of the gift could provide no grounds for elitist claims. One would then be left wondering *why* some were crowding out the meetings with tongues, when there is no "gain" in it.[19] The

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[16] As Fee thinks: cf. *Presence*, p. 150.

[17] Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, pp. 294-303; Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 171-75, 260-64.

[18] See also especially Theissen, *Psychological Aspects*, pp. 294-97 (and cf. pp. 297-303).

[19] Widespread and relatively uncontrolled tongues might well have been

distinction between whether tongues were used at home or at church would inevitably have appeared somewhat irrelevant; unless, of course, there were two sufficiently sharply *distinguishable* types of gift, and the "church" one was somehow recognizably "superior" to the other. It needs to be said that the latter situation has never (to my knowledge) been seriously defended, and the case against it is compelling. But let us address the question more directly.

1.2 Two Types of "Tongues" at Corinth?

Did Paul distinguish two quite different *types* of speaking in tongues, one available to all (but only for private use) in accordance with 1 Cor 14:5, the other available for manifestation in the congregational worship, but *not* available to all (as indicated by Paul's question in 12:30)? If he did not make such a distinction, then it becomes difficult to see why Corinthian readers should take the restriction implied in 12:30 to apply purely to "tongues in the assembly" (unless there are other clear textual markers to indicate this - which we shall examine below).

While it is relatively clear that Paul distinguishes two spheres of *use* of tongues - public and private[20] - it is by no means so clear that he thinks of them as different *types* of *gifts*. The terminology is exactly the same in the two verses appealed to as evidence of two different *types*: glwssai" lalousin ("[they] speak in tongues") in 12:30, lalein glwssai" ("to speak in tongues") in 14:5. What is more, Paul moves backwards and forwards between private tongues and public, often without clear demarcation (cf. 14:2, 4a, 5, 14-16, 17-19), and without suggesting any difference of essential *content*. Historically, Pentecostals have at times tended to think of "congregational" glossolalia as "a message in tongues," equivalent (when interpreted) to prophecy (on the basis of a misunderstanding of 14:5?),[21] while private tongues has been understood as prayer/doxology expressed to God (cf. 14:2, 15-16). In this they have recently received a small measure of scholarly support from Christopher Forbes, who has argued (on the basis of 14:2) that the revealing of divine

anticipated in initial enthusiasm for the gift, but the congregation was founded by Paul c. 51 AD, and Paul writes to the Corinthians c. 55 AD.

[20] See Turner, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 232-34; Fee, *Presence*, pp. 172-173, 217-21, 229-35, 889-90; cf. also Fee's "Toward a Pauline Theology of Glossolalia," in *Pentecostalism*, pp. 24-37, esp. p. 29.

[21] See Fee, "Pauline Theology," p. 33.

mysteries is central to Paul's understanding of congregational tongues.[22] But, as Forbes himself notes, the "mysteries" spoken of in 14:2 are addressed "*to* God" (not as a "message to the congregation" = i.e., "not to other people"). Interpretation, it would then appear, merely unfolds this type of prayer/doxology to the congregation, and "builds them up" (14:5) by involving them in the Spirit-inspired worship. In that case there is no indicator of any material difference to the form or "content" of the tongues used in private and in public. All this would suggest that for Paul it is not a matter of different *gifts*, as much as of whether or not individuals who already have the gift for private use are ever divinely prompted to use it as a form of inspired public address to God within the congregational worship. That naturally leads us to the next question.

1.3 Is 1 Corinthians 12:30b Exclusively Concerned with Gifts of Tongues in the Worshipping Assembly?

Can the reader be expected to understand that the implied restriction - "Not all speak in tongues do they? (12:30b) - relates purely to the use of tongues in congregational worship?

To be sure, Paul has been addressing problems related to congregational worship in chs. 8-11, and the whole of 12-14 will emerge as a corrective to congregational abuse of tongues at Corinth, but the perspective of ch. 12 is also more general. Admittedly, 12:28 focuses on what God is doing en th ekklhsia ("in the church"), and Paul uses a similar expression in 1 Cor 11:18 where he speaks of divisions "when you gather together en ekklhsia": here he must mean "when you gather *as an assembly*" (cf. also 14:19, 23, 28, 33b, 35). But this is unlikely to be the sense in 1 Cor 12:28, however, for there Paul says that "God has set 'in the church,' first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, the gifts of healings, helpful deeds, acts of guidance or leadership, kinds of tongues." There were not regularly (if ever) a *plurality* of apostles in the Corinthian meetings.[23] The reference seems to be to the church universal (of which "the churches in Corinth" are the local expressions) rather than

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[22] Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 93-99.

