

Glossolalia: Why Christians Can Speak in Tongues in a Church Service without Interpretation

Ervin Budiselić
Biblijski institut, Zagreb
ebudiselic@bizg.hr

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Abstract

The article analyzes the topic of speaking in tongues, notably, the question: Can Christians speak in tongues in a church service without interpretation? In the first part, the article presents various views on glossolalia that exist among Christians. The second part introduces the problem of differences between glossolalia in 1 Corinthians and the book of Acts which is then followed by a textual analysis of key parts of 1 Corinthians and Acts. Based on the analysis, it is suggested that the best way to reconcile the differences about glossolalia between 1 Corinthians and Acts is to make a distinction between devotional and ministerial glossolalia. The third part of the article offers remarks and a summary of the topic with a conclusion that Christians can speak in tongues in a service, and not every speech in tongues needs to be interpreted.

Key words: *glossolalia, speaking in tongues, gifts of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12-14, the book of Acts, Pentecost*

Introduction

From its beginning to the present, the church has been divided over various issues and theological topics. One such topic is *glossolalia*. It is amazing how something that, by definition, has its source in God's grace can divide Christendom. Based on the same Bible, some Christians connect *glossolalia* with the initial evidence

of the baptism in the Spirit, while others reject such an idea. Some regard it as “a thing of the past,” arguing that *glossolalia*, like some other miraculous gifts, ceased to exist after the Bible was completed. Consequently, it is easy to get lost among the variety of opinions and interpretations.

The main concern of this article is not glossolalia in general, but one specific issue in connection to it: Can Christians in church speak simultaneously in different tongues, or must they speak one by one? Namely, believers in Pentecostal and charismatic churches in the context of worship and prayer often practice simultaneous praying or singing together in different tongues. Critics then point to Acts and 1 Corinthians 14 claiming that, yes, believers in Acts 2 were speaking simultaneously in tongues, but their speech was understood by others, and in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul specifically says that those who have a gift of tongues must speak “one by one.” Does this mean that there are two different and opposite teachings regarding glossolalia?

In order to properly understand the differences between these two texts, first we must conduct a textual analysis which will then help us to reconstruct specific historical situations or contexts to which these two texts refer. Only then can we go back to the Scriptures and understand all the other potentially unclear details of it. In doing so, we will prove that the Scriptures support the idea that Christians can gather together and speak together in one voice in different tongues. Hence, in the first part, we will briefly present different ideas and understandings about glossolalia among Christians. In the second part, we will introduce problematic differences between 1 Corinthians 14 and the book of Acts regarding glossolalia, and after that, we will analyze 1 Corinthians 14 and the book of Acts. Part of the analysis will be a reconstruction of historical situations (particularly in the church of Corinth) in order to gain a proper understanding of these texts. In the third part, we will summarize our results and offer some reflective remarks claiming that Christians can speak in tongues in a church service and that not every speech in tongues needs to be interpreted.

Various Ideas about the Gift of Glossolalia

The term *glossolalia* is a combination of two words: the noun *glōssa* which means “tongue” as the organ of taste, “speech or manner of speech” or “language”, and the verb *laleo* “to speak, to tell, to utter, to preach.” From there, we get the expression “to speak in” or “with a tongue” or “tongues”. The actual term “glossolalia” does not appear in the New Testament, but as a combination of the previously mentioned noun *glōssa* and verb *laleo* (Mk 16:17; Acts 10:44-46; 19:6; 1 Cor 14 chap.). Occasionally the adjective *heteros* “other, another” (e.g. Acts 2:4) or the adjective *kainos* “new” (e.g. Mk 16:17) is used with these words creating the expression which, the

KJV for example, translates as “speak with other tongues.” Other translations use expressions like “speak in foreign tongues,” “speak in foreign languages,” and “speak in different languages.” However, in my estimation, such translations weaken the primary intention of Paul because, as Reinhold Ullrich (1996, 124) notices, exchange of the term “speaking in tongues” for terms like “foreign language” or “different languages,” carries the implication that Paul talks about languages that can be learned and taught.

Diversity in terminology reveals diversity in opinion. When the topic of glossolalia is brought up among Christians, one can encounter a variety of ideas connected to its source, nature, purpose and use. Regarding the source of *glossolalia*, the majority of Christians believe that the source of *glossolalia* is the Spirit of God. A second view claims that all cases of *glossolalia* were the result of emotional utterances, and therefore the human psyche is the source. An explanation for this view is found in the fact that the disciples at Pentecost had been long awaiting the arrival of the Spirit, so when it finally came, they expressed their excitement in highly emotional, even frenzied utterance. Kirsopp Lake explains this as “merely the removal of inhibitions under the stress of great emotion” (as cited in Williams 1996, 2:214). Lastly, since *glossolalia* as a phenomenon can also be found outside of Christianity, some believe that such manifestations have a demonic source.

Regarding the nature of glossolalia, we can summarize three main views. The first one is accepted among the majority of Pentecostals where the ability to speak in tongues is ascribed to the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit provides the language to the speaker which the speaker does not understand, yet it has an intelligible content. Therefore, the speech occurs not in any kind of human language, but in a different kind of language – different in its quality, not in quantity. The second view is to say that at Pentecost, and on other occasions, people spoke in earthly foreign languages which they did not understand, and it had nothing to do with any subconscious category. The third view is to say that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:1, mentions an angelic language, and based on that, some have concluded that the word “angelic” probably describes the mystery of speaking in tongues. Hence, those who speak in tongues speak some sort of angelic¹ language.

In general, for Pentecostals, glossolalia has two purposes: glossolalia for personal edification (devotion) which is manifested in prayer, praise and worshiping

1 Fee (1996, 170) observes that the Corinthians probably considered glossolalia to be “one of the evidences of their having already achieved something of their future heavenly status.” Williams (1996, 2:396) argues that it is a difficult thing to equate the angelic languages with glossolalia since it is the Spirit who gives the utterance. To support his idea, he quotes Ralph P. Martin who explains that the “tongues of angels” is probably a Jewish phrase of prayer-speech eminently suited to praising God and concludes that it is only another way of referring “to spiritual utterance as being from heaven, even if it is not literally the speech of angels.”

God, and glossolalia for the edification of the church when such speech should be interpreted so that other members can be edified (cf. Jambrek 2007, 106-107). A second theory ascribes glossolalia to the missionary activities of the first church saying that God permanently endowed the apostles with a miraculous knowledge of foreign languages in which they were able to preach the Gospel.² Similar to this theory, some Christians say that it was only a temporary sign which attested to the divine mission of the apostles and foreshadowed the universality of the Gospel (cf. Schaff).

