'Tongues' - A Messianic Perspective

Therefore My people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge - Isaiah 5:3.

History of Pentecost

Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, and the Day of the Firstfruits, are three names for the same Festival.

It is called Pentecost (Acts 2:1) – meaning fiftieth, because it is the fiftieth day of Counting the Omer:

Lev 23:15-16 - "You shall count for yourselves . . . from the day when you brought the omer of the Wave Offering . . . fifty days . . . then you shall present a new grain offering to Yahweh."

An omer is a tithe of an ephah (Ex 16:36), or a dry measure of approximately one-half gallon (an ephah being about a bushel). On the first day of Counting the Omer, "an omer of barley from tender ears" (Talmud: Sanhedrin 11b) was baked into unleavened bread and waved with a lamb before Yahweh (a name of God representing the Eternal Who is Gracious and Merciful). Since this was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, no leaven was permitted. Barley was the first grain crop to ripen, followed by spelt, rye, oats, and finally wheat. Each day was verbally counted, with a blessing offered to God. When the full verbal count of fifty days was reached, "when the Day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1), then two leavened loaves (each about three feet long and nine inches wide) were waved before Yahweh; each loaf was made from two omers (about a gallon) of fine wheat flour.

Lev 23:17 - "You shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two omers: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto Yahweh."

Waving the two omer-loaves

It is called (Heb.) Hag Shavuot / Feast of Weeks (Ex 34:22), because the days of tithing grain are counted for seven weeks, plus one day:

Lev 23:16 - "You shall count fifty days, to the day after the seventh week."

It is called (Heb.) Yom haBikkurim / Day of the Firstfruits (Num 28:26), because it is the day when the final tithes (represented by omers of flour) of the grain harvest are brought. These tithes are part of what is called firstfruits. After waving the firstfruits of new wheat, the new wheat crop may be used for consumption.

Almost 4000 years ago,[1] on the Day of Firstfruits (Talmudic), God divided the world into seventy languages at Babel. This is commonly known as the Dispersion. Genesis 10 names the seventy nations, and Genesis 11:1-9 describes the division of languages. It is understood in Orthodox circles that God kept the firstfruits – the line of Abraham (who was about 48 at this time), and the rest of the world had their languages changed.

Then about 3500 years ago,[2] on another Day of Firstfruits, at Mt. Sinai, God gave the Torah to Israel as a Betrothal Covenant.[3] Talmud: Shabbat 88b on Psalm 68:11 teaches that "Every single word going out from the Omnipotent was split up into seventy languages." Psalm 29:7 reads, "The voice of Yahweh hews out tongues of fire." It was understood by Jewish folk of 2000 years ago, that a "tongue as fire" had presented itself to each person at Sinai, to ask if he would accept the Covenant. Those present were from all seventy nations, a "mixed multitude."

Then, at still another Pentecost about 1970 years ago (around AD 30),[4] the people at Jerusalem experienced something they were taught had happened prevoiusly, at the Pentecost at Sinai: God partially reversed Babel – granting some of His Hebrew speaking saints to miraculously proclaim the gospel in these various languages of the world, which again came as "tongues as fire". It was serious language that burnt. Hear the words that were spoken: "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Yeshua the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" – (Acts 2:22-24). This grant of hearing the Gospel in one's own language prefigured the future complete reversal of Babel – the restoration of a common language.

Today, at the Feast of Pentecost, we celebrate the Betrothal in a similar fashion to the ancients. Fifty days prior, at the Passover seder, we take four cups of wine/grape juice, representing the four parts of the Covenant, recognizing God's redemption of a slave girl (Israel) to be Messiah's bride. Now, at the betrothal ceremony, we take the Bride's Cup, saying, "Whatever our Lord speaks, we will obey, and we will listen (learn)" – Ex 24:7. Note that we are to obey God even before we learn why. The leader of the Festival then proclaims, "Thy maker is thine husband; Yahweh of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the Whole Earth shall He be called" – Isaiah 54:5. Note: a betrothed couple is called husband and wife, even before the wedding, when there is no cohabitation.

For an overview of the Biblical Festivals and their Messianic significance, see Festival Overview. For more detail on the Feast of Pentecost, see Feast of Firstfruits and Pentecost Seder.

