

Processing Spiritual Experiences Today: The  
Validity of Spiritual Gifts

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*Abstract*

*Whether or not the Holy Spirit is active in spiritual gifts today, or even the degree that He is active, is essential in reviving the notion and understanding of God's presence. If the Holy Spirit is moving in spiritual gifts of contemporary culture, God is not an impersonal being. The validity of spiritual gifts can be a reminder that God is moving in our lives and that this is not just restricted to biblical times. A reawakening of awareness in the Holy Spirit is important because it will impact the way Christians act and live their lives; it can bring new spiritual flourishing in society today. There is evidence that in the past century, a renewal in focus of the Holy Spirit and the gifts it supposedly bestows has captured people's interest. In my research, I address three specific areas: how the scriptures of Christianity treat the issue concerning the validity of spiritual gifts, the definition and biblical design for the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, what is the debate, specific scripture on the Holy Spirit, and scripture on spiritual gifts (referencing Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4); while also looking at the historical development in thinking about the Holy Spirit, what is pneumatology, the development of the Pentecostal Church/Charismatic Movement, and how spiritual gifts interacted with*

*culture; and, what the contemporary relevance of spiritual gifts is in the charismatic movement today, the reawakening of awareness in the Holy Spirit, the degree that the Holy Spirit is active in spiritual gifts today, and other contemporary examples. The specific spiritual gifts I will identify answers to concerning the validity issue include: the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, the spiritual gift of prophesying, and the spiritual gift of healing. I will conclude with my overall takeaway from the research and what my own personal experience with spiritual gifts has been.*

*“The Spirit is breath, not a full outline, and therefore he wishes only to breathe through us, not to present himself to us as an object; he does not wish to be seen but to be the seeing eye of grace in us, and he is little concerned about whether we pray to him, provided that we pray with him, “Abba, Father,” provided that we consent to his unutterable groaning in the depths of our soul. He is the light that cannot be seen except upon the object that is lit up; and he is the love between Father and Son that has appeared in Jesus. He does not wish to be glorified but “to glorify me,” by “taking what is mine and revealing it to you” (John 16:14), in the same way that the Son neither wishes nor is able to glorify himself but glorifies only the Father (John 5:41; 7:18).” (Karkainen 2002:175)*

## PART 1: HOW THE BIBLE TREATS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### INTRODUCTION

The Bible reveals many instances of God’s Holy Spirit moving in people’s life through the use of spiritual gifts. However, there has been lots of debates over if some or all of these gifts are still active today in the same kinds of ways they are seen active in the Bible. Today, some spiritual gifts such as prophecy, healing, miracles, speaking in tongues, and interpretation are a subject of great controversy. But despite this, “the vast majority of Christians are charismatics in the sense that they believe in the exercise of spiritual gifts (*charismata*). But in another sense, not all believers are charismatics; those who describe themselves by this term believe that all the gifts are still given today, while non-charismatics believe that the controversial gifts mentioned above have ceased” (Boa 2006).

Furthermore, non-charismatics tend to make a variance between sign gifts and edification gifts. Non-charismatics argue that sign gifts “served their purpose in the first century by attesting to the authority of the apostles and their divinely-inspired message. Once the New Testament canon was complete, miraculous gifts were no longer necessary, and they gradually disappeared from the church” (Boa 2006). For example, in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 it says, “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears” (Bible Gateway). This passage is used by non-charismatics to suggest that signs and wonders were gone from generations.

Charismatics on the other hand, generally acknowledge that the use of these gifts have declined since the early church but they haven’t disappeared. Charismatics would argue that 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 is not definitive “because the perfect may refer to the second advent of Christ rather than the completion of the canon of Scripture. In addition, they say that the gifts of prophecy, miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation are not merely for signs, but also for edification” (Boa 2006).

Some specific issues about spiritual gifts include: Bible believers disagreements about the definition of gifts and the validity of certain gifts, ignorance in the church about the role of gifts, confusion about how spiritual gifts and a believer’s natural abilities or talents coincide, and how some gifts are portrayed as being a necessary evidence of being a follower of Jesus. I believe the main reason for the confusion and conflicting views is due to misinterpretation of scripture and a lack of dialogue about the subject. But aside from these problems, there is also confusion between the distinction between spiritual gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

There are four things to note in regards to the gifts of the Spirit. One, gifts differ for each individual, two, gifts can be abused and can lead to division, three, no Christian possesses all of the gifts, and four, no single spiritual gift is an obligation for being a believer. Whereas the fruit of the Spirit are listed in Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Bible Gateway). These spiritual fruits are for all the church (no exceptions), are related to our character as Christians, all are vital and equally important, if they are authentic they can not be misused, and all Christians are to manifest them. Spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are not the same thing. It can be concluded that:

*“Spiritual fruit is produced from within; spiritual gifts are imparted from without. Fruit relates to Christlike character; gifts relate to Christian service. The fruit of the Spirit, especially love, should be the context for the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 13 that spiritual gifts without spiritual fruit are worthless. Fruit is eternal, but gifts are temporal (1 Cor. 13:8); the former is a true measure of spirituality, but the latter is not” (Boa 2006).*

Now we have an idea of the distinction between spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit and the problems often associated with gifts. But before we go in depth on spiritual gifts, we need to address the source of where those gifts come from, and that is the Holy Spirit.

## PNEUMATOLOGY

The study of the Holy Spirit is referred to as pneumatology. What is the Biblical perspective on the Spirit? According to Karkkainen, an established author and pneumatologist, “the Bible presents no systematized outline of the work of the Spirit, anymore than it does of any other systematic topic. It teaches about the Spirit through symbols and stories [...] we could perhaps describe biblical pneumatology as a sort of ‘lived’ pneumatology rather than a

schematized doctrine” (Karkkainen 2002:23). However, according to Karkkainen’s book, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, there are 7 various images and terms used for the Spirit in the Bible. First, the Holy Spirit is referred to as the *life-breath*. In Genesis 2:7 it says, “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” - this is one of the earliest impressions of the Spirit and,

*“Although this passage uses the Hebrew word neshamah, the more familiar Hebrew word ruach, which means ‘breath,’ ‘wind,’ or ‘spirit,’ is also used in this sense of life-breath (e.g. Gen. 6:17; Ezek. 37:5). The act of God breathing life into human beings at creation is an important forerunner of John 20:22, where Jesus breathes upon the disciples and says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ - it is important to note that only in regards to the creation of humans did God breath into his nostrils” (Karkkainen 2002:23-24).*

A second way the Spirit is referenced is as *wind* - which is related to the idea of breath (e.g. Genesis 8:1; Numbers 11:31; Isaiah 27:8; etc.). This dual meaning *ruach* is evident too in John 3 because it “more explicitly connects the image of wind with God’s Spirit, speaking of the mysterious nature of wind and the Spirit’s role in a believer’s new birth” (Karkkainen 2002:24). Old Testament contains many words for the Holy Spirit however, “The most disputed passage is Genesis 1:2. The question is whether *ruach elohim* should be translated as ‘a mighty wind [that] swept over the waters’ (NAB) or as ‘the Spirit of God [that] was moving over the face of the waters’ (RSV). In some cases, *ruach* literally means ‘wind,’ and in other cases, it is more appropriate to translate it as ‘spirit’” (Karkkainen 2002:26).