To define when, where and how glossolalia should be used depends largely on the understanding of its purpose. Those who maintain that the gifts of the Spirit are things of the past will not see seeking such manifestations as necessary.³ Those who connect glossolalia with demonic manifestation will be against it. Furthermore, those who view glossolalia as the knowledge of a foreign language which the speaker never learned, yet God miraculously bestowed upon him or her, will be open for such a manifestation.⁴ However, even among those who argue for the necessity of such a manifestation, there are significant differences over when, where and how it should be expressed. Pentecostals acknowledge the need for glossolalia, yet not everyone agrees on the need for interpretation or the impact of glossolalia on unbelievers. Some argue that *every* speech in tongues must be interpreted based on Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:27 because if unbelievers hear such speech, it could have a negative effect on them. Others, based on the book of Acts, conclude that not every speech in tongues was interpreted. Accordingly, just in some cases do tongues need to be interpreted. They recognize that speaking in tongues can be offensive for unbelievers, but at the same time such manifestations can, just like in Acts 2, create an interest for the

- 2 In the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in the 20th century, some Pentecostals believed that the phenomenon of *glossolalia* meant the restoration of missionary languages that would enable the church for rapid evangelization. Today, such a view is rejected, although there were some cases in history that in some instances people, under the inspiration of the Spirit, spoke in foreign languages which they never learned and they were understood by other people. For additional information about this topic in Croatian, see *Leksikon evanđeoskog kršćanstva*, article "Dar tumačenja jezika."
- 3 "Miracles...belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purpose(...) and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle working had passed also, as a matter of course" (Stitzinger 2003, 172).
- 4 In the past, Evangelical and Wesleyan leaders viewed tongues as a spurious counterfeit produced by Satan. "Wesleyans no longer view the phenomenon's origin as from Satan; but at the same time they continue to question whether it reflects New Testament practice. The primary reason given is the conviction that biblical tongues were actual languages while the contemporary phenomenon is not" (Faupel 1996, 108).

gospel message. Opinions differ, but in order to make some sense of it, we have to analyze glossolalia as found in Acts and 1 Corinthians 14.

Acts and 1 Corinthians – Two Aspects of the Same Story

The Problem of Glossolalia between 1 Corinthians 14 and the Book of Acts

The books of Acts and 1 Corinthians represent two aspects of *glossolalia*. While in both instances the Spirit provides the language through the human spirit and enables people to speak, pray or sing in tongues, what happened in Acts differs from the instructions in 1 Corinthians. To the Corinthians, Paul gave four major instructions regarding *glossolalia*: a) interpretation *must* always follow the tongue (1 Cor 14:13); b) all manner of speech in church *must be understood by others* so that others can also be built up (1 Cor 14:16-17); c) a person can speak in tongues *one at a time*, but not more than three (1 Cor 14:27); d) “If there is no interpreter, the speaker *should keep quiet* in the church *and speak* to himself and God” (1 Cor 14:28, emphasis mine). These instructions are not quite applicable to the book of Acts since, in the book of Acts, we have different records.

In Acts 2, it is obvious that people heard *glossolalia* and that it attracted them to find out more about this unusual event. We will see that these languages were not human – earthly dialects, but “hetero” languages (languages of another kind) inspired by the Spirit of God. However, people heard the disciple’s speech each in his own language which was a miracle of hearing (interpretation). Contrary to Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 14, all of the disciples spoke in tongues simultaneously. There was no intention from the disciples’ side to interpret the content of their speech. However, God miraculously interpreted the tongues himself.⁵ The content of these tongues was the praise of God.

In Acts 10 in Caesarea, the Gentiles’ speaking in tongues was understood by Jews as magnifying God, probably not because of interpretation, but because they had an earlier similar experience. The disciples did not show any intention of interpreting the tongues and they all spoke at the same time. The element of edification of others was not present, and the content of these tongues was the praise of God.

5 I am inclined to call the event of glossolalia at Pentecost the “fullness of tongues.” Why fullness? Because at Pentecost we have these two functions for which I will argue in this article – devotional and ministerial tongues present and intermingled together. The disciples spoke in devotion and praised God; the disciples did not intend to explain the content of these tongues. However, God intervened and provided interpretation; and finally, this “phone” (sound) and this whole event served as a sign to the gathered people of which some were attracted and some explained away as the effects of too much alcohol.

In Acts 19 in Ephesus, the fact that the disciples spoke in tongues for quite an amount of time contradicts Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:27. We cannot understand Luke's mention of prophecy to be an interpretation of tongues. Possible lack of interpretation did not stop the disciples from speaking in public, nor can we see that Paul objected or advised them to be quiet and speak in tongues only in private settings. The content of these tongues was again the praise of God.

With such distinctions between Acts and 1 Corinthians, how can we reconcile such diversities? We cannot reconcile them unless we can make a distinction between the two kinds of tongues: *devotional* and *ministerial*, and the event at Caesarea in Acts 10 probably represents the strongest argument for a distinction between these two kinds of tongues. If it is correct that at Caesarea baptized believers spoke all at the same time just like in Acts 2, that there was no interpretation or attempt to edify others,⁶ and that Peter more than likely recognized what had happened through his own Pentecostal experience rather than because he understood what they spoke, then we have two options. We can label the *glossolalia* in Acts as an exception and ascribe it to God's sovereignty in dealing with humanity and take 1 Corinthians 14 as the norm for all *glossolalia*, or we can recognize that the Bible implicitly bears witness to two similar yet distinctive functions and purposes of tongues: one for personal devotion (devotional) and the other for the edification of others (ministerial tongues).

If we accept the second option as valid, then I suggest further development of this thesis. Devotional and ministerial tongues have something in common: they both are a gift of the Spirit, and in both instances, we have the same ability of speech. But differences are as follows: one is given as a permanent gift in a person's life and the other is given occasionally; one is meant to edify only the speaker, the other is intended to edify the whole community; one helps an individual express his or her heart and devotion to God beyond words, the other serves as an expression of the Spirit's power, wisdom, guidance and blessings; one does not require interpretation, the other does require it since such speaking is the gift of the Spirit for the whole community.

Just to clarify, whenever a person speaks in tongues devotionally or ministerially, in these two instances, he or she speaks to God, uttering mysteries with his or her spirit and edifying him or herself. There is no difference in that because, as Ulonska (1996, 126) writes, speaking in tongues as a gift for ministry is not some other kind of gift of speaking in tongues, but the role of that same gift (or ability) for other purposes. The same ability that believers have by the Spirit of God to

6 At least, Luke is silent about that. I recognize that this is an argument from silence, but nonetheless a possible interpretation.

speak in other tongues or to utter mysteries by their spirit and edify themselves becomes the gift of the Spirit for the common good when it is used by the Spirit for His manifestation. As Paul's rhetorical question in 1 Cor 12:30 tells us, not everyone can be used by God in this way, but all may devotionally (whether in public meetings or in private) speak in tongues.⁷

Textual Analysis of 1 Corinthians 14

In order to properly understand the topic of glossolalia in Corinth, we have two obstacles to overcome. The first obstacle is that today's readers can not precisely know what the exact situation was in that church. We can only guess and hope to make as few mistakes as possible. The easiest way for some Christians to explain Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:27 that "two or at most three should, one at time, and some must interpret" is to say that Paul forbids corporate praying or singing in the Spirit – and then the problem is solved. However, it is obvious that the Corinthians did not ask Paul to teach them about spiritual manifestations, but Paul, informed of their misbehavior, wrote the epistle to correct their beliefs and practices (cf. Fee 1994, 148). This means that Paul's instructions are not systematic, general and exhaustive, but specific and in response to *specific* Corinthian misconduct. Therefore, if we want to understand Paul's instructions correctly, we must discover what the problem actually was, and not insert or input our personal problems with *glossolalia* into the text. I suggest the following reconstruction.