Languages of Men and Angels, Prayer Language

The term "angel" means messenger. It is a common reference to heavenly beings who are messengers of God. Within Judaism, it is also an ancient common reference to an officer of the synagogue: the (Heb.) Sheliach Tzibbur / Messenger of the Congregation or (Gr.) Angeloi tas Ekklesias / Angel of the Church, as used in Revelation 2 & 3, brought messages from the Holy Temple or from prophets to the congregation.

For several millennia, the "Language of Angels" has been understood to be Hebrew. This applies to both heavenly angels and earthly messengers. Wherever God or a heavenly angel is said to have spoken specific verbiage, the quoted language is Hebrew. (Note Acts 26:14.) Hebrew was and is believed to be the Holy Language by which God created the universe, the language of Eden, and the basis of all other languages: for an Orthodox explanation, see www.homestead.com/edenics/ . Also, the "Angel of the Church," when bringing a message from the Holy Temple or from a prophet, always brought the message in the Holy Tongue – Hebrew. Talmud: Shabbat 40b reads, "Secular matters may be uttered in the Holy Language (Hebrew), but sacred matters must not be uttered in a secular language."

The "languages of men" represent the other languages (and their derivatives) of the seventy nations that resulted from the dispersion from Babel, where God divided the earth by languages.
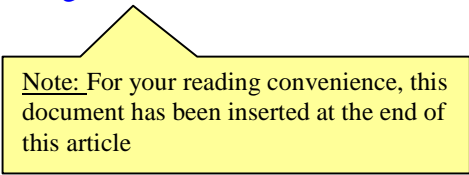
"Prayer Language" has also historically been understood to be Hebrew. Hebrews, to this day, generally pray in the Hebrew tongue regardless of their native language (usually starting: "Baruch Atah . . ." / Blessed are You . . .).

Glossalalia

Today's "speaking in tongues," with its companion, "interpretation," has an interesting history. This same charismatic glossalalia was "experienced" by occultists long before Christianity: it did not originate 1970 years ago at Pentecost. It is still widely practiced by non-believers. It has been adopted and promoted within modern Christendom by novel new interpretations of Scripture: in 1901, Neo-Pentecostalism began with Charles Parham and Agnes Ozman's experience.

For a chronology of the recent adoption of glossalalia, see
www.watch.pair.com/chronology.html

For a history of the practice, see
www.apologetique.org/en/rticles/neomontanism/BDG_glossolalia_en.htm .

Note: For your reading convenience, this document has been inserted at the end of this article

For the past century, many professing Christians have practiced glossalalia, calling it "speaking in tongues" in an attempt to tie their "experience" to Biblical wording. "Other tongues" is an Old English term that in Modern English would be rendered "foreign languages"; the Old English term is often used for mystique. More current terminology would make modern misuse more difficult: the term "foreign languages" may easily be seen to represent the ancient understanding of "the languages of the nations," used in contrast to the Holy Language – Hebrew.

Some advertise their practice to show themselves more spiritual, even making the anti-Biblical claim that others "don't have the Holy Spirit," or making the provocative claim that others are "limiting the power of God." Many Christians accept the beliefs of charismatics, because they are unwilling to cast doubt on their friends, or because they trust in certain teachers.

But, the bottom line is, glossalalia is not the Biblical "speaking in foreign languages" of the nations, and it is not speaking in the Biblical "Language of Angels" or prayer language, both being Hebrew.

Extreme caution is warranted in speaking for God, since attributing one's utterances to the Holy Spirit, when they are not, is a capital offense in Torah (Deut 18:20). In other words, if we falsely proclaim our words ("tongues" or "interpretations") to be of God, we are worthy of death. A lack of learning the historical basis of the Word of God leaves us open to captivation into false doctrine, even occult practices, as indicated by Isaiah 5:3.

Footnotes

1 AM 1996 (AM = Anno Mundi, / Year of the World) by rabbinic calculation from Scripture.

2 AM 2448 by rabbinic calculation.

3 The Torah was the (Heb.) Shitre Erusin / Betrothal Covenant, not the (Heb.) Ketuvah / Marriage Covenant, these being often confused.

4 AD 30 is based on Yeshua's birth being about 4 BC, and about 33 more years to the crucifixion and subsequent Pentecost. By rabbinic calculation, the Common Era (AD 1) began AM 3762, making the Jerusalem Pentecost about AM 3795; We suggest that the Jerusalem Pentecost might actually have been about 200 years later – closer to AM 4000.