Third, a less common reference to the Spirit is as *fire* (Karkkainen 2002:24). Isaiah 4:4 specifically speaks of a time when God cleansed Jerusalem with a spirit of judgment and fire. Isaiah 33:11 states, “my spirit shall consume you like fire”. And John the Baptist preaches about spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17).

Fourth, *water* is another descriptor for the Spirit. Isaiah 44:3 says “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring”. Fifth, the Holy Spirit is referenced as a *cloud* - which is a regular manifestation of God’s presence in the Old Testament. Examples include: Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:15-18), the tent of meeting (Exodus 33:9-10), in the desert (Exodus 40:36-38), and at the dedication of the Solomonic temple (1 Kings 8:10-12). Karkkainen states, “While it is true that in the Old Testament the cloud is not explicitly associated with the Spirit, if God’s presence is made possible only through the all-present Spirit, then this symbolism can legitimately be related to the Spirit” (2002:24-25).

A sixth description of the Holy Spirit is as a *dove*. It is important that Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist is an event that was recorded in all four Gospels (Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1). In these writings, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Jesus.

Lastly, the Spirit is referred to as *paraclete*. This description is “the first and only personal image [...] If the Holy Spirit is the second paraclete, ‘another Counselor’ (John 14:16), Jesus Christ obviously is the first, as 1 John 2:1 says (‘one who speaks. . . in our defense’ = parakletos)” (Karkkainen 2002:25). Karkkainen continues, saying, “the term parakletos (from para + kalein) in its elementary sense means ‘one called alongside to help,’ thus an advocate or defense attorney” (200:35).

When looking at the Old Testament in a lense of possessing charismatic power, “*ruach* can come mightily upon a human being” as we see in Judges 14:6 (the tearing of a lion) and 1 Sam. 16:13 (Karkkainen 2002:27). As we see from scripture, the Holy Spirit has a tendency to clothe and equip a person for mighty works (like Gideon in Judges 6:34). This same Spirit makes



it possible for humans to perform supernatural deeds like Gideon's physical deliverance of Israel by the judges through the Spirit (Judges 3:10) or visions by the prophets (Ezekiel 3:12; 8:3; 11:1).

In the Book of Judges, charismatic work of the Spirit is evident in its stories of many charismatic leaders or warriors. For example the Spirit is at work in Othniel when it says, "The Spirit of the LORD came upon him" (Judges 3:10), similarly too with Gideon saying, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon" (Judges 6:34), and Jephthah, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah" (Judges 11:29), and Samson, "and the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him" (Judges 13:25; 14:6) (Karkkainen 2002:27). So for Christians across denominations I do not believe there is any denying that the Holy Spirit was at work, moving and active, in the Old Testament and I think the same can be said for the New Testament's scriptures upon examination - the Spirit's work just looks a little differently.

We see that in the New Testament, that about 40 times the word *pneuma* is used which "refers to the human spirit insofar as it belongs to the spiritual realm" in other words, "the spirit of a human being is that aspect of a man or a woman through which God most immediately encounters him or her" (examples include: Romans 8:16; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; Hebrews 4:12; etc.), it is "that dimension wherein one is most immediately open to God" (examples: Matthew 5:3; Luke 1:47; Romans 1:9; 1 Peter 3:4)" (Karkkainen 2002:28). Although, there are instances in which it is unclear whether *pneuma* means human spirit or divine Spirit (Mark 14:38; Romans 8:15; 11:8; 1 Corinthians 4:21).

LUKE AND PAUL

Before we get into the Bible's explanation and role for spiritual gifts, I want to look at two biblical author's portrayals of the ministry of the Spirit - Luke and Paul. In Luke's writings, he stresses that the Spirit abides in community. Karkkainen explains that:

*“Luke seeks to overcome the concept of the Spirit as a power that leaps on a human being and then leaves again. In fact, the Spirit is a ‘feature of the age of the Church.’ The fact that each of the baptized possesses the Spirit, and that this fact is often manifested in a visible and perceptible way”*

- this is Luke's emphasis (2002:30-31). The Holy Spirit symbolizes supernatural power that directs the believer by working through them and this is most clearly evident in the book of Act (which Luke wrote). The Spirit in Acts is almost touchable with the way Luke portrays its effects. Pentecost, in Acts, is a dramatic example of the Holy Spirit at work amongst the early Christians. The book of Acts leads the reader to believe that the Spirit work is shown in visible signs. For example, Acts 4:31 says, “After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly”.

Furthermore, we see these visible signs in Acts 8:15-19 when they laid hands on people and later when the people began to speech in tongues and prophecy (Acts 19:6). These very visible signs had a great impact of believers when signs were missing later and Christians doubted the Spirit's presence such as among the Samaritans (Acts 8:12) and disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:11). Rough times like these happened and “often at pivotal moments in the life of an individual or the church, the Holy Spirit was seen as the source of an extraordinary power” and could redeem faith among the people (Karkkainen 2002:31). Lastly, “Another means by which the Spirit helped the early church in her mission was by giving special authority to the leadership of the community. The Spirit was also constantly directing missionaries to new areas” (Acts 8:29, 39; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2,4; 16:6-7; 19:21) (Karkkainen 2002:32).

Another perspective of how the Holy Spirit is portrayed is by Paul. For Paul, “pneumatology is christologically founded: The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19). Therefore, it is only through the Spirit that the believer is able to confess that ‘Jesus is Lord’ (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Spirit makes it possible for us to know and recognize Christ” (Karkkainen 2002:32). According to Paul’s portrayal, “To be ‘in Christ’ and ‘in Spirit’ are virtually synonymous; therefore, the Spirit cannot be experienced apart from Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3)” (Karkkainen 200:32). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:45, even calls Christ a ‘life-giving Spirit’ in reference to the first man, Adam and all of mankind to follow. Karkkainen says of Paul's portrayal:

*“For Paul, charisms play a crucial role both in the communal life and in an individual believer’s life. Charismata may be spectacular Spirit-inspired utterances or acts or more regular ministries. Nevertheless, the preferred gift for Paul is prophecy, because it builds up the body. Paul seeks a balance between not restricting the exercise of the Spirit’s gifts and not overemphasizing or abusing them”* (Karkkainen 2002:33).