It is obvious that the Corinthian church was a church full of problems, and to the issue of *glossolalia*, Paul dedicates three chapters of the epistle (12-14). Fee (1994, 10) suggests that we should look at *glossolalia* and all the other problems in Corinth through the context of what it means to be *pneumatikos* or "spiritual," since the Corinthians probably viewed themselves as spiritual people. There are several things about *glossolalia* that are obvious from the epistle:

a) "Now about spiritual gifts (*pneumatikos*) brothers I do not want to be ignorant" (12:1 NIV). More than likely, Paul was dealing with their false sense of spirituality, but this time regarding the gifts of the Spirit. In chapter 12, Paul gives general information about the charismata of the Spirit, and in chapter 13, he provides them with the right attitude and motives behind the practice of such gifts. In chapter 14, he gives them specific instructions about *glossolalia* in public meetings.

b) "If I speak in the tongues of man and of angels..." (13:1 NIV). It is probable

7 Just as we have the ability of speech which can be used for different purposes and in different settings (we can sing, talk or pray, but God can use our normal speech as a vessel or means for prophecy or a word of wisdom, etc.), in the same way, God can use a person's ability for glossolalia for personal devotion and for the manifestation of the Spirit in communal settings.

that the Corinthians viewed tongues as the language of angels or as a heavenly language, and proof of their spirituality and already-achieved heavenly status. It is no wonder, then, that such elitism was often expressed in *glossolalia* that disrupted meetings and did not build up the church (cf. Menzies 1999, 284). In conjuncture with the Greek obsession and love for rhetoric and speech, the gift of *glossolalia* perfectly resembled and was an expression of a dominant cultural value.

c) Paul talks about the gift of *glossolalia* in the context of the gathered assembly as the manifestation of the Spirit. This is very important because Paul does not discuss the private use of *glossolalia*, or the devotional usage of tongues in public meetings.⁸

d) The Corinthians were very zealous about spirituality and the gifts of the Spirit. Their knowledge about the gifts of the Spirit did not come from “second hand” sources or books they had read, but was a present and continuing experience. Their ignorance (12:1) was not an ignorance about whether gifts should be manifested and how, but about how to practice them in the best way.

e) Their tendency was to over-exaggerate tongues as the supreme gift while discrediting others. Because of that, Paul was trying to open their eyes to the diversity of the gifts and the need to be united in them, and Paul’s reluctance for the public usage of *glossolalia* must be seen from that perspective.⁹

The second obstacle is the need to properly understand “the gifts of the Spirit.”

The gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are a special category among many gifts in the Bible, and this is the only place where the Bible defines the “charismata of the Spirit.” The word *charisma*, which means “gracious gift”, in the New Testament is sometimes associated with *charis* – “grace”, and sometimes with *pneuma* – “the Spirit”. In the context of 1 Corinthians 12-14, *charisma* is connected solely with the Spirit, and for that matter, we have to treat this connection properly. The common mistake is to put all gifts in the Bible under the label “spiritual gifts” and in this way delete the uniqueness of the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Hence, we should make a distinction between “spiritual gifts” and “the gifts of the Spirit” since the latter have their source primarily in the Holy Spirit.

8 As I will point out later, Paul defines the gifts of the Spirit (chapter 12) as gifts given for the common good. For this reason, the explanation that Paul forbids public speaking in tongues without interpretation, but approves that same thing in private, completely misses the point of the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, and represents, in my opinion, an eisegesis of an idea that Paul never wanted to communicate. Why would Paul relegate the practice of something that by its definition belongs to the community to the private setting of an individual?

9 Ulonska (1996, 110) claims that the Corinthians probably tried to teach and evangelize unbelievers through tongues.

Paul begins chapter 12 not with “Now regarding the charismata of the Spirit,” but with “Now concerning the *pneumatikōn*” – or spirituals. Dunn (1978 3:706-707) writes that *pneumatikos* “conveys the sense of belonging to the realm of spirit/Spirit, of the essence or nature of spirit/Spirit, embodying or manifesting spirit/Spirit, and Paul usually uses this word in three ways: a) as an adjective, to describe something as ‘spiritual’ (law (Rom 7:14), body (1 Cor 15:44,46), understanding (Col 1:9)); b) as a masc. noun (spiritual man (1 Cor 2:13, 15; 3:1; 14:37; Gal 6:1)); c) as a neut. noun with a meaning ‘the spirituals’ (spiritual things as in Rom 15:27 and 1 Cor 9:11 where Paul talks about ‘the things of the Spirit.’). Accordingly, *pneumatikos* in 1 Cor 12:1 and 14:1 is used in reference to the gifts of the Spirit more or less equivalent to *charisma*. The reason why Paul interchanges *pneumatikos* with *charisma* (1 Cor 12:4) is probably due to the possibility that Corinthians were using the word *pneumatikos*, but in 1 Cor 12:4, Paul continues with the word *charisma* and makes a connection between the gifts and their source – the Spirit” (cf. Montague 1976, 146). Alternatively, Paul could have used these words interchangeably depending on what he wanted to emphasize. When he wanted to emphasize the manifestation, he used the word *charisma*, and when he wanted to emphasize that this endowment comes from the Spirit, he used the word *pneumatikos* (cf. Fee 1988, 576). In any case, based on Greek grammar, it is obvious that in 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul deals with the charismata that have their source in the Spirit, and accordingly, these nine gifts can be called “the gifts of the Spirit” (cf. Budiselić 2011, 253). What make these nine gifts unique are three things: the way of giftedness, their source, and the purpose of the gifts.

First of all, these nine gifts are not a permanent and continuing possession of believers, but they are given from case to case as the Spirit decides. Paul writes, “now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given...” (1 Cor 12:7 NIV). This verb “to give” (*didōmi*) is written in the present passive which more than likely signifies two things: *present* speaks about the fact that these gifts are received and expressed when God’s people are gathered together (from case to case) and when the Spirit decides to reveal himself through some individuals that he chooses; *passive* speaks about our inability to produce such manifestations.¹⁰ We are dependent on the Spirit, and when he moves in one of these nine ways, we become his vessels whether to prophecy, speak in tongues, declare a word of wisdom...etc. Accordingly, each person can be used at one time in the gift of discer-

10 In spite of all intentions, willingness or desire, a person cannot alone produce nor act in any of these nine gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are not given to be used at the discretion of a person’s will.

ning the spirits and at another time to interpret what was spoken in tongues.¹¹

Secondly, the source of such gifts is the Spirit, that is, they are manifestations of the Spirit and not the believer's maturity, education, intelligence or spirituality. It is the Spirit who manifests wisdom, knowledge, message, power or insights. It is no wonder that the Corinthians, while immature and carnal in their behavior, were able to manifest such gifts because these gifts did not depend on their spirituality, but their openness to be used by God in such ways.¹² Thus the gifts of the Spirit are not a sign of a believer's maturity or the quality of one's relationship with God.