The present year beginning Sept AD 2001 is AM 5762 by rabbinic calculation. We suggest that the present year might actually be about 200 years later – in the last generation of the sixth millennium. For explanation, see Sabbath is Messianic and Millennial Sabbath.

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Glossolalia (Tongues) and 1 Corinthians 14

by

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Contents:

Remark concerning the transliteration of ancient Greek:

Because the pronunciation of ancient Greek dialects (and especially of Koine) is close to modern Greek pronunciation and because it is remote from the artificial pronunciation invented by Erasmus, I have used the *modern* pronunciation.

Definitions

Speaking in Tongues, Glossolalia (and "oracle", "omen" in certain cases):

Phenomenon where a human being utters some sounds without understanding them, and such that these sound would be inspired by a spirit other than the spirit of this human being

This utterance may sound like "babababababa" or "talaka valatakapa kalamalakadabra". "Glossolalia" is a recent word; it was built with two Greek roots which are present in the chapter fourteen of the first letter to the Corinthians, "glossa" (γλωσσα) which means: "language" or "tongue" and "laleo" (λαλεω) which means "to speak". Because the other ways for naming this phenomenon are less precise ("oracle", "omen") or cumbersome ("ecstatic utterance", "unintelligible utterance"), we will use the word "glossolalia."

Mystical or Occult Experience:

Spiritual experience which is inaccessible to the understanding of the one who practices it. Such an experience is beyond human comprehension, apprehension. It cannot be understood nor described and therefore is "*hidden*". "Mystical" and "occult" are words coming from a root meaning "hidden, secret" ("mystical" stems from a Greek root, "occult" from a Latin one.) Glossolalic experiences fit in this category.

Glossolalia in Pagan Religions

Although Glossolalia is a very ancient practice it is still practiced nowadays in many religions, especially those where one seeks contact with the spirit world (witchcraft/shamanism, voodoo) or a mystical union with the "All". Mohamed, the founder of Islam, is probably the most famous of those who have practiced glossolalia. The phenomenon often occurs during a state of trance. Another person may receive the "interpretation" of the sounds uttered by the first person.

Given the importance of the Hellenistic (issued from the kingdom of Alexander the Great) world for the study of Christianity we will focus on the Greek language and culture. Three Greek roots can be used to describe the phenomenon: "mantia" (μαντεια) which is the most commonly used for describing glossolalia, "chresteria" (χρηστηρια) and "chrao" (χραω).

Glossolalie and its interpretation are mentioned in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 18:10) as part of pagan religious practices (deu 18:9). The words used in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament are:

- - "mantevomenos" (μαντευομενος): "he who practices glossolalia" (unfortunately translated by "he who practices divination" in the French translation by Louis Segond);
- - "mantian klidonizomenos" (μαντειαν κληδονιζομενος): "he who interprets glossolalia (unfortunately translated by "he who looks for omens" by L.Segond).

It is noteworthy that in this verse (deu 18:10) glossolalia is listed along with practices such as divination and witchcraft (οιωνιζομενος et φαρμακος) and is strictly prohibited.

The phenomenon was very well known during the hellenistic antiquity. It was often used to know the thoughts of a god, or "daimonon" (δαιμονιον, which gave the word "demon".) One would consult the oracles given by some mediums; the Greek for "medium" was "prophitis" (προφητης which gave the word "prophet".) A first medium would receive the oracle as an utterance of glossolalia, and other mediums would receive the interpretation of this oracle. The most famous mediums were probably the Pythia at Delphi and the Sibyls; these would practice glossolalia and were then interpreted by other mediums, as was the case of the many other mediums mentioned by the authors of the antiquity.

Glossolalia within Christendom

During the second half of the second century AD, in Phrygia, the region of the city Laodicea, Montanus, a former pagan priest, founded a charismatic movement, montanism. Many montanist practices (glossolalia, prophecy, fasting, convulsions, etc.) were reintroduced by the different charismatic waves during the twentieth century. Indeed, like many modern charismatics, the montanists held to many of the major Christian doctrines, but diverged by the experiences and by their belief that the special revelation of God was not completed with the writings of the apostles. Their movement had a great impact in Asia Minor and spread throughout the whole church, to the point of the conversion of the Christian thinker Tertullian who was influenced by stoic ideas. Stoicism was a movement comparable to the "New Age" movement of the twentieth century, and increased much during the second century because of the support of the emperor Marcus Aurelius.