Paul and Luke both offer different perspectives on the Spirit but the Bible provides a vast array of approaches to the Holy Spirit. There may not be a single understanding of the Spirit in the Bible but there is a common center. With the Old Testament we see the Spirit as the principle and source of life whereas in the New Testament, this concept is built on further in highlighting the Spirit’s responsibility in Jesus’ life and the charismatic power that was passed on to his disciples.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

On the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended and created a “new organism [...] this organism consists of all those who have received the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus” (Boa 2006). Through both adoption and new birth, believers are sons and daughters

of God and this 'organism' is also described as a temple of God in Ephesians 2:20-22 and living stones in 1 Peter 2:4-5. However, the most commonly used metaphor a new believer is the body of Christ (see Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4-16; 5:5:23-30; Colossians 1:18; 2:19).

But what really are spiritual gifts? The word *charismata* is the Greek word most commonly used for spiritual gifts and it relates to the word *charis* - or grace of God (Boa 2006). In Ephesians 4:7, Paul writes, "he [God] has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. Another definition of spirituals gifts as defined by William McRae, is "a divine endowment of a special ability for service upon a member of the body of Christ" while C. Peter Wagner offers a similar definition saying "A spiritual gift is a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body" (Boa 2006).

Spiritual gifts are gifts, but these free gifts that God gives to believers are not without design and purpose. There are actually several principles that relates to God's design for spiritual gifts. First, every Christian possess at least one spiritual gift as a manifestation of the Spirit in the believer and that gift is to be used not for selfish benefit but for the betterment of all as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:11 and Ephesians 4:7. Second, it is important to recognized that a person's natural talents are different from spiritual gifts - it is not an ability you are born with but is given later to those who profess belief in Jesus Christ. Third, "gifts are God's spiritual equipment for effective service and edification of the body" (Boa 2006). Furthermore, these gifts are supposed to be used for God's glory. In 1 Peter 4:11 it say, "Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it

with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ” (Bible Gateway). J. Oswald Sanders put it well when he said:

*“They [spiritual gifts] are not bestowed for the self-aggrandizement of the recipient, or as an evidence of a special endowment of the Spirit, but for the profit and edification of the Body of Christ. The possessor is only the instrument and not the receiver of the glory.”*

The list of spiritual gifts is plenty and the list includes but is not limited to: prophecy (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 14:1-40; Ephesians 4:11), service (Romans 12:7), teaching (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11), exhortation (Romans 12:8), giving (Romans 12:8), leadership (Romans 12:8), mercy (Romans 12:8), wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8), knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8), faith (1 Corinthians 12:9), healing (1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30), miracles (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 29), distinguishing of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10), tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28, 30; 14:1-40), interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26-28), apostleship (1 Corinthians 12:28,29; Ephesians 4:11), helps (1 Corinthians 12:28), administration (1 Corinthians 12:28), evangelism (Ephesians 4:11), shepherd or pastor (Ephesians 4:11).

Other suggested spiritual gifts include: celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7-9), voluntary poverty (1 Corinthians 13:3), martyrdom (1 Corinthians 13:3), hospitality (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9), missionary, and exorcism. However, the spiritual gifts I will specifically be looking at in more detail are prophesying, speaking in tongues, and spiritual healing.

Regardless of the gifts a believer may possess, it is important for a Christian to exercise them - but with selflessness, and a good attitude. Romans 12: 6-8 speaks on gifts saying,

*“In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you*

*leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly” (Bible Gateway).*

Use what God has blessed you with to further His Kingdom and glorify his name. The gifts a believer has been given should not be of waste but actively in use

The first gift of the Spirit we are going to look at in more depth is the spiritual gift of prophecy. The spiritual gift of prophecy is described by Bible.org as “the ability to receive and proclaim a message from God” (Boa 2006) which may involve the foretelling of future events. It’s purpose can be seen in 1 Corinthians 14:3 which says, “But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them” (BibleGateway). Some believe that the use of prophecy is still operative today while others argue that the nearest current equivalent is Spirit-empowered preaching. But Romans 12:6 emphasises that some people have been given this gift and those individuals are to use it saying, “In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you” (BibleGateway). The spiritual gift of prophecy is even considered greater and more impactful for communities than the spiritual gift of tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:5-6 says,

*“I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened. Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful (BibleGateway).*

Therefore, the spiritual gift of prophecy should be held at high esteem and desired by all who profess faith in Jesus Christ because it builds community and deepens the relationship an individual has with God.

A biblical example of prophecy being used is in Joel 2 with the prediction of the coming judgment (a motive to repentance), a promised blessing in the last days, and talk of the Day of Pentecost (foreshadowing Acts 2). Joel 2:28-32 talks of the prophy of Pentecost saying,

*“Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike. And I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth - blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved, for some on Mount Zion in Jerusalem will escape, just as the LORD has said. These will be among the survivors whom the LORD has called” (BibleGateway).*

Text like is repeated later in Act 2 when it says, “‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams’” (verse 17) (BibleGateway).

Similarly, the prophet Amasai in 1 Chronicles, is a good example of the use of the spiritual gift of prophecy in the Bible. King David started out with a hard suspicion and distrust that very quickly shifted to confidence after Amasai spoke. This was all from the work of the Holy Spirit in the situation. I Chronicles 12:18 says, “The Spirit came upon Amasai, and he said to David, ‘We are yours, O David, and with you, O son of Jesse. Peace, peace to you, and peace to him who helps you; indeed your God helped you!’” (BibleGateway). The result of the Spirit’s work was the bringing together of people for God’s good.

Another spiritual gift is the gift of healing. The spiritual gift of healing is described as “the ability to serve as a human instrument through whom God supernaturally cures illnesses and restores health” (Boa 2006). However, those with the possession of this gift are not the source of

the power, instead, they are the vessel that can only heal people who the Lord decides to heal. It is said in 1 Corinthians 12:9, that “the same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing” (BibleGateway). In 1 Corinthians 12:28, it is noted that there are specific parts of the church (certain members) that possess different spiritual gifts - one being the spiritual gift of healing. It is argued that “inner healing, or healing of memories is sometimes associated as another manifestation of this gift” (Boa 2006). But I believe the Bible is not interpreting the spiritual gift of healing as anything other than the actual ability to heal. If we read further in 1 Corinthians 12, verse 30 says, “Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not!” (Bible Gateway). Obviously not everyone is gifted these abilities, but some *are* gifted with the spiritual gift of healing.

The final spiritual gift that I’m looking at is the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues - a seemingly more commonly practiced spiritual gift in certain denominations of Christianity. The spiritual gift of speaking in tongues can be described as “the ability to receive and impart a spiritual message in a language the recipient never learned. For other members of the body to be edified, this message must be interpreted either by the recipient (1 Corinthians 14:13) or by another person with the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:26-28)” (Boa 2006).

