

### ***Tongues: Sideshow or Solid Doctrine?***

During my years in the carpentry business (seemingly eons ago), I took part in many different types of existing home remodel jobs. Among the most challenging of these were those that involved bathrooms and plumbing. One bathroom remodel in particular looms particularly large in my memory: the shower pan underneath the shower stall had become compromised, and water had seeped through the sub-flooring into the crawl space beneath the house. The 2 x 8 joists that held up the bathroom floor had subsequently rotted, and the entire bathroom floor felt spongy when I stepped onto it. Without a strong joist system, the floor was essentially worthless: it was there, but it wouldn't hold up the weight of a person, and could even put someone in grave danger if it gave way. Christians similarly face a grave danger when they trust the floor of church teaching that is being held up by rotten or nonexistent underpinnings of doctrine. Without the important joists of sound doctrine, the visible floor of these teachings is spongy and worthless—unable to bear up under the weight of true examination. Nowhere is this paradigm more evident than in the area of speaking in tongues with regard to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Eighth Fundamental Truth of the Assemblies of God—that speaking in tongues is the outward physical evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit—is in deep trouble among Millennials. This trouble has manifested itself in two main groups. The first group is a younger generation of Assembly of God ministers who have serious questions about our Pentecostal Distinctive. Many of them memorize the proof-text verses required for their licenses and ordinations, but are not able to answer the biblical theology questions posed by critics of Pentecostalism. In an attempt to be loyal, many of them affirm the doctrine without ever answering those questions; this is a soft, spongy flooring of teaching that will not hold up under the weight of withering scrutiny of even one parishioner who asks the right questions. The other group is the growing gaggle of non-denominational Pentecostals who are only too happy to

affirm the teaching of speaking in tongues—but unmoored from any doctrinal underpinnings that would articulate the rationale for this sign. In both of these cases, the floor joists need to be bolstered or installed. The fact is that the Eighth Fundamental Truth of the Assemblies of God is built upon solid doctrinal joists: many of our young simply haven't been exposed to our own biblical theology. If we want our floors to hold the weight of people, we'll have to reinforce these joists of theology.

### ***How Did We Get Here?***

In order to properly understand how our movement arrived in a place where our most distinctive doctrine must be re-litigated for the confidence of a new generation of ministers, we must first grasp our own historical contribution to this status. Since the term “Pentecostal” is a broad term, it is helpful to make some identification distinctions in the brief history of the movement. Pentecostalism may be divide into three general movements: classical Pentecostalism (most closely associated with the rise of the Assemblies of God), the inter-denominational charismatic renewal of the 1960's and 1970's, and the so-called “third wave” of Pentecostalism, or neo-Pentecostalism<sup>1</sup>. The advent of the Pentecostal movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries coincided roughly with that of broader evangelicalism. These groups wholly rejected the highly influential German liberalism, along with the low view of Scripture and what they perceived was an arid intellectualism in the prevailing seminaries. This push-back against the pointy-headed scholars of the day was punctuated by a new prejudice: anything that smacked of creedalism. The gospel of Jesus Christ was not a complicated internalization of creeds and doctrines that adherents memorized and memorialized: it was a simple, yet vibrant, powerful, transformative experience. Pentecostals in particular clung tenaciously to this experiential concept: Charles Parham's famous study of Acts, for example, produced the distinctive doctrine that the

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. John Hannah and his HT102A “The Church In The Modern Era” class at Dallas Theological Seminary, along with his notes, for this helpful division of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Pentecostal movements.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a Second Baptism that is evidenced by speaking in tongues<sup>2</sup>. After the Azusa Street revival of 1906, this experiential theology spread like wildfire across the nation.

The careful and thoughtful development of doctrine, however, did not necessarily spread with it. Over the next decade, as the ranks of Pentecostalism swelled with largely blue-collar people who related to its experientialism, the prevailing sentiment among Pentecostal leaders was that the very last thing they needed was a denomination—or centralized authority of any sort. They embraced the autonomy of their grass-roots movement, and resisted attempts at collecting the disparate groups of Pentecostals across the country into an organized group. But the need to fund and train foreign missionaries eventually led to just such a moment, and in 1914 the Assemblies of God held their first General Council in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Comprising this rag-tag group of Pentecostals were two chief groups: the hyper-Wesleyan Holiness Movement people, and some Spirit-baptized Reformed theologians. After the Oneness schism of 1916, the cooler doctrinal heads of the Reformed theologians influenced the movement to adopt its Sixteen Fundamental Truths as the official doctrinal stance of the Assemblies of God. This couldn't have happened a moment too soon: the teaching of speaking in tongues was scattered all over the theological map among Pentecostals: some believed it to be a Holiness agent, others believed it to be associated with evangelism, and others believed it to be a sideshow. In the absence of doctrine, this revival of the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit was getting ready to succumb to another burial at the hands of Man's selfish ends. After all, if speaking in tongues means whatever I want it to mean, aren't I elevating myself to the position of ultimate authority?