Thirdly, the purpose of such gifts is for the common good, and the whole community can participate in them because "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7 NIV). In 1 Cor 14:26, Paul also says that "when you come together everyone has..." clearly testifying to the fact that the whole community in Corinth could and was participating in the service; believers were used in various gifts or ways on various occasions and Paul is encouraging such church services.¹³

Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14

With two imperatives, "follow" and "desire" in 1 Cor 14:1, Paul urges believers to desire both the love and the gifts of the Spirit at the same time. He does not emphasize love over the gifts or vice-versa because both are necessary. It was especially important for the Corinthian church which was imbalanced in spirituality. Paul is not saying that love is one of the gifts of the Spirit, but that love

- 11 Such gifts are not the same as the gifts for ministries like pastor, teacher or evangelist. Nor are these gifts limited to those who lead services, worship or preach on Sundays. The fact that each member can participate in the service (depending, of course, on the Spirit's movement) is something that churches in Croatia are sorely lacking. By limiting these gifts more or less to official church ministries, we have a situation that only those who are formally recognized by the church for some ministry can lead, participate and contribute to the service while the rest of the believers are just more or less spectators. While the latter is needed and required, the former is, in most cases, neglected. We simply do not know how to reconcile and manage these two "things" together.
- 12 Horton (1963, 33) observes that these gifts are above and independent from any reason or ability that a person can have. The fruits of the Spirit based on love, from Gal 5:22-23, speak about character, and none of that is supernatural. On the contrary, the gifts of the Spirit were given to manifest power and they are all miraculous.
- 13 Donald Gee (1993, 130-131), in discussing the purpose of the spiritual gifts, says that "the corporate life of the church was intended to produce a supernatural witness. Its central testimony was the risen Christ who still continued working through His people on earthThe direct purpose of spiritual gifts was to provide a spiritual capability far mightier than the finest natural abilities could ever supply....Rightly exercised, spiritual gifts have a divine purpose of distinct blessing both for the unbeliever and the church."

should be a primary motive and guide behind their practice and ministry. Paul also emphasizes the gift of prophecy because it was a neglected gift among the Corinthians, and the effects of it, as Paul will show later, are huge.

In 1 Cor 14:2-4, Paul compares the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and these two gifts and their effects in public worship. As Harrisville (1987, 229) observes, Paul does not contrast the two gifts by way of definition, but only by function and result. This means that Paul here simply analyzes the scope of influence of *glossolalia*¹⁴ in the public meeting.¹⁵ It is obvious that a person who speaks in tongues speaks not to people, but to God. However, since such tongues are not the expression of an individual devotion, but should minister to others as well, such speaking remains beneficial only for the speaker unless it is interpreted, and for Paul that is not acceptable.

When Paul, in 1 Cor 14:5, says, “Those who prophesy are greater than those who speak in tongues, unless they interpret,” he does not mean that one gift is greater and the other smaller, but that a person who prophesies edifies the whole church, while a person who speaks in tongues without interpretation, edifies only him/herself. Hence, Paul defines prophecy as a greater gift over tongues not because of some inherent value, but from the viewpoint of edification. Surprisingly, he puts interpreted tongues in the same category of greatness as prophecy.¹⁶ Interpreted tongues, like prophecy, edify others and that was Paul’s intention behind this comparison of tongues and prophecy in verses 14:2-4. Furthermore, when Paul, in v. 5, also says, “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy,” I do not think that Paul is talking about the

14 The scope of influence is that glossolalia edifies only the individual who speaks, even if he/she does not understand the speech. But for the rest who hear it, it does not have any benefit at all.

15 Michael Green (1976, 167), similar to Fee, argues that tongues is a gift to be used in private devotions for the edification of the believer, but in public, the gift of tongues and interpretation must be employed together. Ułonska and Williams talk about the possibility, based on these verses, that while everyone can speak in tongues devotionally (in private and in public a person can sing and pray in tongues whenever he/she wants), not everyone can experience tongues as a manifestation of the Spirit. Menzies (1999, 286) sees Paul’s attempt to show that tongues are not some special mark of spirituality in these verses by responding that all may speak in tongues privately (14:2-5) and, for that matter, it is not something special. But in the church, prophecy is more desirable.

16 Does that mean that interpreted tongues equal prophecy? Donald Gee (1993, 154) equates these two, calling the interpreted tongues the “message in tongues.” Montague (1976, 176) also argues for the same thing. Although Hays (1997, 235) does not discuss this issue, he observes that the speaker of tongues addresses God, and such speech is a means of expressing praise and thanksgiving (14:15-17). Prophecy, on the other hand, is addressed to people and contains the message of building up, encouragement and consolation. Williams (1996, 2:405-406) is also in agreement with Hays.

universality of tongues or the ability of all believers to speak privately in tongues like Menzies suggests, nor that by this statement Paul confines all uninterpreted tongues to a private setting like Fee argues. Since Paul, in 1 Corinthians, discusses tongues as a gift of the Spirit (chapter 12), not tongues as a sign of the baptism in the Spirit or as a normal devotional practice of Spirit-baptized believers, and since the problem was spirituality in the community, I cannot see why Paul would use the argument for private/devotional tongue-speaking in this matter. As we will see later, the problem in Corinth was not glossolalia, per se, but glossolalia which was not interpreted, and Pentecostals who recognize the distinction between devotional and ministerial tongues agree that devotional tongues (whether spoken in private or in a public meeting) do not need to be interpreted, but only tongues which serve as a gift of the Spirit for the common good. By stating, "I would like..." in this context, Paul is not against the uninterpreted speaking of tongues in the church in general, but as Fee (1988, 660), in my opinion, correctly observes, while Paul "allows tongues and interpretation; he prefers prophecy."

In 1 Cor 4:6-12, Paul continues to support his claim that ministerial tongues which are not interpreted are useless for communication (v. 2: "no one understands him") by using his personal example¹⁷ and three analogies. Paul's intention was for the community in Corinth to come to a place of mature judgment on this issue, and that is why he uses three simple examples. Whether in music, in sounds or in languages, intelligibility is the key to understanding, and so it should be with tongues. The tongues which are not interpreted are described as "speaking into the air (v. 9)," meaningless (v. 10), and as producing an estrangement between speaker and listener (v. 11).

In 1 Cor 14:13-19, Paul continues to elaborate on his idea that the benefit of the many is more important than the benefit of just one person, and here Paul turns his attention to the fact of how tongues function. If, in vv. 2-5, he defines tongues according to their results and scope of influence, here Paul defines how tongues operate, that is, why only the speaker is edified and not the rest of the people.¹⁸ The reason is that whether she/he sings, prays or praises God, her/his

17 In v. 6, Fee (1988, 661-662) observes an undercurrent of apologetics between Paul and the Corinthians. It is probable that the Corinthian church had a low opinion of Paul's spirituality because he failed to make his point. But Paul intentionally did not choose to come to them speaking in tongues for their benefit. Instead, he had come to them with simple intelligible words (cf. Hayes 1997, 237).