This spiritual gift gets pretty controversial and therefore has several observations. One, we see that the Apostle Paul wanted the gift to be used for public service. Paul said in church meetings, two or at the most three, could speak in a tongue but that turns must be taken and an individual with the gift of interpretation was to be present to share the message with the



congregation (1 Corinthians 14:26-28). Second, there are differences between how the manifestation of tongues happened at Pentecost and how it is used in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14). The changes suggest that the two are not the same. Third, I discussed earlier how in 1 Corinthians 12:28, there are different gifts listed that different individuals possess, and in which, it speaks about different kinds of tongues. Then, from 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, many have been lead to believe that the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues can also be used as a private prayer language apart from a public message to the church that needs to be interpreted - or if an interpreter is absent, someone can be in quiet tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:28 says, "but if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately" (Bible Gateway). Therefore, what can be gathered from these verses is that one, there are different kinds of speaking in tongues, and two, and that the gift of speaking in tongues (along with the other gifts) are given by God by choice - nowhere does it say that they have ceased.

## GLOSSOLALIA

The term *speaking in tongues* can also be known as glossolalia. The phrase *speaking in tongues*, "derived from the two Greek words: *glōssai*, which means "tongues" or "languages," and *lalien* which means "to speak." It is observed in some tribal religions and within some Christian denominations, notably Charismatics, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (often called Mormons) in the past, and Pentecostals" (Robinson 2010). An individual who is practicing speaking in tongues, is commonly known as being in a "state of religious ecstasy and is often unable to understand the words that she/he is saying" (Robinson

2010). The majority of Christians who use glossolalia may believe they are just speaking an existing language but it is argued that glossolalia is not similar to any other known human language. It is therefore speculated that the language is heavenly (i.e. a language spoken by angels or by God). From what we know, glossolalia was practiced frequently in the church at Corinth in the 1st century CE and then it was rarely experienced during Christianity's history until the 20th century when it became common again. However, there is quite a bit of debate that comes with glossolalia.

One issue is that the majority of Pentecostals believe that when a person is saved, the believer will be baptized in the Holy Spirit resulting in the automatic manifestation of the gift of speaking in tongues. These Pentecostals then believe that all of their members do exhibit the gift of tongues when they are saved. However, other Protestant denominations, such as Fundamentalist and Evangelical groups, do not associate salvation with speaking in tongues - almost none of their Christian members actually speak in tongues.

In a book called, *Speaking in tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia* by Felicitas D. Goodman, Goodman says, "speaking with tongues is an experience which most people believe to be confined to apostolic times and bestowed as a special favor on a few followers of the crucified Jesus" (1972:xvi). She continues to talk about people's doubts about glossolalia and attempted explanations saying, "one of the most disturbing aspects of the discussions on glossolalia is the recurrent claim that one is dealing with a manifestation of mental illness. Once one has classed something as 'abnormal' ('sick'), he can safely put it out of his mind and let the psychiatrist worry about it" (Goodman 1972:xvii). Because of this, people practicing glossolalia are often labeled as schizophrenics, epileptics, or even hysterics. But according to modern

research, it clearly shows a significant differences between individuals participating in religious activities involving glossolalia and other “dissociative behavior” (Goodman 1972:xxi). From Goodman’s research, she has concluded that “speaking in tongues is regarded as a highly desirable ‘gift of the Spirit’ that is accessible to anyone who is a ‘child of God’” which aligns with the belief the majority of Pentecostals have about tongues.

What can be said for all three of these spiritual gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 12:10 of Christian scripture. It says,

*“He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said”*  
(BibleGateway).

How common these different gifts are, we do not know but there is no denying that they are still given out - even today to believers.

## PART 2: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS PNEUMATOLOGY

We cannot begin to talk about the historical development of spiritual gifts without first talking about the Holy Spirit, what he is, and what we believe to know about him. In the book, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, Karkainen says, “the Spirit of God is no general spirit hovering above the cosmos but a Person of the Triune God who indwells believers and creation in specific and tangible ways” (2002:9). Karkainen quotes author, John R. Sachs, from the book, *Do Not Stifle the Spirit* saying. “the Spirit is present and active beyond the official structures and ordained ministries of the Church”

(2002:14). He goes on to say, “Theologians from who[m] I have learned the most, both ancient and modern, all warn against trying to comprehend the Spirit in a systematic way” because one must have an attitude of “honorable silence [...] otherwise pneumatology cannot avoid useless speculation” (2002:14-15). Karkainen then develops on Sachs’ warning about trying to understand the Spirit by saying,

*“The Spirit is not an ‘object’ of human study in the same way that, for instance, the objects of the physical sciences are. In fact, we can say that the Spirit, rather than being an object of our scrutiny, is the One who searches us. Paul was quite emphatic about that: ‘The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:10b-11”* (2002:15-16).

And the purpose of the complex Spirit always remains the same - “to glorify Jesus and to bring into fulfillment the new creation of the Father” - the Spirit relates to each individual and group of people in a very specific way” (Karkainen 2002:147).

But why is pneumatology important? Karkkainen quotes Dreyer from the book,

*Resources for a Renewed Life* saying,

*“Many faithfully desire to encounter a Holy Spirit who brings new life to their spirits in the concrete circumstances of their lives and who renews the face of the earth as we approach the third millennium. Not unlike earlier times of perceived crisis, Christians today attempt to reconnect with the well-spring of the faith, hoping these roots will bring stability, order and meaning to a postmodern world that is often felt to be hopelessly fragmented. In particular, many seek to retrieve a three-personed God who is related to the human community and to the entire universe in love, challenge, and care - a personal God who identifies with human joys and sorrows.”* (2002:14).

People are individually hungering for a deeper connection with God while we see that the church is seeking to renew itself by being fresh but at the same time return to its source. If the Holy Spirit is really the fire on Earth and inside Christian’s hearts, then He will be the one who is going to move in people to make great differences.

The Holy Spirit tends to be the part of the Trinity that is forgotten or not given enough credit but a renewed interest in Him can change the world - it is changing (for those who are allowing their bodies to be vessels for God to use through the spiritual gifts they have been given). This is why pneumatology is important to study.

And historically there are people to thank for the resurgence of pneumatology. For one, the entrance of the Eastern Orthodox church into the official ecumenical organization, the World Council of Churches (WCC), has made more easily available a rich pneumatological and spiritual tradition for other churches - probably because the doctrine of the Spirit has always played a more prominent role in Eastern Orthodox theology. Also, the dramatic spread of the Pentecostal movement throughout the world has made other Christians wake up to the significance of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all Christians. Lastly, the Roman Catholic Church, under the enthusiastic Leadership of Pope John Paul II, assigned the year 1998, as a special devotion of the Holy Spirit (Karkainen 2002:12).