After the codification of the Sixteen Fundamental Truths—the Eighth of which states that speaking in tongues is the outward evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit—the Assemblies of God grew in numbers and influence, while those Pentecostal groups that hadn't joined the AG waned in

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<sup>2</sup> Gary B. McGee, *This Gospel Shall Be Preached*, Vol. 1, Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1986, 42.

both. The so-called “Second Wave” of Spirit Baptism was also known as the charismatic renewal of the 1960’s and 1970’s. It swept through established denominations, as opposed to being a strictly “AG” movement, and resulted in many Christians who were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues—but remained in their original churches. Though it helped bring Pentecostalism to the fore of American consciousness, the charismatic renewal (like early Pentecostals) also eschewed the thoughtful articulation of doctrine. Ergo, the largest lasting influence of this movement was the anecdotal testimony of individuals who had experienced something powerful but could not testify as to what it was. By the 1980’s, a third wave of Pentecostalism had begun to emerge: neo-Pentecostalism. This movement also sought to remain non-denominational and resisted any attempts at codifying doctrine pertinent to speaking in tongues or manifestations of the Holy Spirit. A predictable result was the endless litany of stories we’ve all heard: the influence of tangential groups such as the Raima Movement, the elevation of the experiential manifestation above the doctrinal truth, and ultimately people reporting manifestations but not being able to articulate the meaning thereof. This has led us to where we are today: the practice of speaking in tongues is here to stay. It’s out there right now, being twisted and mis-taught by a host of quacks and simpletons who rely on emotional and experiential chicanery in the place of substantive doctrine. The fact remains that, divorced from doctrine, the practice of speaking in tongues has been relegated to the status of “sideshow” for millions of well-meaning Pentecostals. Little wonder we now hide from our distinctive doctrines: if they are, indeed, a sideshow, why emphasize them at all? If Pentecostalism is to survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it will do so on the strength of its doctrine. This means that the only doctrinally grounded Pentecostal movement—the Assemblies of God—must re-examine our Pentecostal Distinctive and teach it afresh to our people. Ministers must be prepared to answer doctrinal objections on doctrinal grounds, not anecdotal ones.

For better or for worse, all AG ministers who undertake the task of shoring up the doctrinal stance of the Spirit Baptism must necessarily wrestle with James D. G. Dunn. Dunn's seminal critique of Pentecostalism, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit In Relation To Pentecostalism Today* (1970), asserts that Spirit Baptism is an initiatory experience associated with salvation<sup>3</sup>. The influence of this and others of his critiques has touched off a flurry of theological self-reflection among Pentecostals that has been long overdue. The possibility of growing from a curious religious movement into a serious and influential school of theological thought begins with thoughtful reflection, and we Pentecostals are indebted to Dunn for inspiring us to do exactly that (and to Dr. Robert Menzies for his able refutation of Dunn in his own essay<sup>4</sup>). Along these lines, I'd like to address two of the most honest and significant questions we'll have to answer.

### ***Why do we need evidence of Spirit Baptism at all?***

This is a profound question. After all, isn't the pell-mell search for external evidence generally reflective of Enlightenment-era thinking—where divine revelation is relegated to the dustbin of history, and human experience and reason are elevated to God's place? Just the contention that a gift from God comes with an "evidence" is fraught with potential peril. Menzies parries this thrust: "The focus on 'evidence' reminds us of a day in which the scientific method had seized the imagination of the American people. Nevertheless, this modern formulation is related to a process of doctrinal development which is reflected in the New Testament and which has been largely ignored by modern exegetes."<sup>5</sup> This "evidence" business, therefore, is a sound question, and one for which we must provide an answer.

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<sup>3</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism In The Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit In Relation To Pentecostalism Today*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered For Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Menzies, 253.