The extent of montanism necessited the reaction of Christian apologists (Apollinaris, Apollonius, Miltiades, Melito, Hippolytus, etc.) These would object for example that true prophets are infallible, do not practice ecstasy and glossolalia, and do not use their gifts to make money, all of which was not the case of the montanists prophets (Eus. E. H. V:16:7-8; V:17:1-4; V:17:18-19; V:18:1-11). It was only after the bishops officially condemned, even denounced as demonic (Eus. V:19), and excommunicated the charismatics that their heretical movement came slowly to an end (Eus. V:16:10.)

Afterwards some sporadic traces of glossolalia can be found throughout church history. So, within Jansenism (a heretical movement of Catholics who used to believe in predestination), a few persons did practice glossolalia and prophecy, they were however rejected and considered heretic by the Jansenists themselves.

It is only in the twentieth century that a charismatic movement appears again, more than seventeen centuries after montanism. At the beginning of the century the first charismatic wave ("Pentacostal renewal") spread the doctrine that only those who receive the gift of glossolalia are saved ("baptized in the Holy Spirit"). This doctrine was based on a generalization of three cases of foreign languages miraculously spoken at Pentecost, at the conversion of the first pagans and at the conversion of the disciples of John the Baptist, as recorded in the book of Acts.

In the sixties the second wave, usually called "charismatic", introduced glossolalia not as the sign, confirmation of salvation, but as the feature of the "fullness of the spirit", which would be the top Christian spirituality. This second wave was based on an interpretation of the fourteenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. Other charismatic waves have since then unfurled on the church, yet without major changes concerning glossolalia.

The Importance of the Matter

I am asking you this question: "What was the percentage of charismatics in 1993 within Catholic and Protestant Christianity (evangelicals included) worldwide?

Answer:

According to David Barett (*Status of Global Mission*, 1993), this percentage was 20 % in 1980, 25% in 1993 and should reach 30% in 2000. But, according to Patrick Johnstone (*Operation World*, 1993), this percentage was only 10% in 1993. However, when considering that the percentage of charismatics among evangelicals only, Johnstone has a figure of 30% for 1993 and 50% for 2000.

Traditional Pentacostists think that those who do not practice glossolalia have not received the Holy Spirit (and thus are not saved). Charismatics (second wave) think that those who do not practice glossolalia are not "spirit-filled". Besides, according to charismatic theology (dominion/restoration doctrine), Jesus will come back to rule on earth when all practice glossolalia. These beliefs explain the strong charismatic proselytism, their infiltration in the churches and the many church divisions they cause.

Besides, many Christians have very much neglected their intellectual faculties and are quite unable to refute the charismatic arguments. Others ignore the existence of classical apologetics and seek support for their faith in spiritual experiences. These reasons foster conversions to modern charismatism, which has probably a greater impact than montanism had.

The extent of the charismatic movement and the high chance of being exposed to its proselytism have made glossolalia an important subject that all Christians should study. Moreover, many New Testament places prohibit associating with Christians practicing occultism, and thus sharing membership with them in the same church or Christian group. And the church fathers severely condemned and excommunicated the second century charismatics. So, at the end of the twentieth century, glossolalia and other charismatic practices have become again very important matters for Christians.

The Charismatic Argument based on the First Letter to the Corinthians

It is mainly this argument which convinces Christians, so we will not deal with the other charismatic arguments for the practice of glossolalia [1]. This argument is based on the interpretation of the fourteenth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. I therefore ask you to read 1Co 14:1-25.

Here are the major points of the argument:

1. This chapter deals with spiritual utterance (1Co 12:30 14:1) practiced without understanding the words one utters (1Co 14:2, 14-15), thus glossolalia.
2. This utterance edifies the one who practices it (1Co 14:4) and is recommendable for all Christians (1Co 14:5, 18).
3. Therefore glossalalia is a gift from the Holy Spirit; all should pray to receive and practice it.

Why the Conclusion of this Argument cannot be Correct

Can you answer this question?