Then there is the theologians development of the Holy Spirit. Theology, is a “reflection on the spiritual life and experience, usually develops by responding to themes that are acutely felt in the church and society” (Karkainen 2002:9-10). And the “church father” of the twentieth century, Karl Barth, wrote on pneumatology,

*“Everything that one believes, reflects and says about God the Father and God the Son . . . would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit, the vinculum pacis between Father and Son. The work of God in behalf of creatures for, in, and with humanity would be made clear in a teleology which excludes all happenstance”* (Karkainen 2002:13).

While Russian Orthodox theologian, Nikolay Berdayev, calls pneumatology “the last unexplored theological frontier” (Karkainen 2002:13). And Augustine said “he [the Spirit] withdraws from us into mystery even more than Christ” (Karkainen 2002:16).

In looking at the historical unfolding of the Spirit, “the doctrine of the Trinity was developed during the first centuries” (Karkainen 2002:37). Early in Christianity, even though different Christian traditions experienced the Spirit in vivid ways, they did not immediately feel a need for a more precise concept of the Spirit’s person and working. The doctrine of the Spirit only grew gradually on the basis of the Old and New Testaments, along with the life of the church, its ministry, and its liturgy.

A prominent contemporary Catholic theologian on the Spirit, Yves Congar, “contends that in the beginning the church saw itself subject to the activity of the Spirit and filled with his gifts” (Karkainen 2002:39). Yves Congar, used Clement of Rome as an example, because he said that the apostles “set out, filled with the assurance of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the good news of the coming of the kingdom of heaven” and then at the end of the first century, Clement was obliged to create rules for the church at Corinth as to the correct use of charisms (implying that spiritual gifts were active at that time) (Karkainen 2002:39). The assumption was confirmed by the witness of Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century, when he claimed prophecy and charismatic gifts were still active; it was believed that the charisms should accompany the church until the end - prophecy was believed to be the most important of the spiritual gifts during the time (Karkainen 2002:39). Similarly, Cyprian, of the Council of Carthage, said he had made decisions “under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and according to the warnings given by the

Lord in many visions” - Cyprian had claimed to have various visions from the Spirit (Karkainen 2002:40).

In a description written in 251 A.D. by Novatian, he gives a strong picture of the charismatic movement of the church in the first centuries saying,

*“That Spirit, (who enabled the disciples not to fear, in the name of the Lord, either the powers of the world or its torments) gives similar gifts, like jewels, to the Bride of Christ, the Church. He causes prophets to appear in the Church, instructs the Church’s teachers, encourages tongues, obtains power and health, works wonders in the Church, brings about the discernment of spirits, helps those who govern the Church, inspires the Church’s councils and dispenses the other gifts of grace. In this way, he perfects and completes the Church of Christ everywhere and in all things”* (Karkainen 2002:40)

Whereas the Eastern Father Cyril of Alexandria, confessed that Christ filled his entire body with the life-giving power of the Spirit saying “It was not the flesh that gave life to the Spirit, but the power of the Spirit that gave life to the flesh” (Karkainen 2002:43). Also, Eastern Father Gregory of Nazianzus (a theologian) was most likely the first Eastern father who dared to say the Holy Spirit was “God” (Karkainen 2002:45). And Augustine drew the following conclusion: “The primary presence of the Holy Spirit is love, not knowledge” (Karkainen 2002:47). But according to Karkainen, “the decisive turn in Roman Catholic theology in general and in pneumatology in particular came with the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which was not only the single most important council of the Roman Catholic Church but also a historic watershed for the entire Christian church” because, “Vatican II was instrumental in the new Catholic pneumatological renaissance” (2002:73-74). Their document insisted that the Holy Spirit “sanctifies and leads the people of God not only through the sacraments and church ministries but also through special charisms bestowed freely on all the faithful in a variety of

ways. Believers have ‘the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of humankind and for the upbuilding of the Church’” (Karkainen 2002:75).

## PENTECOSTAL CHURCH/CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

The first major charismatic movement in church history is argued to be Montanism (Karkainen 2002:). The Montanist movement,

*“emerged in roughly A.D. 160-170 around the Phrygian Pentapolis area, in what is modern Turkey [...] There are various, even contradictory, assessments of Montanism. The overall evaluation is that it arose from a false spirit and held an erroneous pneumatology. Apollonius of Ephesus alluded to the evil lifestyle of their prophets and believed them in need of exorcism. He also criticized them for ‘revelational novelty’ and for undermining the authority of the apostles, which in fact meant opposing the Lord himself”* (Karkainen 2002:41).

However, a more positive evaluation comes from Tertullian, 160-230 AD, the most distinguished early lay theologian from the Carthaginian church (Karkainen 2002:41). Tertullian became attracted to Montanism and defined “ecstasy” as “the ability of the soul ‘to stand out of itself.’ Just as in dreaming the body is asleep but the brain remains active, so the human spirit is overshadowed by the Spirit of God” - Tertullian did not see this as being “mad” or demon-possessed because a dreamer is of sound mind if he is still able to recall his dreams (Karkainen 2002:42). Therefore, Tertullian did not see Montanists as resulting in any new but rather as a form of restoration of what Christ had already taught and said and taught. He was convinced that even when the Holy Spirit introduces something new, it is not actually a new message but a return to underlying principles of the message of Christ. For Tertullian, the Holy Spirit, operative in the church for all ages, could not contradict himself.

But with the start of the twentieth century, the church witnessed a dramatic emergence of Pentecostalism and later rapid growth of the Charismatic movements - which have developed



worldwide through Christianity. According to Karkainen, “The most popular history writings on Pentecostalism usually trace the origins in the American context to a revival that began on January 1, 1901, at Charles F. Parham’s Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas” (2002:87). It was here that students reading about tongues in the Book of Acts began speaking in tongues themselves. After this, Pentecostal revivals exploded could be found in “Canada, England,, Scandinavia, Germany, and parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America” (Karkainen 2002:87). Then about fifty years after Pentecostalism had emerged, it became to enter older churches. This is when the movement was given the title, *Charismatic Renewal/Movement* and as a result went national in the 60s. The movement brought to many churches of all denominations a “revitalization of spiritual life” (Karkainen 2002:88). The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement during the twentieth century became the largest denomination of Protestantism,

*“Its growth from zero to 400 million in ninety years is unprecedented in the whole of church history [...] if, currently, Roman Catholics are the largest Christian group, then classical Pentecostals are now the second largest, and gaining fast. Catholics now make up 50 percent of the worldwide Christian church, while Pentecostals make up 20 percent”* (Karkainen 2002:89).