18 It is a continuation of the argument from verses 2-5. First Paul says that the benefits of tongues are only limited to the speaker and now he explains why. Fee (1988, 669) observes that, based on v. 14, Paul is not saying that a person must interpret for the sake of his own edification and understanding. That would contradict what is said in vs. 2, 4, and 15. A person is edified by his communion with God through the Spirit, but others are not.

mind is bypassed and only the spiritual part of the person is edified by the Spirit (v. 14). Vv. 13-19, therefore, serve as the application for the principle stated in v. 12. In this verse, Paul describes and complements the Corinthian's desire for *pneumatikos*, but he warns them to excel in this virtue so that the whole church may benefit. When we look at it in this way, it is clear that Paul, in vv. 13-19, is talking about the use of ministerial tongues in the church meeting. He just continues his train of thought.

I want to emphasize two common misinterpretations of this paragraph. The first one is Fee's view (1988, 671) which claims that, in these verses, Paul contrasts

...between praying and singing with my Spirit and my mind ultimately aims at relegating the former to the setting of private praying, while only the latter is to be exercised in the assembly. This is implied both in vv. 16-17, where he allows that the tongues-speaker is praising God all right, but to no one's benefit, and especially in v. 19, where this distinction is made explicitly.

While I agree that Paul's intention is to say that intelligibility is the primary goal for worship, I think that it is too much to say that Paul relegates the practice of all uninterpreted *glossolalia* to the private setting and interpreted tongues to public worship. Paul's only intention here is to address this special problem in public worship and not to confine all uninterpreted tongues to the private setting of the believers or to discuss private worship at all. I offer three reasons for this. First, the overall context of chapters 12-14 is communal worship and how the gifts of the Spirit contribute to the community. Secondly, if we understand that the gifts of the Spirit are manifestations of the Spirit, that is, that a person can be used by God from time to time as a vessel of manifestation in a variety of ways, then those gifts are not a permanent possession of believers nor can they be practiced individually whenever a person wishes. Third, the tongues that Paul discusses here are the gifts of the Spirit and are intended to be for common edification,¹⁹ and, as such, the Corinthian's unwillingness to interpret them has blocked the purpose of the gift. Paul was concerned with that. Since Fee does not distinguish between devotional and ministerial tongues, he concludes that every speech in tongues in the assembly must be interpreted or be kept for private devotion.

A second interpretation deals with the idea that Paul here talks interchange-

19 It is clear from 12:7 that the tongues mentioned in 12:10 are intended for the common good. So why would Paul, according to Fee, have advised the Corinthians to speak these tongues privately if they do not offer interpretation when Paul explicitly states that the purpose of these gifts is the common good? Has Paul contradicted himself or has Fee missed Paul's point here? When Paul says that only the speaker is edified, he does not advise them to then speak privately or relegate tongues which are not interpreted to a private setting. He only shows them that they missed the point.

ably about devotional/ministerial tongues, and theologians like Ulonska, J. Rodman Williams and others use these verses to support this idea. So, the question is whether Paul, when he talks about praying and singing in the Spirit, talks about tongues as devotional tongues or ministerial tongues. If he is referring to devotional tongues, then he momentarily shifts his train of thought from ministerial tongues to the tongues for personal devotion. Some support for this claim can be found in the fact that Paul talks about such practice in the future indicative tense, that is, he talks about *glossolalia* as a certain fact that will happen to him in the future.²⁰ This also corresponds with the Pentecostal teaching that every believer can speak in tongues at any time devotionally, but only occasionally can a person speak a tongue whose interpretation will minister to others.²¹

However, I believe that since Paul continues to speak about tongues as a manifestation of the Spirit, (that is, speaking in tongues as representing the ministry of the Spirit and not just a person's devotional act), he is not talking about his devotional approach to the service where he will one moment speak and pray in tongues and then in another moment he will use intelligible words,²² but he simply talks about the possibility that a person can experience tongues as a manifestation of the Spirit. If that happens, Paul's instruction is that such a person must also include his or her rational side in the worship. In my opinion, this claim best corresponds to the overall context of the epistle and to the problem of the lack of interpretation in Corinth.

1 Cor 14:18-19 can be understood in at least three ways: a) we can agree with Fee who argues that Paul compares the appropriateness of the private use of tongues which are not interpreted by using himself as an example (v. 18) with the inappropriateness of such in public (v. 19 "But in the church..."); b) Paul here talks about devotional tongues in his personal life,²³ and for that matter, talking in general about his practice and experience of *glossolalia* both in private and in public; and c) Paul talks about his ongoing experience of speaking in tongues in church meetings, and this is the approach that I am suggesting. Based on the context, maybe Paul is talking about his ongoing experience of speaking in tongues in

20 That is why Ulonska (1996, 112) writes that the Holy Spirit has given one gift into the spirit of a human who can, in every situation and on every occasion, use it for praying to God. The use of this gift is under the will of the person and he/she can use it in every moment.

21 For all the reasons that I have stated, I think that using 1 Cor 12-14 for support that believers can devotionally speak in tongues as a permanent endowment of the Spirit is misplaced. While I believe it to be true, I think the book of Acts is a much better script to use for this argument.

22 This is a common practice in Pentecostal-charismatic churches. Precisely because of that, it is very tempting to use these verses as a support for the second interpretation.

23 Based on the Greek grammar, Williams (1996, 2:217) concludes that Paul is talking about his ongoing experience of praying in tongues by saying this statement in the present indicative tense.

church meetings, but he concludes that, (as he did in verse 5) even then, he prefers intelligible words over tongues without interpretation in the church. He uses exaggeration, pointing out that 10,000 words in an unknown tongue cannot compare to only five words of intelligible speech. Therefore, since he, as an experienced speaker in tongues in church meetings, prefers intelligible words, they should as well.

And now we come to the most important verses in chapter 14:23-24.

²³ So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, ²⁵ as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you” (NIV)!