Fortunately, the book of Acts and the 1916 General Council of the Assemblies of God aren't the only times the topic has come up. We see evidence that the Holy Spirit has come on the seventy elders with Moses when they begin to prophesy (Nu 11.25-26). We note with interest that great works of power accompany the judges when the Holy Spirit comes on them (Ju 14.6, 15.14), and even Saul himself becomes living evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Sa 10.6, 10). When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit's descent onto Him is evidenced by the presence of a physical dove (Jn 1.32). Though the tongues that were heard at Pentecost were actual languages (διαλεκτω, Ac 2.6), it is undeniable that this served as evidence to the crowd of onlookers who witnessed the occurrence. As Grudem points out, if the power of the Holy Spirit within us is like a river of living water (Jn 7.39) flowing to others, doesn't that suggest that "people would be aware of a presence that would somehow be perceptible<sup>6</sup>"? Though the inherent danger of conflating "gift" and "sign" exists in any formulation that employs this language, this danger is easily dispensed with—and doesn't automatically negate the fact that tongues is the evidence of the Spirit-baptism: "tongues-speech is an integral part of the Pentecostal gift, edifying and universally available; therefore, when one receives the gift, one would expect to manifest tongues.<sup>7</sup>" We don't want to make "evidence-seeking" our goal, but we cannot deny the existence of evidence when it appears. Therefore, noting its presence in our biblical theology should hardly be controversial.

***Should we be formulating doctrine from narrative?***

Another excellent objection raised by critics is that of methodology. If we emphasize the theological in the Lukan (Acts) account, aren't we mistreating the historical nature of the text? Certainly many errors have been made by well-meaning preachers who attempt to shoehorn some theology into a passage of Scripture where it was not meant to go. Is it possible that we Pentecostals are making a hermeneutical mistake by formulating a doctrine from a historical book, rather than a doctrinal one such

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<sup>6</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 641.

<sup>7</sup> Menzies, 253

as Romans? Many critics such as John R. W. Stott have leveled precisely this accusation at Pentecostals: “this revelation of the purpose of God in Scripture should be sought in its didactic, rather than its historical parts. More precisely, we should look for it in the teaching of Jesus, and in the sermons and writings of the apostles, and not in the purely narrative portions of the Acts<sup>8</sup>.”

But this is foolishness on its face. Stronstad correctly sees this as an “unbiblical dichotomy between the so-called descriptive and didactic passages of Scripture.<sup>9</sup>” His rebuttal of Stott should be required reading for every Assembly of God minister: it rests on two contentions. The first contention is Paul’s words to Timothy regarding the nature and definition of Scripture: “all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable or teaching for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Ti 3.16-17). This would ostensibly include all of the historical portions of the Old Testament, as well. Additionally, Paul points out that “whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction” (Ro 15.4). As Stronstad puts it, “if for Paul the historical narrative of the Old Testament had didactic lessons for New Testament Christians, then it would be most surprising if Luke, who modeled his historiography after the Old Testament historiography, did not invest his own history of the origin and spread of Christianity with a didactic significance.<sup>10</sup>” To look to Luke for history and Paul for doctrine is to perpetuate this erroneous split between instruction (διδαχή) and history; indeed, those who do so typically relegate Luke to his History Corner and Paul to his Doctrine Corner. Stronstad ably demonstrates in his landmark work *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* that Luke is a theologian in his own right. In short, developing doctrine from a careful reading of historical texts carries no more danger than formulating an eschatology from apocalyptic literature—which many non-Pentecostals do without batting an eye.

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<sup>8</sup> John R.W. Stott, *The Baptism and the Fullness of the Holy Spirit*, Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Stronstad, 7