Not all Pentecostalism is the same though - there are different emphases on the understanding of the Holy Spirit. One example includes Baptistic Pentecostals. Baptistic Pentecostals are part of the Assemblies of God organization that spouted in 1914 (this is currently the largest Pentecostal denomination) and they stress gradual sanctification and more congregational forms of church government than do most other Pentecostal (Karkainen 2002:90). In general though, Pentecostals affirm that spiritual gifts (charismata) are granted by the Holy Spirit and are normative in contemporary church life and ministry. Furthermore, Karkainen incorporates all of these ideas while explaining Pentecostal worship well when he says,

*“For Pentecostals, ‘worship’ is another way of saying ‘presence of God.’ Their worship service is an interesting mixture of spontaneity; the exercise of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophesying, and prayer for healing; and attentiveness to the mystical encounter with God. The Holy Spirit is not the center of the worship. Rather, in the power of the Spirit, the focus is on Jesus Christ and God. Often called ‘emotionalism’ or ‘enthusiasm’ by the public and scholars alike, the expressive worship of Pentecostalism carries on the tradition of Montanists, Anabaptists, Quakers, Shakers, and other revival movements. This type of worship is often accompanied by singing in tongues, applause to the Lord, the raising of hands, and the shouting of loud ‘amens’ and ‘hallelujahs.’” (Karkainen 2002:91).*

Pentecostalism and Charismatic movements share basic beliefs but also have distinct differences. For example, the Catholic Charismatic Movement is centered more around its commitment to the Catholic Church than by its commitment to any spiritual experience. And Catholic Charismatics especially, will regularly remind Christians saying, “spiritual gifts have never been absent from the life of the church” (Karkainen 2002:95). With differences though, the most important aspect of Pentecostal pneumatology is the doctrine of Spirit baptism.

Pentecostals believe that Spirit baptism and conversion are two different events (though usually related) and as a result of this, Pentecostals believe that “the Holy Spirit acts differently in conversion/regeneration than in the work of Spirit baptism” (Karkainen 2002:96).

To really understand the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal Movement and why it flourished, you need to know Dennis Bennett’s story. Most people consider the Azusa Street Mission in Van Nuys, California as the starting place of the Charismatic Movement. However, some argue the Charismatic Renewal really began 60 years later in California with Dennis Bennett. Bennett had been discussing spiritual growth with a small group of a Saint Mark's Episcopal Church when he declared to the congregation that on Easter Sunday of 1960, he had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit - this resulted in tension (Stetzer 2013).

When the news got a hold of Bennett's declaration, Bennett had to resign from his position. With the news reporting on it, Pentecostalism had an opportunity to be acknowledged and this ultimately began larger practice of speaking in tongues, praying for healing, etc. Pentecostal churches had been on the outskirts of Protestantism Christianity but the news reports gave the denomination a boost. And as a result of Bennett's resignation, "the Episcopal Bishop in Seattle assigned Bennett to the floundering St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle" (Stetzer 2013). When mainline churches began to adopt these beliefs as well, they avoided the "Pentecostal" label "for both cultural and theological reasons" and instead used the descriptor "charismatic" (Stetzer 2013). This label is in reference to the Greek word *charismata*, "which means 'a gift of grace,' and refers to the particular gifts they emphasized" (Stetzer 2013). Stetzer says the growth had affected on "Anglicans, Lutherans, Orthodox, Reformed, and even Roman Catholics" and as a result, movements were born from these denominations (Stetzer 2013). "Episcopalians had 'Faith Alive' and 'Acts 29,' the Southern Baptists had the 'Fullness Movement,' Lutherans had ARC, and more" (Stetzer 2013).

Today, Pentecostalism "is by far the largest non-Catholic grouping, accounting for one in every five Christians. It is also the fastest growing Christian movement on earth, increasing more rapidly than either militant Islam or the Christian fundamentalist sects with which it is sometimes confused" (Cox 1995:15). In Africa, Pentecostal congregations, are also quickly becoming the main expression of Christianity and several Latin American countries are beginning to approach Pentecostal majorities as well even though they are "on a continent that had been dominated by Roman Catholicism for five centuries" - the movement is also expanding in Korea and China (Cox 1995:15).

Another development of the Pentecostal Movement is of a small group in Topeka, Kansas. This group had met in a Bible school and were particularly interested in the miracles described in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles. As they read what happened on the Day of Pentecost to Jesus' followers, how they experienced the Holy Ghost baptism and began to speak in other tongues, they asked themselves, "If speaking in tongues accompanied Holy Ghost baptism on the Day of Pentecost, why not now? Indeed, if then, why not always and everywhere?" (Wacker 2001:5). Speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, probably existed off and on for centuries yet no one knows when the practice first in church circles. By the time the Pentecostal movement was beginning to really flourish, many had claimed they were speaking in tongues in worship meetings in the 1880s and 90s. It wasn't until the 1950s that the movement really began to gain attention of "mainline theologians and national news magazines" (Wacker 2001:7).

It is in the Book of Acts, where we read of the first Pentecost which happened in Jerusalem somewhere around 34 A.D. In this biblical account, "the same Spirit of God that was present in Jesus had descended again to empower his followers to continue his work" (Cox 1995:47). The Spirit descended and resulted with people speaking in all kinds of tongues which became the creation of a new community that brought together languages and nations that were formerly divided. From this event, Pentecostals believed something went wrong which resulted in inactive and lazy Christians. Christians from here "lapsed into writing meticulous creeds and inventing lifeless rituals [...] Christianity degenerated, but God did not give up" (Cox 1995:47).

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

### I. Prophecy

In the New Testament, Peter, quotes the prophet Joel from the Old Testament to explain the strange goings-on in Jerusalem. Peter says that in “the last days” God will “pour out his Spirit on all flesh” and that both “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17) (Bible Gateway). It is believed by Pentecostals that anyone can suddenly be filled with the Spirit and pray in an unknown tongue, testify, or even prophecy; however, “pentecostalism [have] not always adhered to this momentum” (Cox 1995:125).

(Cox 1995:)

## II. Healing

Today, “the concept of what was included in healing broadened. ‘Healing’ now came to include not just bodily recuperation, but finding remedies for unemployment, family disputes, racism, marital discord, and controversies between factions in a tribe or village” (Cox 1995:254). The healings we see in the Bible from Jesus however, tend to be physical or spiritual healings - and similarly so for Jesus’ disciples. In the book, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*, Harvey Cox speaks of African indigenous churches, saying, “I am convinced that healing is the area in which [African churches] have most to offer to other Christians and to the world at large” (Cox 1995:255). Cox also warns to be careful when trying to understand these kinds of church’s healing practices because they are often accused of “‘syncretism’ or of relapsing back into pre-Christian tribal practices” (Cox 1995:255).

## III. Tongues

“When early pentecostals wanted to explain themselves to the outside world - indeed when they wanted to explain themselves to each other - they usually started with the experience of Holy Ghost baptism signified by speaking in tongues” (Wacker 2001:35).