[23] Fee, *Presence*, p. 191, notes the "surprise" provided by the plural here, and takes it as a reference to Paul and his co-workers (cf. 9:5; 15:7-11): in which case Paul is not thinking of what happens in any single "assembly," but of what God has "set" in the church at Corinth over the totality of its existence, past and present, inside and outside specific "church meetings."

specific to the Corinthian believers "in assembly."[24] Even if Paul has the Corinthian church primarily in mind (cf. 12:27), his description of what God has set "in the church" cannot easily be restricted in reference to what goes on when "the church in Corinth" meets in formal assembly for public worship, as opposed to what happens through believers (individually or as groups) in the variety of contexts that Corinthian life provided. The members of Christ's body are "the church in Corinth," whether or not they are formally "in assembly" (Paul has to remind them they are so even when they are prosecuting law-suits against each other in the pagan courts; hence the irony of 1 Cor 6:4). So it is not clear that anything prepares the reader to think Paul's question, "Not all speak in tongues do they?" refers exclusively or primarily to the use of tongues in public worship.

Five brief observations support this conclusion:

(1) When Paul asks the similar questions - "Not all are apostles are they?," "Not all are prophets are they?," "Not all work miracles do they?," and "Not all have gifts of healings do they?" (1 Cor 12:29-30a) - few would be prepared to suggest Paul is only talking about what happens in congregational worship. Paul is an apostle "in the church" even when he is shipwrecked for nights and days in the Mediterranean, or when he is being lowered from the walls of Damascus hidden in a linen basket (2 Cor 11:32) - that is very much his point over against the more triumphalist conceptions of apostleship in Corinth (cf. 2 Cor 11-12).

(2) Similarly, when he asks the question, "not all are prophets are they?," he must anticipate that his readers will be well aware from the Jewish scriptures that prophets were very often active, and prophecies regularly given, *outside* formal congregational settings - and this was probably also the case in early Christianity, though the direct evidence is sparse (cf. Acts 21:4, 11). So the reader is hardly likely to infer that Paul's question in v. 29 ("not all are prophets are they?") pertains only to "prophets-in-the-worshipping-assembly."

(3) Immediately before his question about the distribution of tongues he asks two parallel questions about the working of miracles and gifts of healings. These charismata are never elsewhere described as happening in

[24] It is often held that in the uncontested Paulines Paul uses the word ekklhsia only of individual congregations, never as "the church" in a broader sense, let alone a universal one. However, when Paul speaks of himself as having formerly persecuted "the ekklhsia (singular) of God" (Gal 1:13), he is not referring merely to a single local congregation (cf. also Phil 3:6 and 1 Cor 15:9). Similarly, here, a broader understanding seems indicated (with R. P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in I Corinthians 12-15* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 31, against Fee, *Presence*, p. 189).

formal Christian *congregational* settings (which is not to say none happened there), except perhaps in the extraordinary case of Eutychus in Acts 20:7-12. Normally such healings were worked *outside* the assembly, wherever the sufferers were - whether the unevangelized sick (as throughout Acts; and this is the most obvious context for the collocation of expressions of "powers" and "healings") or believers being restored in their homes (e.g., Tabitha [Acts 8:36-41]; Publius' father [Acts 28:7-8] and cf. the instructions in James 5:14-15).

(4) In the light of the above, how can the reader suddenly be expected to make the assumption that the apostle is only asking about what happens in *public worship* when Paul then asks his very next question, "Not all speak in tongues do they?"

(5) In 12:28, Paul had referred to "*diverse* kinds of tongues." If the Corinthians are aware of a private gift, distinct from one for public use, Paul's reference to "different kinds of tongues" would surely evoke that distinction (among others), and then his question, "Not all speak in tongues do they?," will most naturally be taken to refer to *any* of the kinds and *all* of them, not merely to one type.

In short, the series of questions (in 1 Cor 12:29-30) of the form, "Not all are/have X, are/have they?," directs the reader to the more general context of Christian life and experience, including what happens in public worship, before he turns back more specifically to conduct in the assembly. So the question in 1 Cor 12:30b would most probably be read to imply that *not* all believers were able to "speak in tongues" (whatever the setting).