***A Doctrinal Apology for the Tongues as the Initial Evidence for Baptism in the Holy Spirit***

**1. *There are two baptisms.***

That there are two baptisms should be beyond question to every AG minister; notwithstanding, allow me to briefly sketch the rationale for this doctrine. Let's examine 1 Co 12.13: "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and were all given the one Spirit to drink." The Greek preposition *ev* is translated "by" in every verse in this chapter in which the Holy Spirit is referenced. Additionally, we must remember that John the Baptist called Jesus the One who baptizes us in the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3.11, Mk 1.8, Lk 3.16, Jn 1.33). Paul's contention, then, that the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ means that there are two baptisms: "the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, then Jesus baptizes us into the Holy Spirit."<sup>11</sup> We note as well that the gift of the Spirit in Acts does not have soteriological connections; it cannot be said to be an initiatory experience that is connected to salvation: "in spite of interpretations to the contrary, in Acts the Spirit is given to those who are already Christians, that is, to disciples (19.1) and believers (8.12, 19.2)."<sup>12</sup> The real problem passage of Scripture for those who would make the Baptism in the Spirit a soteriological gift is in Ac 8.8.4-25. In it, we find a group of people (the Samaritans) who believed the preaching of Philip, believed in the Lord Jesus, and were later baptized by him (Ac 8.12). It was subsequent to this that they received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Ac 8. 15-17). The ramifications of this are clear: "since Luke considered the Samaritans to be Christians before they received the Spirit, it can hardly be maintained that he understood the Spirit to be [ . . . ] the 'means of salvation'.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it is a

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley Horton and William W. Menzies, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Springfield: Logion Press, 1993, 129.

<sup>12</sup> Stronstad, 64

<sup>13</sup> Menzies, 204



“supplementary gift given to Christians, those who have already been incorporated into the community of salvation.<sup>14</sup>”

A final thought pertinent to the “two baptism” aspect of this argument: the story of Apollos in Ac 18.24-28 is instructive. We meet the character of Apollos, who is an eloquent and well-read teacher of the Scriptures (Ac 18.24). He had been instructed in the way of the Lord (Ac 18.25), but Luke tells us that he was “acquainted only (μονον) with the baptism of John” (Ac 18.25). I have included the Greek adverb in parenthesis because it demonstrates Luke’s desire to show the comparative inadequacy of the one baptism. In the very next verse, we see Aquila and Priscilla take the young man aside, at which time they “explained the way of God to him more accurately (ἀκριβεστερον)” (Ac 18.26). Again, the existence of the comparative adverb ἀκριβεστερον implies that the aforementioned settling for one baptism is not quite as accurate as the way of God upon which they subsequently expounded. In light of this, how can we deny the validity of two baptisms?

## ***2. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit Has A Vocational Purpose***

As mentioned earlier, one of the central dangers of the neo-Pentecostal movement has been the proliferation of tongues- and manifestation-related teachings that are unmoored from doctrinal reality. Without the careful reflection and study that comprises the articulation of doctrine, Man will still believe in speaking in tongues—but such manifestations are relegated to “sideshow status” in the absence of a doctrinally specified purpose. This manifestation-as-sideshow paradigm is abundantly evident in the interdenominational surface-scratching Pentecostalism that is particularly resistant to doctrinal teaching. It is the Pentecostal version of finding the Virgin Mary in a tortilla, and has had similar repercussions. In the same way that it is patently absurd and unfair to paint all of Catholicism with the broad brush of some ignorant Catholics, it is also unfair to paint all Pentecostals with the Benny

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<sup>14</sup> Menzies, 211

Hinn broad strokes. However, that is precisely what is happening in the theological world today; the purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit has been lost in the “tongues sideshow” Man has created in the absence of doctrinal codification, and thoughtful Pentecostals are simply seen as part of the show. In order for our Pentecostal Distinctive to have validity, we must rediscover the purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit is not an agent of personal holiness. It is not given as a means by which we become closer to God. This gift is not given so that we may operate in the Spirit in miraculous ways. **The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is for the empowerment of His disciples for evangelistic witness.**

Period.

This is not to say that your personal walk with God, your status before Him, and your ability to be obedient in the gifts of the Spirit are not connected with His influence in your life. It is simply to say that this gift, when properly understood against the contextual backdrop of the rest of Scripture, is for the unique task of empowering you for witness. When Moses is faced with the miraculous sign of the burning bush, the ramification of this is his empowerment for witness before Pharaoh (Ex 3). When Isaiah is faced with the transformative experience of the presence of God, what follows is his empowerment for prophetic ministry (Is 6). When the Spirit descends on Jesus at the Jordan, His prophetic and messianic ministry is inaugurated (Lk 3.22). This is precisely what we see at Pentecost: following the gift of the Spirit, Peter stands and delivers the first Christian sermon (Ac 2.22-36)—and is a firebrand for the gospel until his dying day. It would appear that a transformative Baptism in the Spirit has a specific and distinct purpose: “the logical corollary is that at Pentecost the Spirit came upon the disciples in order to enable them to be effective witnesses.<sup>15</sup>” Though Dr. Menzies’ logic is unimpeachable, we need not make his logic the foundation for our doctrine; we have the words of Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> Menzies, 174

Himself explaining the rationale behind the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts 1.8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” Jacques Dupont’s description of Pentecost as a “new Sinai” echoes this notion: Moses is transformed at Sinai, and he speaks the words of God and ushers in the age of the Law. The disciples are baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and also usher in a new covenant<sup>16</sup>.