The Azusa Street revival may be known as the most significant and familiar North American experience of early Pentecostalism but it is argued that it was not the only nor the earliest because “Various revivals occurred in different parts of the world during the late nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century within a few years of each other” (Anderson 2013:17). Glossolalia (speaking in tongues), “is known to have occurred in Glasgow in 1830, in Irving’s congregation in Regent’s Square, London, in 1831, and in several other places” (Anderson 2013:11). Irving, strongly disapproved of for allowing women and men to speak in tongues during the services. He was tried for what people considered heretical views - “overemphasizing the human nature of Christ” (Anderson 2013:11). Irving was removed from his congregation in London in 1832, “after which he led 800 of his members to form the Catholic Apostolic Church” (Anderson 2013:11). These spiritual gifts were “practiced and recorded in the Catholic Apostolic Church until about 1879” (Anderson 2013:11).

However, despite this history, the question remains whether or not spiritual gifts are active today or at least to what degree in comparison to biblical times. Specifically looking at the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, also known as glossolalia, the question is whether it is legitimate today. In the book, *Heaven Below*, Grant Wacker states,

*“Non-pentecostals, especially those who have never heard tongues, often suppose that glossolalia is only gibberish, made-up words thrown together at random. Mature pentecostals and professional linguists both know, however, that the real thing is a baffling and awesome phenomenon precisely because it is not gibberish. Cross-cultural investigations have shown that a glossolalic utterance is drawn from the basic sounds or phonemes of a speaker’s native language. These phonemes erupt in patterns resembling the patterns of one’s vernacular tongue. That is why glossolalia is easily mistaken for*

*language: it sounds like it, especially in real-life situations where it competes with other noises and is cued by gestures and facial expressions” (Wacker 2001:52).*

Wacker goes on to speak of linguists disagreements saying that they have argued that glossolalia is not a real language because it,

*“reveals no grammar or syntax. It has no past, present, or future tenses, no means for distinguishing verb-like actions from noun-like entities, and no ability to specify singular versus plural agents and objects. Moreover glossolalia carries no semantic value. In other words, the sound units of glossolalia speech bear no predictable relationship to their natural or social context [...] on the whole they seem content empty.” (Wacker 2001:52).*

Therefore, the question is whence glossolalia comes. Social scientists view the spiritual gift of tongues, despite its differences, as an “easily identifiable form of speech because it arises from an underlying physiological function (or malfunction) called dissociation” (Wacker 2001:52). During this supposed dissociation, it is explained that “the higher speech control center in the cerebral cortex of the brain is cut off from the lower motor control center in the medulla” and therefore, “aborted language results, sounds that bear some of the phonological characteristics of ordinary language but lack the structure, intricacy, and nuance of ordinary language” (Wacker 2001:52).

It is argued by some that the various gifts of the Holy Spirit disappeared from view after the death of the apostles. While some say, speaking in tongues reappeared since the Renaissance. In the late 17th century of southern France, “during the attempted extermination of Protestants by the Roman Catholic church. Many of the victims who exhibited the gift were French Calvinists, called Huguenots” (Robinson 2010). In the 18th century, tongues was identified among some British Quakers and American Methodists. In the 19th century, it was recognized in the Catholic Apostolic Church, and by Mormons in the US. Then later, it became common

within the Holiness churches. But a monumental time was the founding of the Pentecostal movement in the 20th century. In the decade of the sixties, interest in glossolalia increased, mainly due to an upsurge of the behavior outside of the Pentecostal movement in various popular denominations and this resulted in a number of publications from academic journals ranging from theology, anthropology, and psychology (Goodman 1972:xviii).

In Goodman's book, *Speaking in tongues: A Cross-Cultural Study of Glossolalia*, she speaks of the Streams of Power movement which came to the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent in 1965. This movement began in Holland a couple years before but "has since spread to the Dutch West Indies and Dutch Guiana and to Trinidad, and Saint Lucia in addition to Saint Vincent" (Goodman 1972:3). Their congregation is composed primarily of women, lasts about two hours, and begins with a long period of singing. Goodman says, "this singing is loud and fast, and there is much hand-clapping, stamping of feet, and gesturing. This is followed by the 'Service of Adoration'" - where glossolalia is a prominent feature. She describes her experience saying that the main church leader would begin whispering repeatedly into the microphone phrases like 'Thank you, Jesus,' 'Hallelujah,' or 'Praise the Lord,' which would then establish a pattern for the rest of the congregation to follow (Goodman 1972:4). Periodically during this time someone in the group would break out into glossolalia utterances, and then proceed in interpretation of their utterance (Goodman 1972:4) Here,

*"the glossolalia is viewed by the Streams of Power movement as revealing the words of Jesus himself, or of the Holy Spirit. The message is given in a foreign tongue, and it is its essence that is thought to be subsequently repeated in the vernacular. The unknown tongue is believed to be an ordinary foreign language that could be understood if someone who knew that language happened to be present. The interpretation also rests with the Spirit. According to the evangelist, the person who is speaking 'doesn't even know what he is saying'" (Goodman 1972:5).*



Another area of glossolalia exposure is during tent revivals. It is said that “tent revivals were brought to this country by immigrants from the English lower working class, and lower-class whites still constitute the bulk of the participants” (Goodman 1972:5). Glossolalia is essentially a sign that the Holy Ghost is “moving the tent” (the congregation) according to the preacher and it allows people to witness effectively. There is disagreement but according to Goodman, when you “‘fall down,’ meaning that you go into trance”, this “show[s] that the Holy Ghost is really in you, that you are ‘slain of the Spirit.’” and after this experience, individuals report a feeling of euphoria (Goodman 1972:6).

However, across churches and denominations there are many different understandings of glossolalia, what it symbolizes, its purpose, how it should be used etc. For example, in 1965, Mainline Protestant Church in Texas presented a program on the National Educational Television Network entitled *Divine Healing and Speaking in Tongues*. Here, glossolalia was “interpreted as evidence of a ‘baptism in the spirit’” whereas other groups believe speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift given chosen believers - not all (Goodman 1972:6). Similarly though, the First Apostolic congregation of Mexico (founded in 1914) said, “Glossolalia usually occurs during these altar calls. It is considered a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, a baptism of the Spirit that comes to take up its abode in the person as in a tabernacle” (Goodman 1972:10). At this church, women are the ones who have the ability to go into glossolalia much more easily than men and it also looks differently for men and women. Men often have “an impressive concomitant kinetic behavior such as lifting arms, shaking the head, a twitching in the face; among the women, the only observed consistent accompanying behavior was crying” whereas, “men’s glossolalia is loud, while that of the women can barely be heard giving rise to the

impression that only the men have a strong ‘manifestation of the Holy Spirit’ in this church (Goodman 1972:10).