1.4 Does 1 Corinthians 12:30b Refer Exclusively to Those with a Special "Ministry" of Tongues-Speaking?

Another way in which interpreters have sometimes sought to imply that 12:30b refers only to people exercising a public kind of glossolalia is by appeal to the contrast between prophets and prophecy. It is observed that Paul's similar question, "Not all are prophets are they?" (12:29), might suggest prophecy is limited. But this must be interpreted (it is argued) by the apostle's positive assertions that he wishes "all" might be able to prophesy (14:5), and that "all" can and may prophesy as long as it is done in orderly fashion and with discernment (14:31). This means not all are "prophets" (in the sense of having regular, public, and proved ministries of prophecy), but all may occasionally and in lesser fashion "prophesy."

By analogy, it is suggested that the question about speaking in tongues in 12:30b is all about something approaching church "ministries" of the gifts referred to in vv. 28-30 - and that these are indeed restricted - but *all*

might experience the gifts in more humble fashion.[25] To be more precise, concerning tongues, 12:30b could be taken to imply "not all have *ministries* of tongues," without excluding the possibility that "all" might have tongues for private prayer and/or for occasional congregational use.

The distinction between the narrower circle of those recognized as "prophets" and a broader one of those "able (occasionally) to prophesy" is quite widely accepted.[26] But it is not easy to justify the view that Paul is making a parallel distinction between the smaller circle of those who "speak in tongues" in 12:30b and some wider circle in 14:5. The problems with such a view should be clear. The position advocated fails to note that while the categories of apostles, prophets and teachers in 12:28 and 29 are clearly "established ministries" of some kind, 12:28 switches focus from "ministries" to "gifts." To establish that the question, "Not all speak in tongues do they?," denotes a *ministry* of speaking in tongues, Paul would need at very least to use some noun or participial construction that would subvert the reader's anticipation that he is talking more generally. He would have had a slight problem here, of course, because while there was a word to designate a "prophet," there was none available in the first century world to designate, "one who has a ministry of glossolalia." The phenomenon was a *novum*. So if Paul wanted to distinguish someone with a regular "ministry" of tongues for the church from others who had a more infrequent gift, or a gift experienced only in private, he would have had to create a new noun phrase, such as o glwssolalwn (= "the tongues-speaker"). But even this may have been too ambiguous for his purpose, given the shift from the first three categories in 12:28 to those that follow. More probably, he would have needed a much more explicit question such as mh pante" diakonia" ecousin glwsswn ("Not all have *ministries* of tongues do they?").

1.5 Does the Traditional Pentecostal Distinction Between the Private and the Public Gift of Tongues Explain the Corinthians' Mistake?

It is heuristically worth pondering how the Corinthian abuse of tongues could possibly have come about on the traditional Pentecostal

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[25] The argument receives recent support from Menzies, *Empowered*, p. 248.

[26] See, e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), pp. 171-72, 281; W. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 235-38; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), pp. 117-18; Turner, *Holy Spirit*, p. 212; Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 251-63.

understanding that all were in fact able to speak in tongues. On such a view, the Corinthians should know that people will only speak in tongues publicly as part of the church's worship when they have a special "anointing" to do so (for that is precisely the [sole] difference between the majority [whose gift is merely for private use] and those "who 'speak in tongues'" in church as at 12:28-30). If so, how have the church's "tongues speakers" made their mistake? Does it all boil down to the fact that they wrongly *thought* they were so "anointed" or "led," and used their "ordinary" gift at the wrong time? One might then be tempted to explain the Corinthian failure to interpret tongues along similar lines: because the tongue has not truly been initiated and orchestrated by God, the Spirit inspires no corresponding gift of interpretation.

But if that is the explanation, Paul's lengthy discourse does not really address the problem. We might have anticipated him to *major* on the themes of waiting on the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, and discerning the Spirit's prompting. But these topics only receive the scantiest attention. Instead he gives a careful defense of the view that there is a God-ordained diversity of mutually useful gifts, and that not all has each, with the result that we become dependent upon each other (so ch. 12), reminds the church that expression of gifts without love gains nothing (chapter 13), and spends a long time arguing for the need for mutually edifying intelligibility (ch. 14). His answer makes more sense if we may assume he thought the problem was that only a *part* of the congregation have any ability to speak in tongues at all, that they think it is a special sign of spirituality that they have it, and that they have flaunted it in the congregation to exalt themselves within it.