Menzies notes that “the immediate result of the Spirit’s activity is inspired speech.”<sup>17</sup> Stronstad draws parallels between Zacharias’ infilling and his prophecy in Lk 1.67 and Peter at Pentecost.<sup>18</sup> When Luke describes Peter as being “filled with the Spirit” (πλησθεις πνευματος ἁγίου) in Ac 4.8, the very next thing to happen is his address to the Sanhedrin. The evidence of the missiological purpose of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit should be abundantly evident.

The influence of the hyper-Wesleyan movement in the early days of the Assemblies of God led to some unfortunate conclusions regarding Spirit Baptism, but thoughtful theologians have since engaged in the correction of error and have paved a theological road that is safe to walk:

The emphasis of Acts 1.8 is power for service, not regeneration, not sanctification. [ . . . ]  
Some have treated the baptism in the Holy Spirit as primarily a matter of sanctification.  
Some have even made the chief object of the Christian life the perfecting of oneself. We must avoid this idea. We actually achieve more growth while in service for our Lord.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jacques Dupont, *La nouvelle Pentecote (Ac 2, 1-11)*, *Nouvelles etudes sur les Actes des Apotres*, 1984, 193.

<sup>17</sup> Menzies, 177

<sup>18</sup> Stronstad, 54

<sup>19</sup> Horton, 124

“The outpouring of the Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost fulfills the promise of power for mission (Ac 1.8).<sup>20</sup>”

When we in the Assemblies of God are reminded of the true purpose of the Spirit Baptism, we are better able to articulate it and interpret the resulting manifestations to others.

### ***3. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit Is Not Climactic***

One undeniable and unfortunate by-product of Pentecostal theology is the potential to over-emphasize the experiential at the expense of “the process” in the area of spiritual growth. It’s not difficult to understand why: we go to an altar and are saved in a moment of repentance, confession and prayer. In a second moment (although sometimes simultaneous with the first), we are baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. When we need healing, we go down to an altar and pray for healing. If we are healed instantaneously, that is a pivotal moment. If we are not healed instantaneously, that moment does not come in the same way. Either way, much of our church practice hinges on the seeking of the next “moment” when we experience God—and many times, this comes at the expense of the daily process of feeding on His Word, experiencing His presence in our prayer life and hearing His voice through the community of believers. He gave us this process, and we should be loathe to ignore it—in fact, once we have been baptized in the Spirit, our daily process should be one of being continually Spirit-filled: “being filled with the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience.<sup>21</sup>” Once baptized, we are empowered for witness, and this should be a habit rather than an experience:

As Pentecost itself was only the beginning of the harvest and brought men into a fellowship of worship, teaching, and service so the baptism in the Holy Spirit is only a door into a growing relationship with the Spirit and with other believers. It leads to a life

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<sup>20</sup> Stronstad, 52

<sup>21</sup> Stronstad, 54

of service where the gifts of the Spirit provide power and wisdom for the spread of the gospel and growth of the Church.<sup>22</sup>

If we mistake the importance of the sign for the gift, we will miss this life of Spirit-filled witness. Because of this, our Baptism in the Holy Spirit should be inaugural to a new life process, as opposed to a moment of existential experience.

#### ***4. The Initial Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is Speaking in Tongues***

We have already established that “evidence” isn’t the bad word that some make it out to be. We have also established that the doctrine of two baptisms is scriptural and valid. So since there IS a Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and since God’s gifts to Man are frequently accompanied by signs, we conclude that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is no exception. According to the book of Acts, the sign that accompanies the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. We’ve also seen that “tongues” can mean actual translatable languages, as in Acts 2—but we also note that Paul’s discourse on tongues in 1 Co 14 (γλωσσολαλία) is not talking about translatable languages but some sort of prayer language. As we work our way through the episodes in Acts in which people are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we can quickly see the pattern emerge: speaking in tongues always follows.

