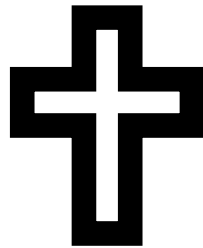


*A Scriptural
Interpretation
of
Tongues*

*by
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A SCRIPTURAL INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES
THE ROOTS OF THE MODERN DAY PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT
NOTES FROM "AZUSA STREET" by Frank Bartleman

The Azusa Street revival of 1906-1909 ushered into being the worldwide twentieth-century pentecostal renewal. The main people involved were a teacher, Charles Parham; a preacher, William J. Seymour; a city, Los Angeles; a journalist, Frank Bartleman; and a building, the Azusa Street Mission, located at 312 Azusa Street.

Charles Parham is credited with being the father of the movement. A former Methodist minister from Kansas, Parham by 1898 had begun a healing home in Topeka where students were invited to study the Scriptures in a small Bible school community. Four major teachings were justification by faith, sanctification as a second work of grace, divine healing, and the premillennial second coming of Christ.

In January 1901, one of Parham's students, an eighteen-year-old girl named **Agnes Ozman**, began to speak in other tongues. From this experience, Parham constructed his thesis that glossolalia was the Biblical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In 1905, he moved his school to Houston, Texas where **William J. Seymour**, a Baptist, joined Parham's Bible School. In 1906 Seymour received an invitation to preach in a black Nazarene church in Los Angeles pastored by a woman preacher, a Reverend Mrs. Hutchinson. William J. Seymour was the central figure of the Azusa Street revival.

Frank Bartleman's diary and reports in the holiness press constituted the most complete and reliable record of what occurred at Azusa Street. He was said to have been converted in October 1893 in the Baptist Temple in Philadelphia. He was licensed by the Temple Baptist Church but left the Baptists and cast his lot with the holiness movement. He then joined the Salvation Army but left and entered Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. He left there not long after and did a tour through the South. In 1900 he married a Miss Ladd, matron of a school for fallen girls in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He also experienced his first spiritual manifestation of "shouting and jumping." Soon after marriage, Bartleman was ordained in Philadelphia by a pentecostal holiness group.

Near the time of this marriage he joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church and was assigned a pastorate in Corry, Pennsylvania. During this period, Bartleman was subject to several more mystical experiences in addition to his shouting and jumping of a few months earlier. In a camp meeting he felt "electric shocks" to the point that he fell unconscious. Later, after his horse was healed in answer to prayer, Satan attacked him in his room at night "to destroy me." The name of Jesus put Satan to flight. Also, after a miraculous healing, he was "slain in the Spirit" for one-half hour before a congregation where he had been preaching.

He left Pennsylvania and moved to Denver, Colorado, where he went to work with Alma White, head of the Pillar of Fire church, a small holiness group that specialized in the "holy dance." It was here that Bartleman was "cured of ever worshipping a religious zeal or creed." In 1904, he moved to Sacramento, California where he worked in the Peniel Mission, a holiness rescue mission in the heart of the city. He then moved to Los Angeles, where he worked with the various holiness churches and missions in the Los Angeles area. About 1905, Bartleman began writing articles for the holiness press. In his writings, Bartleman injects himself into the story as one of the prime movers of the Azusa Street events but the crucial role was played by William J. Seymour, pastor of the Azusa Street Mission.

In 1906 Seymour had been invited to preach in a black Nazarene church in Los Angeles pastored by a "Mrs. Hutchinson." When Seymour preached his first sermon, proclaiming the "initial evidence" theory of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, he was locked out of the Nazarene church. Simply stated, the theory is that one cannot say that he has been "baptized in the Holy Spirit" without the "initial evidence" of speaking in tongues. This was an offensive and revolutionary teaching, since practically all Christians claimed to be baptized in the Spirit--evangelicals at the time of conversion and holiness people at the time of their "second blessing" or "entire sanctification."