Answer:

The conclusion of this argument cannot be correct for many reasons, either philosophical, biblical or psychological. I will briefly name a few:

Biblical Arguments

1. The Bible teaches that the greatest commandment is to love God with all one's self, including one's understanding, one's intellectual faculties (Mat 22:37). Glossolalia is a practice where reason and understanding are "switched off" and is therefore a sin against the greatest commandment.
2. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a spirit of intelligence and understanding (Isa 11:2). The Holy Spirit cannot therefore inspire an occult phenomenon such as glossolalia. Moreover all biblical characters who were inspired by God expressed themselves in understandable utterance using analogies (comparisons, parables, etc.)
3. The Bible prohibits glossolalia and its interpretation (Deu 18:10). Jesus himself condemned the meaningless prayers practiced among the pagan religions (Mat 6:7-13).
4. The Bible teaches on the one hand that certain activities such as reading the bible or praying are for the *own* good, edification, but on the other hand that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the good, the edification *of the others* (1Co 12:7; 1Co 14:12, 26; Eph 4:11-12; 1Pe 4:10; analogy with the members of the body in 1Co 12). But charismatic glossolalia is supposed to edify the one who practices it and not the others, and thus cannot be a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Philosophical Arguments

1. Logic and intelligibility are indispensable foundations for showing the truth of Christianity. If Christianity would teach occult practices such as glossolalia it would reject its foundations and that would be a fatal self-refutation.
2. The point of language, of oral expression is to communicate ideas, meaning. He who practices glossolalia does not understand what he utters and neither do those who listen to him. Glossolalia is therefore meaningless.
3. Both philosophy and the Bible (Psa 147:5; Isa 41:28; Rom 11:33) teach that God is infinitely rational, and that His will is in keeping with His immutable character (voir aussi: Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; James 1:17). So God wants men to be rational and not to practice glossolalia (see also Pro 10:13.)

Psychological Argument

Academic studies have shown that glossolalia is not a language but a mere psychological, (see book of John P. Kildahl), sociolinguistic phenomenon (William J. Samarin). Besides, many credible and non-gullible Christians (M. Unger, C. F. Dickason, G. A. Birch, W. Bühne, F. Varak...) have documented verifiable cases of Christian glossolalists who were demon-possessed, and this in many countries.

Why this Argument is not Correct

We have mentioned a few counter-arguments which falsify the conclusion of the charismatic argument for glossolalia. The argument must be incorrect. Can you see what is wrong with it?

Answer:

(1) "Glossa" does not mean "Glossolalia"

"Glossa" (γλωσσα), which is the word used to designate the languages discussed in this chapter of the letter to the Corinthians, means either the tongue (the physical organ in our mouth) or a language accessible to human understanding such as a foreign language, but not a occult phenomena such as glossolalia.

Glossolalia was very well known in the Hellenistic world. The Greek could describe it with words derived from three roots, of which "mantia" (μαντεια) was the most common. "Glossa" (the word used by Paul in 1Co 14) was never use to designate glossolalia. Even the German theologians such as Johannes Behm who interpret this chapter as dealing with the practice of glossolalia within the church recognize that this would be the only case where "glossa" would be used to describe glossolalia, and that their only argument is that the phenomenon described here would be the same as the one practiced in the pagan religions.

An interpretation such as Behm's distorts the meaning of the words used by Paul and cannot be very credible. In addition, one wonders why Paul would have misleadingly used the word "glossa" while he could have used one of the many Greek words which

have the right meaning. Charismatics may answer that Paul used "glossa" to make a distinction between the glossolalia inspired by the God of the Bible and the glossolalia inspired by the demons worshipped in the other religions. This charismatic reply is however not credible because Paul used the word "prophetis" (προφητης, which gave the word "prophet") to designate those who transmit the Biblical revelation whereas "prophitis" was the word designating the mediums of the pagan religions, and especially those uttering oracles through the practice of glossolalia.

(2) These Languages could be learned through Education

Paul called those who did not understand these languages "idiotis" (1Co 14:16,23,24. "Idiotis" (ιδιωτης, which gave us the word "idiot"), designate a persons without education (and is also used in Act 4:13 and 2Co 11:6). So these languages are normal languages that can be learned and understood through education, and not occult utterances such as glossolalia.