Paul continues with the same message about the need for intelligibility and edification in using the gifts of the Spirit in church meetings, but this time refocusing his attention from believers to unbelievers and visitors. ²⁴ He also offers a picture of church that is open for the reception and the participation in the gifts of the Spirit. ²⁵ The Greek verb *echō* “to have” in v. 26 is in the present active form, and grammatically portrays the idea that participation in these gifts depends on momentary expressions and the will of the Spirit – the same idea that we had with the verb *didōmi* in 1 Cor 12:7. ²⁶

Contrary to usual interpretations, it is very clear that Paul is not dealing with a situation where the whole church speaks in tongues at the same time (praying

- 24 Could it be that until now Paul was discussing the effects of *glossolalia* only for the meetings where believers were present, and now starting from v. 20 he discusses the usage of *glossolalia* when unbelievers are present? Horton (1963, 232-236) believes thus and concludes that tongues have some benefit for believers, but no benefit for unbelievers, and therefore tongues, not even with interpretation, should not be used when unbelievers are present.
- 25 Hays (1997, 24) observes that the Corinthians did not have a fixed order of service nor printed bulletins for worshipers, and remarkably nothing is said of a leader to preside over the meeting. Accordingly, Paul expected that all members follow the guidance of the Spirit, participate with the gifts they had received, deferring to one another and learning from one another. He concludes, “In Paul’s vision for Christian worship there is neither stiff formality nor undisciplined frenzy: the community’s worship is more like a complex but graceful dance, or a beautiful anthem sung in counterpoint.” Obviously, the Reformation’s idea of Sunday services as a time of preaching the message as the most important part of the service is seriously questioned and challenged here (1997, 243).
- 26 Williams (1996, 2:335) writes, “A proper understanding of this makes for a vital sense of the *contemporaneity* of the Spirit’s activity. The focus is not on the past but the present; hence when people assemble, there is a lively expectation of fresh, perhaps different, manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Also, since one may not know ahead of time what gift the Spirit will impart, each person may come with keen anticipation, even excitement, about what the Spirit will do through him.”

or singing) like we can encounter in some contemporary Pentecostal/charismatic communities. If we observe vv. 23-24 in light of vv. 26-27, we can conclude that the Greek grammar supports this claim. When Paul said in v. 23 *pantes lalōsin glōssais* “all might speak in tongues,” does that mean that they all spoke in tongues at the same time? If we say yes, then, when Paul says in v. 24 that *pantes prophēteuōsin* “all might prophesy” he also means that all those who prophesy, do that simultaneously, or all at the same time. While there can be some truth in that occasionally disorder in the Corinthian church was due to several people who were speaking in tongues out of a false sense of spirituality and competition,²⁷ the primary reason for disorder and an unbeliever’s conclusion that the Corinthians were “out of their minds” was the lack of interpretation. One person would stand up and speak in tongues so that all others would listen to him, then another, and another...but there was no interpretation. And this was the main problem in Corinth regarding glossolalia. But if we miss this crucial point in the text, our reconstruction would more than likely sound as if Paul is dealing with a “the whole church singing/praying in the Spirit – please stop it” type of argument. Can we imagine what confusion would be created if a whole congregation prophesied in the same voice? Yet, nowhere in chapter 14 has Paul suggested that. But usually those who interpret v. 23 to mean simultaneously speaking in tongues do not interpret v. 24 in the same way.

The Book of Acts

To further prove the distinction between ministerial and devotional tongues, I will now examine three explicit instances when *glossolalia* is mentioned in the book of Acts and compare them with the four specific instructions that Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 14. In this way, I want to show how inappropriate it is to read the book of Acts through the eyes of Paul (or vice-versa), and submit all *glossolalia* under the instructions of Paul. Surprisingly or not, we will discover that all those instructions that were written in the didactic part of 1 Corinthians 14 were “violated” by God himself. Another astonishing fact is that in Acts, glossolalia did not occur in private, but in the public/communal setting, just like in Corinth.

Acts 2:1-12

When Luke describes the coming of the Spirit, he describes this event in Acts 2:2 with the aorist indicative *egeneto* “become, happen”, and this tense in Greek usually signifies a past and completed action, that is, it only registers that action

27 Verses 29-31 gives us a hint that the same thing possibly happened with prophecy, that is, several people simultaneously gave prophetic utterance and that had created disorder in the church meetings.

which happened without showing the duration of the action. Though we cannot be a 100% sure, based on this, we can say that the “sound/noise” from heaven that appears as the Holy Spirit came down appeared in one undefinable moment and then disappeared. To describe that sound, Luke uses the noun *ēchos* which can stand for “any type of sound, tone, or noise other than human speech—sound, noise” (Louw & Nida 1996, 179) or “metaphorically for fame, rumor... something which is heard” (Zodhiates 2000).

However, in v. 4, Luke describes glossolalia by saying that the disciples were *lalein* “speaking” (present active infinitive) *heterais*²⁸ “other, another, different” languages as the Spirit *edidou* “had been giving” (imperfect active) them to speak. From this we can see that the disciples were speaking for a significant amount of time in tongues due to the fact that the verbs in v. 4 are in the present infinitive and imperfect. Contrary to the shortness of the action in v. 2, their speech in v. 4 was not some momentary event, but they had been speaking for some amount of time inspired by the Spirit.

Based on this, we can understand which sound attracted the multitude to

- 28 The expression “heteros” languages can be understood in several different ways. According to Williams (1996, 2:213), “First, there is the view that glossolalia at Pentecost was not the phenomenon that occurred later – that whereas at Pentecost foreign languages were spoken, in other situations they were ecstatic or inspired utterances. This viewpoint actually distinguishes between two kinds of otherness: the otherness of foreign languages and that of ecstatic or inspired utterance.” Charles D. Isbell (1975, 16), in accordance with this view, observes that “Paul’s use of the phrase *Lalein glōssais* here in 1 Corinthians 14 must be sharply distinguished from Luke’s use of the same phrase in Acts 2. For Luke tells his readers that he is describing the speaking in various languages or dialects (Acts 2:6, 8), which the presence of a multilingual audience made necessary; but Paul explains that glossolalia in Corinth involved the utterance of *mystēria* which ‘no one understands.’” A second view claims that all cases of glossolalia were basically emotional unintelligible utterances due to long awaiting the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit and great excitement when it did happen. Such a viewpoint is inadequate according to Williams (1996, 2:214) because some people thought the apostles were drunk, but they also “each one heard them speaking in his own language.” Therefore, glossolalia on the day of Pentecost was not merely emotional utterance, but also had an intelligible content. Third, there is the view that the speaking of tongues in the book of Acts refers to speaking foreign languages. Those who hold this view believe that tongues spoken elsewhere were likewise foreign languages. For Williams (1996, 2:214), such a claim has little sense because, at Caesarea, the only people present were Jews and in Ephesus the only person there was Paul. Williams’ (1996, 2:21) final argument for a solution to this question lies in understanding the Greek word *heteros*. Based on our understanding of this word, it is possible to argue that the disciples at Pentecost spoke in “other” – foreign languages or in “other” – pneumatic languages. “Otherness” can be in connection to *number* or *quality*. If we consider otherness in *number*, then we can argue that the disciples spoke in an additional *number* of foreign languages. But if otherness refers to *quality*, then this signifies languages which are different in nature, class or kind. Therefore, Williams suggests otherness of glossolalia lies in quality - the disciples in Acts and Corinth spoke in pneumatic or spiritual languages different in quality and nature.

“come together”. Had they heard the sound of the wind from heaven, or the sound of glossolalia? *Genomenēs* (aorist participle middle) in v. 6 can literally be translated “when this sound came into existence,” they heard it. However, this time, for the sound, Luke does not use the word *ēchos* but *phōnēs*. So, when we take into consideration that the disciples were continuously speaking in tongues, (thus creating the noise) and that speaking is described as a “phone” vs. a momentary “echo” from heaven, it is obvious that people heard the sound of *glossolalia* and they were attracted by it. The other part of v. 6 says that people were “confused”, but for what reason?

hoti ēkouon heis hekastos tē idia dialektō lalountōn autōn (Acts 2:6)

hoti – “because, since”

ēkouon – “was listening, hearing” (imperfect, plural)

heis – “one” (adjective, nom., sing. masculine)

hekastos – “each, every” (adjective, nom., sing. masculine)

autōn – “them” (pronoun, gen., plural)

lalountōn – “as they speak” (present participle, plural)

tē – “in” (pronoun, dative. sing.)

idia – “own” (adjective, dative, sing.)

dialektō – dialect (noun, dative, sing.)