In the light of sections 1.2-1.5 above, the form of Paul's question in 1 Cor 2:30b suggests he did not consider *any* kind of tongues to be universal to believers. That conclusion should be allowed to stand unless there is weighty evidence against it.

1.6 How Does 1 Corinthians 14:5 Relate to This?

Menzies makes the appeal that just such weighty evidence is to be found in 1 Cor 14:5 (qelw de panta" uma" lalein glwssai"...), which he renders, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues." According to Menzies, this means that for Paul "*every Christian may - and indeed should - be edified through the private manifestation of tongues.*"[27]

[27] Menzies, *Empowered*, p. 248 (italics his).

Menzies reproaches Carson for not giving due consideration to the possibility that 1 Cor 12:30 is restricted to public manifestation of tongues.[28] Unfortunately, Menzies himself in turn finds he has no space to discuss the different possible interpretations of 1 Cor 14:5 in New Testament scholarship.

In the first place, the pante" here (as anywhere) *could* mean "all without exception," so "every one of you," but (like the English "all") it often means far less than that. In the first place, it can mean "all without distinction" rather than "all without exception." Second, it can be used in a weaker generalizing sense. Thus when Mark tells us that "all Judea and all Jerusalemites" came to John and were baptized (1:5), he means little more than that many did so. Similarly when Paul says the Gospel has been proclaimed "to every creature (en pash ktisei) under the heavens" (Col 1:23), one should not press the "all/every" too hard. "All" can sometimes mean little more than "a representative group," "a majority," "the group as a whole"[29] or even just "many," and to secure a *universal* meaning in an otherwise ambiguous context a writer would prefer ekasto" ("everyone, each one").

More to the point is the question of the possibly concessive force of the whole construction, "I would like... but rather...." The verb qelw can mean anything from the strong "I want" to the weak and concessive "Although I could wish," the latter especially in polemical situations or where the writer wishes to identify in respects with those he opposes, but does *not* expect the substance of the wish to be fulfilled.

An obvious parallel case, noted by the commentators, is 1 Cor 7:7: qelw de panta" anqrwpou" einai w" kai emauton alla... ("I would like all men [and women] to be as I am: but..."). Paul is addressing the *Corinthian* claim that it is better not to be married, and not to engage in sex within marriage (because, according to them, believers belong to the angelic and/or eschatological order). In this context he expresses the "wish" that all could be celibate and as free to serve the Lord as he is. But I suspect Menzies would not want to press this to mean Paul really does set

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[28] Menzies, *Empowered*, p. 248 (taking issue with Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, p. 50).

[29] It is this sense that is most probably meant in 1 Cor 14:23 and 24. I.e., the clauses "if all speak in tongues..." and "if all prophesy..." stand for "the church as a whole" - which could in practice mean a quarter or a third (say) are actively involved and the rest "counted in" merely by not offering an alternative. Little can be deduced about actual practice at Corinth from these clauses, however, as they are hypothetical cases for the purpose of drawing out the advantages of prophecy over tongues.

forth that *everyone can* and (perhaps) *should* be unmarried and celibate. Paul himself has just said the opposite (7:2-6) and he immediately qualifies his assertion in v. 7 with a comment to the effect that each has a different gift from God, one to celibacy and the other to marriage. The expression of the wish in 7:7 is thus hyperbolic and in measure merely conciliatory - his way of getting alongside those whose view he opposes, and trumping their position.

Not surprisingly a number of interpreters have detected a similar rhetorical device in 14:5. Paul's comment has thus occasionally been taken as almost entirely conciliatory: he grants with 14:5a what he will effectively withdraw through the strategy of the *whole* discourse.[30] This reading, however, is unsatisfactory. Taken with 14:18 ("I thank my God I speak in tongues more than you all"), 14:5 more probably expresses what he could truly *wish* to be the case. Paul values tongues quite highly (certainly for private use, and, with more hesitation, even in public worship - providing it is accompanied by interpretation).[31] There is little obvious trace of irony in his commendation of it.