(3) These Languages could be translated

The verbs Paul used when speaking about translating these languages (1Co 14:5, 13, 26-28; see also 1Co 12:10, 30) are derived from the Greek root which gave the word "hermeneutics". These verbs mean "to translate, interpret, explain" and entail the idea that the translator or interpreter understands what he translates. (These words are very often used in the New Testament with the very clear meaning of "translation", for example in Heb 7:2). I did not find any instance where these verbs are used in the context of interpreting glossolalia (other verbs were used then, such as συμβαλλω, σημαινω, or verbs derived from κρινω...). This is one more indication that there is no question of an occult phenomenon such as glossolalia here.

(4) Were these Languages Incomprehensible?

The theologians who saw in this chapter a pagan practice have put forward the argument that the Corinthians did not understand their utterances (1Co 14:14-15) and thus practiced glossolalia. Does a serious analysis support or invalidate this argument?

Paul said in verses 14-15 and 19 that the Corinthians would speak without "intelligence", and used the word "nous" (νους), which means "mind, intelligence" and is opposed to "stupidity." The idea of Paul is not that the Corinthian speaker did not understand their own utterances, but that they spoke stupidly, without intelligence (the negation of "nous" conveys the idea of stupidity, as for example with the adjective "anitos" which can be found in Luk 24:25; Rom 1:14; Gal 3:1,3; 1Ti 6:9; Tit 3:3). This is the more striking as Paul used the verb "ida" (to know, understand) in verse 16, that is between the verses 14-15 and 19; he chose thus his words very carefully to pinpoint nuances.

Moreover Paul used the verbs "akouo" (1Co 14:2) (ακουω, from which comes the word "acoustic"), "ginosko" (1Co 14:7, 9) (γινωσκω) and "ida" (1Co 14:11, 16) (οιδα, from which comes the word "idea"). These three verbs are suitable for expressing the lack of understanding or knowledge of a language. Paul would thus have used them in verses 14-15 and 19 if he had meant that the one who spoke one of those languages did not understand what he what he was saying.

In conclusion, the text in verses 14 and 15 shows that these languages were practiced with stupidity, but not without the understanding of the utterances, and thus cannot be used to infer the practice of glossolalia.

(5) He who spoke these Languages would understand what he said

Paul said (1Co 14:28) that he who spoke one of these language spoke to *himself* and to God in the absence of translation. But how could he speak to himself if he did not understand his own words?

Much more, certain verses (1Co 14:16-17; 11-12; 5-6) show clearly that these languages could bring any edification unless they were understood. Now Paul taught also that he who spoke one of these languages was edified (1Co 14:4). Therefore he who spoke one of these languages would understand what he said. The same point can be found in verses 16 and 17; Paul says here that one could not say "amen" at a prayer in one of these languages without understanding the prayer, and that that the one praying in one of these languages could say "amen" to his own prayer. If follows here again that he who prayed in one of those languages would understand this language.

He who spoke one of these languages would thus understand what he would say, there is therefore no question of glossolalia in this chapter.

(6) These were Normal Languages

Paul said (1Co 14:18) that he spoke more languages than all the members of the church of Corinth together. Many have understood this as showing that Paul was an enthusiastic adept of glossolalia and would practice it inordinately. But Paul was excessively busy with his missionary and professional activities, day as night (1Th 2:9; 2Th 3:8), he was carrying the burden of the problems of the many churches he had founded, etc. (2Co 12:23-28). Paul could not have more time to practice glossolalia than any member of the church of Corinth, and the less could he practice it he alone more than all of them together. So these languages were certainly not glossolalic utterances.

Or would Paul have had more time because he would practice glossolalia at home, whereas the Corinthians would only practice it in the church? Here again Paul was certainly too busy to be able to practice it more than all Corinthians. Besides, such a practice is never mentioned in the New Testament: how could Paul have devoted all his time to such a practice and never mention it in his letters? This explanation is not acceptable. Moreover such a practice would be utterly absurd and even sinful since Paul considered that these languages were spiritual gifts and that spiritual gifts must be used for the edification of others, not for one's own edification (1Co 12:7; 1Co 14:12, 26; Eph 4:11-12; 1Pe 4:10).

Or would these languages be miraculous, such as the three cases of foreign languages miraculously spoken and mentioned in the book of Acts (chapters 2, 10 et 19)? The point of these linguistic miracles was to break a language barrier and make the Christian message understandable to foreigners. But, quite the contrary, the languages mentioned in this letter to the Corinthians were incomprehensible to other persons! Besides, these linguistic miracles were unique events and not spiritual gifts which one develops and regularly practices. And the book of Acts, which recounts the journeys and miracles of Paul never mentions that he performed such miracles. Moreover how could Paul know that he miraculously spoke foreign languages (and he certainly never did) more often

than all the members of the church of Corinth? This third explanation is no more acceptable than the others.