The text clearly shows that they were listening to *glossolalia* together (imperfect, plural) “each,” “in,” “his own,” “dialect.” Notice that everything is in singular except the verb *ēkouon* “to hear” which is in plural. Initially, the people were attracted by the sound of *glossolalia*, but the confusion was not created because of *glossolalia*, but because each of them “heard” this *phōnēs* “in his own dialect.” Apparently, we had two miracles at Pentecost – a miracle of speech and a miracle of hearing, that is, God sovereignly interpreted this “sound” to each person in their own language.²⁹ It is obvious that people heard *glossolalia* and then each heard this “phone” in his or her own language. I am putting stress on the argument that people did not question the disciples’ sanity because of “tongues”, but because they could not understand how they could hear *phōnēs* in their own dialects.³⁰

Acts 2:8 supports this conclusion of v. 6. Again we can notice the singular in

29 The miracle of hearing is obvious because it would be impossible for listeners to grasp the words of their own language if the disciples were speaking simultaneously in various dialects. Even in a room full of people who all speak in the same language, it would be hard to grasp the content of some conversation.

30 That is why I do not accept the argument that tongues per se are a negative sign because even the interpretation will not erase the repulsion and opposite reactions that tongues produce. Tongues are something positive (they are a gift of the Spirit, after all), but because of their ambiguity, some will be attracted and some will not.

the words “each,” “in,” “own,” “dialect.”

kai hēmeis akouomen hekastos tē idia dialektō hēmōn en hē egennēthēmen

pōs – “how, in what way”

hēmeis – “we, us” (pronoun, nominative, plural)

akouomen – “hear” (present indicative active, plural)

*hekastos*³¹ – “each, every” (adjective, nominative, singular)

tē – “in” (pronoun, dative, sing.)

idia – “own” (adjective, dative, singular)

dialektō – “dialect” (noun, dative, singular)

hēmōn – “of us” (pronoun, genitive, plural)

en hē egennēthēmen – in which we were born; (aorist, passive, plural)

Similarly, Acts 2:11 confirms the miracle of hearing.

akouomen lalountōn autōn tais hēmeterais glōssais (Acts 2:11)

akouomen – “hear” (present indicative active, plural)

lalountōn – “speaking” (present participle active plural)

autōn – “them” (pronoun, genitive, plural)

tais – “in” (article feminine plural dative)

hēmeterais – “our” (adjective, feminine, plural, dative)

glōssais – “tongues” (noun, feminine, plural, dative)

The gathered people understood what happened (what the miracle was) and amazingly they concluded, “we hear them speaking in our own tongues.” This time, the whole sentence is in plural which means that this was their collective conclusion. They were hearing glossolalia and “phone” from the disciples, but each of them in their own language. The reaction was twofold: some were curious and sought to discover more about it, but others discredited them by saying, “they have had too much wine” (Acts 2:13).³²

Acts 10:44-48

In this event, v. 46 is especially interesting – how did the circumcised be-

31 This word, since it is in nominative, refers to the subject of the sentence, that is, the hearers. If this word would refer to the one who was speaking in tongues (the apostles) then it would be in the genitive *ἑκαστῶν*. This is important because then the meaning of the sentence would change to mean that “each” apostle was speaking in the dialects of the gathered people and there would be no miracle of hearing.

32 On a side note, in Christianity, it is possible to observe Christians acting as though drunk (they babble, stumble, laugh, ... etc.), and they attribute that to the filling of the Holy Spirit based on Acts 2:13. But the text clearly shows that the idea of drunkenness originated not because the apostles acted and sounded drunk, but because people could not explain how they could all understand what the apostles were saying “in their own language.” That is why they blamed this miracle on drunkenness.

lievers know that the Gentiles were praising God? Was interpretation present in this event? Did the Gentiles interpret tongues like Paul requests in 1 Cor 14, or did circumcised believers know from previous experience that the content of these tongues was the praise of God – even without interpretation? Also, were circumcised believers listening to the speech in tongues for some time before an interpretation came (whether God personally interpreted the tongues or that someone from the present people interpreted)? Or could it be that the Gentiles spoke in tongues, but the circumcised heard and understood them in Hebrew (then we would have a miracle of hearing like in Acts 2)? If these new believers were speaking in tongues without interpretation, then that would be a violation of Paul’s instruction from 1 Cor 14. Again, we must look for the answers in the Greek text.

ēkouon gar autōn lalountōn glōssais kai megalynontōn ton theon (Acts 10:46)
gar – “for” (conjunction)
ēkouon – “to hear, to understand” (imperfect indicative active, plural)
autōn – “them” (pronoun, genitive, plural, masculine)
lalountōn – “to utter, to speak” (present active participle, plural -lit. “speaking”)
glōssais – “the tongue, a tongue, the language” (noun, dative, plural) (indirect object)
kai – “and” (conjunction)
megalynontōn – “to make great to magnify, declare great” (present active participle, plural - lit. “magnifying”)
ton theon – “God” (noun, accusative - the object of Gentile’s praise)

The circumcised believers *ēkouon* “listened” to Gentiles speaking in tongues for some time. Considering that the two present participles are in the adverbial form of “speaking” and “magnifying,” coupled with the fact that the present participle in the adverbial form supplements the action of the main verb “to hear” but also describes the action that happens simultaneously with the main verb, the grammar supports the conclusion that we have to understand speaking, magnifying and hearing as three actions that were happening simultaneously. Luke does not mention interpretation, but he also leaves no time between the Gentiles’ speaking and magnifying God and the Jewish disciples’ understanding of the content of these tongues as the praise of God. My conclusion is that what the circumcised disciples heard and understood as speaking and praising God was not interpreted tongues, but simply the very event of glossolalia. Peter later apologetically concludes in Acts 11:15 that the same thing that happened in Caesarea also happened to them at Pentecost. Therefore, they knew that the tongue-speaking Gentiles in Caesarea were praising God, not because of interpretation, but because they had had the very same experience at Pentecost. If we insist that interpretation was present, then it is more natural to say that one more time God sovereignly

interpreted glossolalia than to insist that somehow those who spoke in tongues offered it for Jewish believers. But again, Luke is silent on this subject; we can only guess whether interpretation was present or not.