But 1 Cor 14:5a does not necessarily imply that Paul thinks his wish is liable to become a reality, far less that it is *already* a reality, which he merely wants to affirm and see, continued. His greater wish, according to the same verse is "rather that you might prophesy," yet that was apparently *not* fulfilled in the measure he had hoped for (hence his different encouragements to seek prophecy in 12:31; 14:1, 5). Correspondingly, the very expression of the wish in the first clause of 14:5a may suggest that tongues was *not* as widespread at Corinth as Paul might have liked.[32] Given Paul's restriction of public tongues to "two or at the most three" (14:27), Menzies must be correct that this wish that "all" might speak in tongues refers primarily to its use in private prayer. But as Paul's wish is

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[30] Cf. H. Chadwick's assertion: "The entire drift of the argument of 1 Cor xii-xiv is such as to pour a douche of ice-cold water over the whole practice. But Paul could hardly have denied that the gift of tongues was a genuine supernatural *charisma* without putting a fatal barrier between himself and the Corinthian enthusiasts.... Paul must fully admit that *glossolalia* is indeed a divine gift; but, he urges, it is the most inferior of all gifts" ("All Things to All Men," *NTS* 1 [1954-55], pp. 268-69; the first part of this quote is cited with approbation by F. F. Bruce, *I and II Corinthians* [London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971], p. 130); similarly, F. W. Beare, "Speaking with Tongues: A Critical Survey of the New Testament Evidence," *JBL* 83 (1964), pp. 229-46, esp. pp. 243-44.

[31] See Fee, *Presence*, pp. 889-90; Turner, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 231-34.

[32] Cf. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1954), p. 319.

immediately coupled with the qualifying one "but rather that you be able to prophesy" (an evidently "public" gift), Paul perhaps does not mean private tongues *alone*. While Paul can hardly be taken to mean he wants more instances of public tongues than were taking place in any one service (cf. 14:27!), he could nevertheless mean that he wished tongues were not restricted to the practicing elite, and that others might experience the gift in the course of time, whether inside or outside the assembly.[33]

When it came to prophecy, Paul had good scriptural grounds for hoping it would be universal to the people of God, even if not all would emerge as "prophets" of significant stature. Jewish tradition based on Numbers 11:29 (cf. 25-29) and Joel 3:1-5 (EW 2:28-32) made this clear: cf. the specific statement attributed to Rabbi Tan✓uma in *Numbers Rabba* 15:25:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "In this world only a few individuals have prophesied, but in the World to come all Israel will be made prophets," as it says: *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men,* etc. (Joel 3:1), (and compare similar explicit statements in *Midrash Psalms* 14:6 and *MHG Gen* 140).

Some such understanding may well lie behind Paul's encouragements to seek prophecy (14:1, 5, 39) and his affirmation that "you may all prophesy, so that all may learn," etc. (14:31).[34] But there was no similar

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[33] That in turn also indicates it is unlikely he distinguished two quite separate *gifts* of tongues in terms of the private and the public. His earlier mention of "diverse kinds of tongues" (12:28), is thus more likely to be played along the axis of "tongues of angels" and "tongues of men" (and perhaps different *sounding* tongues), than to be conditioned by whether the use is in private or in public.

[34] H. Conzelmann would restrict the "all" to "all upon whom the Spirit of prophecy comes" (*First Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974], p. 245), by which he means "the prophets." But his position is betrayed in the very attempt: from the perspective of Luke, Paul and John the "Spirit of prophecy" is given to all: see Turner, *Holy Spirit, passim*. Against the argument that Paul has in mind here only "the prophets," see esp. Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 254-59. Fee and Forbes are probably right to discern that while Paul limits tongues to three at most in the assembly (14:27), he does not so limit prophecy - as the explicit dunasqe gar kaq ena pante" profhteuein of 14:31 makes clear. The apparent restriction in 14:29 means either there should be no more prophecies till the first batch have been weighed (so Fee, *Presence*, pp. 249-50) or only two or three of the self-styled "prophets" may speak before others must get a turn (so Forbes).

basis in the Old Testament or in Judaism for the hope of a universal outpouring of tongues, even though it was obviously related to prophecy as form of inspired speech. Tongues was simply unprecedented in Judaism.[35] And - in contrast to prophecy - there are correspondingly no unambivalent encouragements to seek tongues in 1 Corinthians.