Seymour was invited to stay in the home of Richard Asbury on Bonnie Brae Street. Soon thereafter, Seymour spoke in tongues in the Asbury home. As the group grew in number they found an old abandoned building on Azusa Street in which to meet. They began holding services there in April of 1906. The Los Angeles times first reported the Azusa story in April of 1906 calling tongues a "weird babel" and Seymour's followers a "sect of fanatics." For three and one-half years at Azusa, services were held three times a day--morning, afternoon, and night. Tongues-speaking was the central attraction, but healing of the sick was not far behind. As time passed Seymour and his followers claimed that all the gifts of the Spirit had been restored to the church.

In a few short years, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Fire-Baptized Holiness Church, the Church of God, the United Holy Church of America, The Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church, and the Church of God in Christ joined the pentecostal fold. The five major teachings of Azusa Street served as a standard for this first wave of pentecostals. They were;

1. Justification by faith

2. Sanctification as a definite work of grace
3. The baptism in the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in other tongues
4. Divine healing “as in the atonement”
5. The personal premillennial rapture of the saints at the second coming of Christ.

Although a significant proportion of the holiness movement accepted the Azusa revival as signaling the long-prayed-for Pentecost, the majority rejected pentecostalism. The Fundamentalists rejected pentecostalism and by 1928 had disassociated themselves from all pentecostals within their ranks.

In December, 1906, Dr. Phineas Bresee, founder of the Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles wrote an article, entitled “The Gift of Tongues” in which he refuted many of the claims of the articles that Bartleman had published. Playing down the importance of the Azusa Street phenomenon in Los Angeles, Bresee stated:

“Locally it is of small account, being insignificant both in numbers and influence. Instead of being the greatest movement of the times, as represented--in Los Angeles, at least--it is of small moment. It has had, and has now upon the religious life of the city, about as much influence as a pebble thrown into the sea...”

In the end, Bresee felt that the Azusa Street pentecostals bordered on fanaticism and heresy by teaching that Christians are sanctified before they receive the baptism with the Holy Ghost, this baptism being a gift of power upon the sanctified life, and that the essential and necessary evidence of the baptism is the gift of speaking with new tongues, (which he called) “a jargon, a senseless mumble...a poor mess”.

As to the Azusa Street worshipers, the Nazarene leader stated: “There are more or less people whose experience is unsatisfactory, who have never been sanctified wholly, or have lost the precious work out of their hearts, who will run after the hope of exceptional or marvelous things, to their own further undoing.

NOTES ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ENDORSING TONGUES

In 1975 over 10,000 Catholics gathered in St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome to celebrate the Pentecost season. During this service, these charismatics rejoiced as Pope Paul VI gave his endorsement to the movement. At the climax of the service thousands spoke and sang in other tongues.

In 1978 a similar pentecost service was conducted in Canterbury Cathedral in England. About 2,000 Anglicans and Episcopalians spoke in tongues and uttered prophecies at the World Anglican Communion. Archbishop Coggin addressed the Conference and spoke in glowing terms of the pentecostal movement.

1. Historical Facts--Charles Parham started a school in Topeka, Kansas and taught healing. All of his life, he never once joined a Church of any kind. In 1901, one of his students, a woman named Agnes Ozman, spoke in a "tongue". Parham constructed his thesis that "tongues" was the Biblical evidence of being baptized in the Spirit. This, of course, is not validated by one verse of Scripture in the whole Bible. The Baptism of the Spirit is the act of God whereby God puts the Believer in the Body of Christ. This is a one time act and is done immediately at conversion and is never repeated.

Note: Dr. J. William Kanoy in his pamphlet “Marvelous Person of the Holy Spirit” makes a clear statement in the chapter headed:

VII. Misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit.

A. Baptism (In) With the Spirit: The Bible nowhere speaks of “*the baptism of the Holy Spirit.*” It is always “*with*” or “*in*” the Spirit, for He is not the Baptizer, but the Element in which we are baptized. There are seven passages in all talking or referring to this Baptism, five pointing to Pentecost, and two passages going back to Pentecost. (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 11:15-17; and I Corinthians 12:12-13)

The baptism “in” or “with” the Spirit is a term applied to one new thing that happened at Pentecost. It is reserved for the initial coming of the Holy Spirit from the Father--for the purpose of indwelling for the first time. This descent and this alone is called the baptism in the Spirit. The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (John 15:26) constituted the baptism in the Spirit. It has never been repeated.