Acts 19:6

Our final text is Acts 19:6 where we are only interested in two verbs that describes the activity of speaking:

*kai epithentos autois tou Paulou tas cheiras elthe to pneuma to hagion ep' auto
us elaloun te glōssais kai eprophēteuo*

elaloun – “to speak” (imperfect, indicative active, plural)

te glōssais – “in tongues” (noun, dative, plural)

kai – “and” (conjunction)

eprophēteuon – “to prophesy” (imperfect, indicative active, plural)

This time, when Luke speaks about *glossolalia*, he uses two imperfect verbs to describe glossolalia: “were speaking” and “were prophesying.” This implies continuous action that lasted for some time, not momentary actions. All this is directly opposite to Paul’s instructions (who was there in Ephesus) in 1 Cor 14:27 that “two – or at most three,” “one at time,” and “let one interpret.” The fact is that they all had been speaking, not just two or three, and probably all at the same time. Likewise, in this instance, Luke does not mention that interpretation occurred, so it is impossible to conclude whether interpretation was present in this case or not. Two imperfect verbs connected by the conjunction *kai* “and” do not tell us whether the tongue speaking and prophecy happened simultaneously or one after another; were they first speaking in tongues and after prophesying? The imperfect only denotes continuous finished action and, as such, we must understand that the disciples in Ephesus spent a significant amount of time speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Reflective Remarks and Summary

When we approach any subject with wrong presuppositions or false starting points, we will end up with wrong interpretations and conclusions. Therefore, in this article, we have tried to faithfully reconstruct historical situations in the book of Acts and in Corinth in order to arrive at a proper interpretation. The textual analysis of Acts and 1 Corinthians 14 revealed that the glossolalia referred to in the two accounts showed some significant differences. To be honest, we must say that the Bible is not a book of systematic theology in which doctrines and dogmas are presented in a systematic and comprehensive way. Hence, it is normal that among different biblical authors and/or documents, certain differences exist. However, as we have seen, notwithstanding the nature of the Bible as a collection

of documents written by different authors, the differences regarding glossolalia between Paul and Luke are significant. Instead of trying to force a reconciliation of Paul's and Luke's teachings on the subject which is usually done by throwing Luke "out the window" as an unreliable theologian and setting Paul on a pedestal, we have tried to allow Luke and Paul to speak in their own terms and agendas.

Surprisingly or not, Luke does not follow Paul's teaching on glossolalia in 1 Corinthians 12-14. On all three occasions that we have looked at in Acts, all the people who were filled with the Spirit spoke simultaneously and not "one by one". Interpretation was only mentioned in Acts 2 and that was done sovereignly by God himself. In Acts 10 and 19, we are left with no information about this. Hence, we cannot know how and in what way listeners in Acts 10 and 19 understood glossolalia. Finally, the lack of interpretation did not hinder people in Acts from speaking for some indefinite time (remember the imperfect verb tense) in tongues.

When we come to the Corinthians, the common mistake which is usually done, and which I have pointed out, is that people approach the text as if Paul was addressing a contemporary situation where all or most of the people sing or pray in the Spirit during the church service, and when some outsiders come, they think that Christians are insane. We have no way of knowing whether the Corinthians practiced such prayer and singing, but the main point is that Paul is not addressing this situation. He is concerned with the situation wherein single individuals would stand up in front of the gathered congregation and start speaking in tongues without interpretation. Imagine what would happen today if several individuals stood up and went to the pulpit, and all they said was in tongues. That would be strange and odd.

Saying all this, hopefully we can see that applying the instructions from 1 Corinthians to our current situation in Pentecostal or charismatic churches when people are praying or singing in the Spirit is misguided and wrong. The Bible does not address this issue, so we are left with certain blanks to fill. If we take the book of Acts as a help in this regard, there we can see that due to the filling of the Spirit, people spoke in tongues all at the same time, they spoke extensively and on two occasions, Luke does not mention anything about interpretation. But if we would address the situation when people in the church all in one voice pray or sing in the Spirit, we have a pattern in Acts which fits this description. Accordingly, I see no obstacles for Christians to sing or pray simultaneously in the Spirit.

In this article, I also addressed the solution for apparent differences between the *glossolalia* in Acts and in 1 Corinthians 14. The suggested solution was to acknowledge the difference between *devotional* and *ministerial* tongues – the same ability of speech used for different purposes. Both "kinds" of tongues are a gift of the Spirit, and while 1 Corinthians speaks explicitly about ministerial tongues,

the book of Acts implicitly testifies to the gift of tongues which remains a part of the devotional life of believers in the public setting. I recognize that the Bible does not explicitly teach about a distinction between *devotional* and *ministerial* tongues. But if we take as valid interpretation that “the gifts of the Spirit” are not permanent possessions of believers and they cannot use them at their own discretion, with the teaching of the Bible which presupposes the ability of believers to pray or sing in the Spirit (Rom 8:26; Eph 5:19, 6:18; Col 3:16; Jud 20), this interpretation is probably the best.

In my opinion, Williams (1996, 2:398) is on the right track when he says that

It is urgent that we distinguish between tongues as a normal accompaniment of the Spirit-filled life and tongues as a gift (freely given, never possessed) of the Spirit when the community comes together. There is, however, no essential difference between devotional and ministerial tongues. The difference is *not in essence but in practice*.

Devotional tongues belong to the ongoing life of prayer and praise; there is no limitation and all believers may thus speak in tongues. However, “by no means do all who speak in tongues devotionally (i.e., in prayer and praise) also speak in tongues for edification of the body of believers” (cf. Williams 1996, 2:397).

Tongues in the Bible are given for four specific purposes: a) as a sign that an individual was baptized with the Spirit, that is, that one has received the gift (baptism) of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6); b) for the personal edification of a believer manifested in prayer, praise and personal devotions (1 Corinthians 14:5,14-18, 23, 28, Mark 16:17; Eph 5:19, 6.18; Rom 8.26; Jude 20); c) as a sign to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22); d) for the edification of the local assembly. Therefore, as Bernard (1984, 255) says, “if we understand what speaking in tongues is and the purposes for which it is given, we can correctly understand and harmonize all scriptural teaching on the subject.”

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Ervin Budiselić

Glosolalija: zašto kršćani mogu na bogoslužju govoriti u jezicima bez tumačenja

Sažetak

Članak analizira tematiku govorenja u jezicima, posebice pitanje mogu li kršćani govoriti u jezicima na bogoslužju bez da se taj govor tumači. U prvome dijelu članak predstavlja različita gledišta o govorenju u jezicima koja postoje među kršćanima. U drugome dijelu uvodno se raspravlja problematika različitog prikaza govora u jezicima u 1 Korinćanima i Djelima apostolskim, a nakon toga slijedi tekstualna analiza ključnih dijelova 1 Korinćanima i Djela apostolskih. Na temelju analize kao najbolje rješenje različitog prikaza govora u jezicima u 1 Korinćanima i Djelima predlaže se da se napravi razlika između govorenja u jezicima u svrhu osobne pobožnosti i govorenja u jezicima u svrhu službe. Treći dio članka donosi osvrt i sažetak teme te se zaključuje kako kršćani mogu govoriti u jezicima na bogoslužju te da svako govorenje u jezicima ne treba biti protumačeno.

Ključne riječi: glosolalija, govorenje u jezicima, darovi Duha, 1 Korinćanima 12-14, Djela Apostolska