The remaining possibility is that these languages were normal foreign languages, as point (2) above indicates. And this is indeed the only satisfying explanation. One can hardly find someone who lived in as many places as Paul did and was as gifted at foreign languages (Paul spoke Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, and very probably Latin,

Arabic, Syriac and many dialects of Asia Minor and Greece.) Paul had certainly had the opportunity to learn more languages than all the members of the church of Corinth together, we can say with certainty than he spoke more languages than them all.

In conclusion, these languages are normal languages and not glossolalic.

(7) What is then the Correct Explanation of Paul's Ideas?

You should now be able to find this explanation. Here is a hint: the key verses are verses 15 to 19.

Answer:

We can now understand why Paul said that those who spoke these languages did it without intelligence (1Co 14:14-15). The listeners who did not know these languages could not understand them in the absence of translation and thus could not be edified (1Co 14:4-6, 12, 17). But, in contrast to personal activities, the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is the edification of the others, of the church (1Co 12:7; 1Co 14:12, 26; Eph 4:11-12; 1Pe 4:10). Consequently those who practice their gift (may it be teaching, counseling, or, as in the present case, foreign languages) in such a manner that others are not edified, do it uselessly, and thus without intelligence, stupidly (see the remark on the Greek "nous" above).

My wife, present in this congregation this morning, is Dutch. If she would pray aloud during the service in this French-speaking church, she would be edified through her own prayer (1Co 14:4), but since the French cannot understand her, she would only speak to God (1Co 14:2) and herself (1Co 14:28); the others would not be edified (1Co 14:17), she would be stupid to do so (1Co 14:14-15,19.)

The case of my wife would be an illustration of the situation in the church of Corinth. Corinth was at the time of Paul an important Roman colony with an international harbor. The city was composed of many inhabitants originating from Italy, Asia Minor, Israel, etc., in addition to the local Greek population. The New Testament even mentions the presence in Corinth of foreign Jews such as Aquilas, Priscilla and Apollos. It is quite possible that in this church some Jews recited some prayers in Hebrew and that other foreigners may have then prayed or sung in foreign languages, without any translation into Greek, the local as well as the international language of the time.

We can also understand why Paul spoke of praying for being able to translate one's words (1Co 14:13). It is very difficult (1Co 14:27-28) to keep concentration when speaking and translating each sentence, hence the prayer for divine help (1Co 14:13). A petitionary prayer requires some personal initiative and does not seem compatible with a glossolalic, ecstatic state. Moreover there do not seem to be any cases where a glossolalist "interprets" his own utterance, whereas there are some cases where one succeeds in translating his own words.

There are many more things to say about this chapter fourteen and especially about verses 20 to 25, but lack of time limits us to what we studied so far.

Conclusion

The Bible teaches that one should love God with all his intellect (Mat 22:37) and should renew (Rom 12:2) and develop his intellectual abilities (Eph 4:13; Heb 5:12; 2Pe 3:16-18.) Unfortunately many Christians do not develop the intellectual gifts, faculties they may possess, and do not study philosophy, history, ancient Greek and Hebrew... A lack of knowledge and logic can lead to serious heresies, to occultism indeed as in the case of glossolalia which we studied this morning. These consequences are terrible and confirm the divine word "My people are destroyed by lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6.) This is the more disastrous for the church that the New Testament forbids association with Christians who practice occultism.

Even worse, glossolalia is only one out of the many occult practices of the charismatic movement. And this movement grows to menacing proportions, at least comparable to the second century charismatic heresy, montanism. The churches could then only stop it by officially condemning it and excommunicating the charismatics. Gérard Dagon, Président of the Fédération Evangélique de France, was recently courageous enough to take a stand against the charismatic movement. We can rejoice and praise God for this example of pure and upright faith. We can also pray and act so that an end may come to this heresy which leads astray many Christians deeper into occultism with each new wave.

[1] The article "Rexposition and Refutation of some charismatic arguments" should soon be available on this site, and will provide a systematic analysis and refutation of charismatic arguments for many charismatic doctrines and practices.

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