1. We do not seek this Baptism.
2. We do not pray for this Baptism.
3. Baptism in the Spirit, indwelling, sealing are all once for all transactions. These can never be repeated or will never be repeated.

2. Pentecostalism is a counterfeit that was started by Satan in direct opposition to the Great Welsh Revival that was sweeping the world at this period of time. It is still the enemy of Revival that places experience above and more important than doctrine. It will be the one counterfeit that will usher in the One World Church by unifying all religions under this experience, because they could never agree on Doctrine.

3. Real Truth--John 15:26-27--“*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*” (Notice the true Holy Spirit does not

speak of himself.) Verse 27--"And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Notice here as in Acts 1:8, the coming of the Spirit is not to cause the believer to have some ecstatic experience but to be a witness and a soulwinner.

4. How can we define the modern day "Tongues Movement"? There are two faults in this current plague of the modern tongues movement.

a. Wrong Interpretation--This movement is not based on the Word of God, neither do its proponents encourage searching the Scriptures to see if this movement is true. They present a few "**proof texts**", but beyond that, there is no study of the Scriptures. The departure of the great denominations from the Word of God has given rise to these false doctrines. I Tim. 4:1-- "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith (the Word of God), giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*" This is cultish. A Cult can be defined as any religious group which differs significantly in belief or practice from a correctly interpreted Bible. A Cult can be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible. I believe that Tongues can be explained as Satanic or Demonic. There are many cases on record both from heathen and Christian sources that prove that Satan can produce the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Tongues-speaking has been reported from the days of Plato, known among the Zulus, practiced in Hinduism. Tongues-speaking has been heard among Muslims, Mormons, and spiritualist mediums, not to mention various other groups. Since it can be done by non-Christians, tongues-speaking cannot be the sure sign of one's faith in Christ, much less of the baptism in the Spirit. Matt. 24:24-- "*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*"

b. A Search for Reality--Liberalism and Modernism has produced a hunger for something that is Spiritual. In their search for reality, they have been given a false experience. Tongues can also be explained as psychological. It is probably **self-hypnosis or autosuggestion**. It is peer pressure, or wanting to be accepted, that causes many people to become involved with the group that is doing this thing. Also those seeking help are enticed by this "feel good" experience.

5. Based on Experience--This method has introduced some serious errors and strange heresies into the Church. In the Pentecostal's own book, "**Azusa Street**" by Frank Bartleman, it states clearly, "**From this experience, Parham constructed his thesis that glossolalia was the biblical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.**" The test of every experience and doctrine is the **Word of God** !

6. First Mention Principle--A Rule of Hermeneutics states that when a doctrine is mentioned the first time in the Scriptures, it follows the same teaching throughout the Scripture. In Gen. 11:1-4, we see man's rebellion against God. The building of the Tower of Babel was to rally against God. It was the beginning of idolatry and of false religion. The Corinthian Church was full of idolatry. They worshipped men, themselves, and their experience more than God and this was evidenced by tongues. Pentecost was God's answer to Babel. God was here breaking through the sound barrier that He had put up at Babel when He had confused the language. Now the Gospel is to go out to all people--that is the message of Pentecost. The Gospel is for all. Pentecost is a blessing. Babel was a judgment. At Pentecost, men were saved but at Babel, men were scattered.

a. There are four historic accounts since the Transitional Period 30 A.D--100 A.D. where tongues have broken out.

- (1) In the Second Century--the Montanists of Phrygia
- (2) In the 1700's--the Camisards in France
- (3) In the 19th Century--The Irvingites in England
- (4) In our day--Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California

b. The Modern Tongue Movement boasts "it has been in the church from the beginning" and it has but always as heresy. It has never started a revival and has always been divisive.

Point: Jesus never one time spoke in an "unknown tongue."