Acts 2 is our inaugural episode. As we can see from the text, the phenomenon that takes place at Pentecost is one of actual languages—but still is evidence that a New Baptism has taken place. The second place we see the phenomenon is in Acts 8.14-24, in which Simon the sorcerer offers Peter and John money for the gift. Why? What did he see that would cause him to be sufficiently amazed? Dr. Horton’s logic helps us to understand what influenced Simon: “Obviously there was something supernaturally evident in the receiving of the Spirit. Simon had already seen Philip’s miracles. Prophecy

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<sup>22</sup> Horton, 127

would have been in their own language and not obviously supernatural. Speaking in tongues must have been the evidence that Simon recognized.<sup>23</sup>

A third episode occurs at the house of Cornelius in Acts 10. Though Peter was obedient to the Lord's call to appear at Cornelius' house, there was sufficient prejudice between the Jews and the Gentiles to require some sort of evidence that the Holy Spirit had also fallen on a Gentile household. As the Jewish believers looked on, they "heard them speaking in tongues [λαλούντων γλωσσais] and praising God" (Ac 10.46). This is a pivotal moment in Luke's narrative, and there is no question that the gift of the Spirit is distinctly associated with tongues: "the decisive sign of God's favor on the Gentiles is their reception of the gift of the Spirit, manifested in inspired speech."<sup>24</sup> We see a fourth textual evidence for this in the next chapter, when Peter defends the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council. He explicitly connects the gift of the Spirit at Cornelius' house with that of Pentecost<sup>25</sup> in his speech: "the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as it did on us at the beginning" (Ac 11.15). Clearly, Peter saw the sign of tongues as evidence of the gift of the Spirit.

A fifth evidence is given in Acts 19, in which the Holy Spirit comes on the Ephesian believers "and they spoke in tongues [ἐλάλουν τε γλωσσais] and prophesied" (Ac 19.6). Just as God gave signs to accompany His mighty outpouring on Man in the Old Testament, so Luke draws such a connection: "Luke's repeated emphasis on 'seeing' and 'hearing' demonstrates the centrality of the sign motif for the theology of the Holy Spirit."<sup>26</sup>

Scriptural evidence attests to the veracity and validity of the evidentiary tongues doctrine. Perhaps we stand in need of being reminded of it, but its verdict is definitive. Upon closer examination,

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<sup>23</sup> Horton, 137

<sup>24</sup> Menzies, 215

<sup>25</sup> Stronstad, 67

<sup>26</sup> Stronstad, 79

moreover, it need not seem so controversial; after all, speaking in tongues makes perfect sense as a God-given evidence of His gift—particularly against the backdrop of the sign motif throughout Scripture:

Tongues-speech [ . . . ], because of its unusual and demonstrative character (the very reason it is both often maligned or over-esteemed), is particularly well suited to serve as ‘evidence’. In short, if we ask the question concerning ‘initial physical evidence’ of Luke, tongues-speech uniquely ‘fits the bill’ because of its intrinsically demonstrative character.<sup>27</sup>

We began our examination of this doctrine with a conundrum: if we could not conclusively prove that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, we would be complicit in relegating the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit to “sideshow status,” as have the neo-Pentecostals. That way lies the road to eventual irrelevance and extinction. If we accept that tongues have validity as a manifestation of the Spirit, we must also accept that they are the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. In light of this cornucopia of evidence, however, it seems we are forced to come to the conclusion that tongues aren’t just “something that happens,” but rather the outward evidence of a powerfully transformative experience known as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

What churches teach is either supported by sound theology or isn’t. If our Assembly of God churches are affirming our Eighth Fundamental Truth but cannot be certain why it should be affirmed, the result is a spongy floor of teaching. When parishioners walk on that floor, it might not hold them up. In fact, the embrace of any number of lesser, squirrely doctrines pertinent to speaking in tongues is likely to take root in the soul that has not shored up its beliefs with solid doctrinal joists: The Neo-Pentecostal movement has no shortage of soft floors that invite the parishioner to fall through the teaching on tongues into the rot below. Without joists to hold this floor up, we don’t have a floor. There is never harm in examining our own doctrine from time to time; the unexamined faith, after all, is a

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<sup>27</sup> Menzies, 251

weak one, indeed. Memorizing proof texts will simply not be adequate to the task: it is time for our Millennial ministers to check their floor joists of biblical theology and doctrine; such an exercise will lead to the strongest possible teachings in the next generation of Pentecostals.



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