In short, I think Menzies goes well beyond the evidence when he claims that 1 Cor 14:5a establishes that "*every Christian...should...be edified through the private manifestation of tongues*." This is to press Paul's incidental wording too hard for a conclusion on a topic his discourse does not address. Even if 14:5a expresses a real wish, it is by no means clear he thinks it a divinely willed state of affairs, whether actual or merely potential. There does not then appear to be any significant tension with 1 Cor 12:30. If anything, 14:5 *confirms* the assumption in the earlier reference - not all *did* speak in tongues (whether privately or in public). Of course, if one already "knows" (on some other grounds) that Paul did in fact think all believers had the gift of tongues for private use, and if one already knows that he sharply distinguished this from the "ministry of tongues," then one can read 1 Cor 12:30 and 14:5 in a way that makes them agree with the known position - albeit at the cost of having to say Paul did not express himself well. But the point is that we do *not* know from "elsewhere" that Paul held these distinctions - these two texts are themselves precisely and alone the texts regularly appealed to for the distinction - unless of course we merely "know" on the basis of our church's confessional or traditional positions! But there can be no security there, for the various Pentecostal and Charismatic streams differ on precisely the point at issue.

PART 2: RECENT PENTECOSTAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

I need to limit myself here to brief remarks on two contributions of especial interest - those by Menzies and Chan.

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[35] See Forbes, *Prophecy*, pp. 182-87. Of the passages usually appealed to as Jewish exemplars, none is clearly Charismatic speech unintelligible to the speaker, and two (*1 Enoch* 71:11 and *Apoc. Abr.* 17) may well be in the speaker's (earthly) vernacular. In *Apoc. Zeph.* 8, the seer speaks with the languages of angels, but he has come fully to understand them. The remaining texts (*Test. Job.* 48-52 and *Mart./Asc. Isa.* 7:13-9:33) are *Christian* (cf. the specifically trinitarian mentions of the Father, the Beloved/Christ and the angel of the Holy Spirit [*Mart. Isa.* 7:23; 8:18; 9:33-42] and more frequent mentions of them individually).

2.1 Menzies

Menzies offers a methodologically nuanced argument for tongues as the normative evidence of Spirit-baptism. He concedes that it is impossible to demonstrate that either Luke or Paul held such a belief, for neither addresses the question directly and with sufficient clarity. But together they may provide a biblical theology of the gift of the Spirit which acts as a forerunner for a Pentecostal systematic theology. Paul portrays tongues as a gift available to all (1 Cor 14:5). Luke portrays Spirit/baptism exclusively as the gift of the Spirit of prophecy, that is (according to Menzies) the empowerment for "inspired speech" for effective witness.[36] If one now attempts to fuse the horizons, and inquire from the perspective of systematic theology which manifestations of the Spirit of prophecy might most appropriately serve as "initial physical evidence,"[37] in the sense that they would "verify" reception of the Pentecostal gift, then one can only conclude "tongues." The other two gifts - inspired praise or witness and Charismatic revelation/prophecy - are too ambiguous: the former is too easily replicated by natural abilities, the latter is not "physical evidence" at all. By contrast, "tongues-speech uniquely "fits the bill" because of its intrinsically demonstrative character."[38]

I agree entirely with the need for systematic reflection of the type Menzies advocates. But is this particular line of argument cogent? Why would the systematic theologian think that initial evidence would necessarily be "physical"? If Menzies laid hands on a convert to receive the Spirit, and that covert came to him subsequently with prophecies and revelations, but no tongues, would Menzies really doubt he had received the Spirit? Indeed, in Lucan terms, might it not be thought these gifts (along with inspired praise and witness) had an *even more* "transparent" correlation with reception of the Spirit as the "Spirit of prophecy"?[39] And is "tongues" really a less ambiguous "evidence"? It might be thought so in cases where tongues burst upon the individual seeker as utterly spontaneous inspired speech. But for many charismatic believers today, their initial speaking in tongues was not manifestly spontaneous. They

[36] *Empowered*, pp. 248-250.

[37] *Empowered*, p. 250.

[38] *Empowered*, p. 251.

[39] The point is well made by Chan, in his critique of Menzies: "Given the preponderance of prophetic utterances in Luke-Acts, it would seem equally, if not more, plausible to infer prophecy as initial evidence" ("Language Game," p. 83 n. 12).

needed (e.g.) to be encouraged to "step out in faith" or to "follow" someone's example, and they "progressed" from stuttering repetition of short phonemes to greater variety, complexity and length as confidence and facility grew. For such believers, the first experience of tongues was barely "spontaneous": it felt more like a "learned" phenomenon. And there is reason to suspect their feelings might be right. As it happens, there is evidence that the great majority of taped examples of tongues prove to have no genuine linguistic structure. They appear on careful analysis rather to be "strings of syllables, made up of sounds taken from among all those that the speaker knows, put together more or less haphazardly."[40] Secular researchers also get similar results in tests when they encourage groups simply to "free-vocalize." These observations put together may suggest that some sorts of tongues-speech (perhaps most?) are "natural" or "learned" phenomena rather than miraculous foreign or heavenly languages.[41] I am certainly not seeking to deprecate such tongues when evoked in a spiritual setting. If God can use our inarticulate groanings as a gift of the Spirit himself, communicating our inner longings (Rom 8:26),[42] much more might he be expected to take over and inspire such "natural" glossolalia when we direct them to him and ask the Spirit to speak through them. My point is only that the phenomenon of tongues speech *as such* is no more "intrinsically demonstrative" or unambiguously "evidential" than most other expressions of the Spirit.

More to the point, *why* would systematic theology suspect there should necessarily - or even usually - be "initial" evidence at all? It may theologically be predictable that God would confirm his gift of the Spirit in some demonstrable way *where otherwise the church* (or parts of it) *may have doubts* (e.g., in the admission of Samaritans or Gentiles to the people of God). But it is not clear why he should be expected to do so in regular circumstances. One does not receive the impression that the God of the

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[40] See Turner, *Holy Spirit*, p. 309, quoting the pioneer linguistic analyst of tongues, W. Samarin.

[41] For broader discussion and bibliography see *Holy Spirit*, ch. 17.

[42] Fee is surely right to see tongues as a prime symbol of our present weakness, rather than a symbol of power. In this gift, God, who indwells us as his eschatological temple, only speaks in us when we abandon our own striving for words, and then he only speaks in fashion that is unintelligible to us (!); we await with groaning the day when such "distance" will be overcome: "Theology," pp. 34-36. Whether Fee is also right ("Theology," pp. 29-34) that Rom 8:26, 27 *refers to glossolalia* is, however, much less certain. It is not clear στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις can mean groanings which *are* spoken, but not comprehended; the adjective more obviously means "*un*spoken" or "inarticulate."

bible looks particularly favorably on the human search for "proofs" of such a kind, and if anything it is "subsequent" and "ongoing" evidence - does the life and service of the believer demonstrate the presence and power of the Spirit? - that are the real issue, not the phenomenological character of some initial "moment."[43] Christians do not usually look for some single clear "sign" from God at the moment of conversion-initiation to confirm that a person has genuinely "received Christ" (they would usually take the person's confession and ongoing commitment as evidence enough, unless there is reason to doubt it), yet this is a much more momentous transition. Why then should "initial evidence" be expected always to mark what on Pentecostal terms is a lesser rite of passage?

2.2 Chan

Chan too recognizes that the New Testament witness on "initial evidence" is fragmentary and inconclusive. Consequently he turns to his own discipline of systematic theology to bring out the inner meaning of tongues in its relation to other theological symbols. He locates this inner meaning of tongues in *relationships*, for that is what language is about. More specifically, the unintelligibility of tongues marks it as a *language of intimacy and love*, like the idiolect of lovers, or the affectionate prattle of infants. From this, he rightly deduces that its manifestation in Spirit-baptism indicates the later has as much if not more to do with intimacy of life in relation to God as it has with empowering for service.[44] But is there any suggestion that tongues will be normative in connection with Spirit-baptism? Chan argues that as Spirit-baptism is the moment in which our whole being is submerged into intimacy with God, we should expect spontaneous tongues to mark the moment - they are as naturally the correlate of the encounter with the divine lover as tears are of sadness.[45] Indeed they are precisely what one would expect of a moment in which the *mind* is submerged too. In this respect Chan differentiates initial tongues from all subsequent ones: the latter (according to 1 Cor 14) are under the control of the anointed mind.[46]

Once again, this is perceptive and creative, and one could point back to Philo's discussions of the eclipsing of the human mind at the moment of the arrival of the divine Spirit of prophecy as a possible parallel (see esp.

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[43] See my introductory comments above, and *Power*, ch 14.

[44] Chan, "Language Game," pp. 93-94.

[45] Chan, "Language Game," pp. 86-90.

[46] Chan, "Language Game," p. 88.

Who is the Heir of Divine Things, 265; cf. *Special Laws* 4:49).[47] But questions remain. It is not clear from most testimonies that the moment of what people call their Spirit-baptism was essentially characterized as one of the profound intimacy of lovers (for example, people talk of "tingling," "electricity," "power," etc., as often or more often than of loving intimacy). Nor is it clear that such moments *necessarily* involved any greater "submerging" of the mind than on many subsequent occasions. The logic of Chan's argument comes close to affirming that the first instance is "ecstatic" and subsequent ones not (in which case, incidentally, there would be no reason to expect that all with "initial evidence" of tongues would necessarily experience it thereafter), but that pushes too hard an antithesis not found in the NT, nor clearly matched today. As we have noted, testimonies of "initial tongues" do not suggest they are always or usually "spontaneous."

If, however, the first moment is not entirely "ecstatic" - and even when it is - why should tongues be the exclusive or privileged marker? One might argue silent awed adoration or outspoken loving praise are as appropriate manifestations of intimacy as idiolect or baby-talk. So we might as readily anticipate powerfully inspired praise and adoration in the speakers *own language* (certainly so for *1 Enoch* 61:11-12 and 71:11), or the "abba" cry (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15), or spiritual song (cf. Eph 5:19), or profound silence, or the groan of Rom 8:26 - any of these, and more besides - to accompany and mark theophanic moments. It is thus barely surprising that Pentecostal interpreters have themselves been divided from the very beginning over whether tongues is "the" initial evidence of Spirit-reception, or whether prophecy, or shouts of acclamation, or dance, or some other manifestation, might not equally well serve.[48]

Again, Chan believes his argument about the inner meaning of tongues points in the direction of the doctrine of "subsequence." But this too is unclear. The language of intimacy and union more naturally fits the coming into being of that mutual indwelling of Christ (by the Spirit) in the believer, and of the believer (by the Spirit) "in Christ." In other words, it better suits post-Pentecost *conversion-initiation* than any subsequent essentially repeatable moment of deepening intimacy beyond it, however theophanic, short of the *parousia* itself. Might that not in turn suggest Spirit-baptism is about the whole of that "life" (and the multiplicity of empowerings for different sorts of service) that normally commences with response to the call of the gospel, rather than something distinct and

[47] But see Turner, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 200-202, for the limits on this.

[48] Synan, "Role," *passim*.

subsequent? But to pursue that question would lead to another and quite different paper.

CONCLUSION

As is becoming widely agreed, there is not sufficient evidence to show that any type of tongues was regarded as normative by Luke or Paul. Nor do their writings provide a basis from which we might safely *infer* such a conclusion, even if the writers themselves did not. To the contrary, 1 Cor 12:30 and 14:5 if anything suggest the opposite conclusion. But the evidence is so fragmentary, that careful considerations from systematic theology are inviting. Pentecostal scholars like Macchia,[49] Fee, Menzies and Chan are certainly leading the field in the exploration of the biblical and dogmatic significance of tongues. They are opening up the whole subject with great creativity and insight. That said, however, there is not yet any clear basis in systematic or empirical theology for giving *pride of place* to tongues, let alone a normative place, as "initial evidence" of Spirit-reception.[50] It might be possible to argue for the universal availability of tongues on the basis that some kinds of tongues simply involve the appropriation - in the Spirit - of an otherwise intrinsically "natural" ability to free-vocalize. Such an approach would evidently not establish any necessary link between initial Spirit-reception and tongues, and might tend to undermine, rather than strengthen their character as "initial evidence." It could even be mooted that Paul empirically "discovered" that all could thus speak in tongues (without suspecting the mechanism), but there are much more probable explanations of 1 Cor 14:5 and its whole context.

I recognize that tongues as "initial evidence" and tongues as a universally available form of private prayer are cherished tenets of a majority of Pentecostals. I belong with the minority of Pentecostals and other Charismatics who value tongues, but do not understand them in such a way. I do not expect to be able to convince the majority - the relevant evidence is perhaps too incomplete and ambiguous to mount a major

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[49] F. D. Macchia, "Sighs Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Glossolalia," *JPT* 1 (1992), pp. 47-73, cf. also H. N. Malony, and A. A. Lovekin, *Glossolalia: Behavioural Science Perspectives on Speaking in Tongues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[50] Cf. M. Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), p. 265: "it is *undisputed* that the descent of the Spirit is not necessarily bound up with the gift of speaking in tongues" (my italics): here speaking as a systematician.

"assault." My hope is rather that this paper will help the majority understand more clearly why some of us are unconvinced, and where the weaknesses in their case are perceived to be. May that call forth the sort of responses that lead us into deeper understanding of scripture and greater respect for each others' traditions.