Another type of tongues is missionary tongues, “the ability to speak an actual though unstudied foreign language at will” - which is technically called xenolalia or xenoglossy (Wacker 2001:45). In Wacker’s book, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, he recalls a woman named Sophie Hansen who became a missionary in China in 1908. After six months in China, Hansen, “found herself suddenly able to preach a sermon in Chinese” (Wacker 2001:46). In a letter Hansen wrote describing her experience, she said she used her gift all over China at will, but could only use it to speak the gospel - not earthly things.

Despite the movement and numerous occurrences of people claiming tongues, there is still controversy about Pentecostals fibbing about glossolalia. However, “to suppose that hundreds of earnest souls who prided themselves on their probity would have intentionally lied seems more improbable than the phenomenon it seeks to explain” (Wacker 2001:47).

### PART 3: CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Genesis 1:2 says, “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth, and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the Earth” (Bible Gateway). We do not just worship the Father, we worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit certainly has contemporary relevance because with the Trinity, the three do not divide. The Holy Spirit can be described as God’s presence on earth; an active presence that is working today. Author and journalist J. Lee Grady, speaks of the Holy Spirit saying,

*“He is not an it, he is not some kind of innate substance, he’s not star war the force is with us. It’s not that kind of concept. In fact, I’ve been in Charismatic meetings where people refer to the Holy Spirit as a blob of power and they were pretending to throw*

*blobs of power at each other. I don't think that's the way we should look at the spirit. He is not just some kind of blob, he is not this power or force. He is God but he is God with us" (Wilson 2014).*

Sadly however, many people today, evangelicals, and the church in the United States, make their Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy bible. I sense at there has been a silent divorce in the church between the word and the Spirit. We need to stop limiting God by putting him in a box. I believe that we tend to hide in doctrine and theology because the mystery of a personal relationship with God is scary. But Matthew 28:20 reminds us that God is with us always to the very end of the age (Bible Gateway).

There is contemporary relevance for Spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit today. In the documentary *Holy Ghost*, by Darren Wilson, a crew of Christians set out on a quest to see if the Holy Spirit can direct a movie. Wilson has no plan for his film except to have it be completely led by the Holy Spirit. With no plan and no script they go out first to Salt Lake city where a couple of the crew members do spiritual healings. 1 Corinthians 2:4 says, My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power. The film references Bill Johnson, a Charismatic Christian, saying "Fear of failure keeps us from success and you have to learn how to hear the voice" in regards to the Holy Spirit working through people to do great good. The argument the film was making is that the living God hasn't changed since bible times. The next place they feel the Holy Spirit directing them to is Monte Carlo because they have a vision to go there and film on a boat - so they listen. While there they encounter an older gentlemen and without having spoke to him before he approaches the gentlemen asking him if he can pray for his knee. He said that the Holy Spirit told him to pray for this man and in response the man gave his life to Christ. In Isaiah 59:21, it says,

*“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,” says the LORD. (NIV)*

The film crew then finds themselves meeting up with Korn, an American metal band, where they had a good discussion about the Spirit and the member's Christian faith. The film crew then proceeded to go around healing concert attendees before and after the concert while sharing their faith and people were brought to Christ.

Darren Wilson then had a crazy sense that they needed to go to India. So, not knowing what for, the crew packed up their bags and got on a plane. The setting where they were was extremely dangerous for Christians because people could get killed for publicly praying and speaking the name of Jesus. But, the group asked themselves, “are we going to listen to fear or listen to the Holy Spirit?” They started off breaking down barriers first using music - a more non-threatening means of communication about Jesus. One of their crew members used his guitar to sing and play Christian music in a public setting and people responded. The music was a way to start a conversation and people here too were healed. One man in his early 20s that was in the crowd found himself particularly responsive to the Christian worship music and couldn't keep his body from shaking. He had the largest grin on his face and wanted to know more.

Because India is a very Hindu area, the filmmakers were told by everyone that it would be impossible for them to film inside of a Hindu temple for it was forbidden. But, not only did they end up filming in a Hindu temple, they sang on the steps of the Shiva temple and the highest priest there was singing his heart out with the words. Because of the area they were in, others were convinced they would die for speaking of Christ and so the evangelists without their knowledge were secretly assigned two bodyguards but during the duration of the trip, no one

touched them. Darren Wilson and his crew were certain of the Holy Spirit's interference in the trip but nothing solidified that certainty than when the crew was allowed into the holy of holies where foreigners were forbidden. They witnessed people go to such great lengths to touch the god of destroying, Shiva, for a moment but the God of love is all dwelling - and it was no effort for their crew to enter - God was certainly believed to be at work.

#### IHOP CONFERENCE AND AGLOW INDOCTRINATION

There is a movement today of Christians who believe in the Holy Spirit's interception not just in the film but that I've seen personally. Two years ago I attended a IHOP conference (International House of Prayer) where there was 15,000 people gathering composed of the young generation (mostly college students) from all over the country in Kansas City. IHOP's Stance on Gifts of the Spirit is the believe in the operation of the prophetic ministry as a source of edification, exhortation, and comfort from the Lord (1 Cor. 14:3). They firmly believe that signs and wonders, as well as all the gifts of the Spirit described in the New Testament, are operative today and are designed to testify to the presence of the kingdom and to empower and edify the Church to fulfill its calling and mission (IHOP 2017).

In my own experience with IHOP, I had the opportunity to be prophesied over, I witness spiritual healing, and I experienced others speaking in tongues - all with skepticism. During the conference they had a room holding many chairs with people spread out that had the spiritual gift of prophecy. My friend and I went up to one of the women and she prefaced by saying that what she would be telling us today would not be direct. For example, she would not be telling us who we should marry or what we need to be doing for a career. She would however, be sharing God's

love for us, encouraging us, and reading us scripture that she felt God wanted us to know. It was an interesting experience but I do not know how much of an impact it had.

During one of the evenings at the conference a man came up on stage and asked everyone who had a physical ailment to stand so they could be healed. Those surrounding the people with physical problems were supposed to stand around them with their hands on them. One of the people in the group was to place their hand on the head of the person who needed healing and say with confidence and authority, "In the name of Jesus, I command you to be healed!". The girl I was surrounding claimed that her arthritis was gone and that her joints were no longer sore. I am not certain of the rest of the people but the girl in front of me who had a boot on her leg was not healed.

During another part of the conference, the audience was told that for those who believed, they could speak in tongues. He had us shout out loud randomly in the hopes that it would turn into tongues - I had no success but I also was not super genuine because I felt really uncomfortable. The girl that was sitting directly behind me freaked me out the most. I never had the courage to turn and look at her but I could hear that she was sitting down, sobbing, and shaking. If I would have looked, I know there would have been a bunch of snot coming out of her face as she weeped and talked in an unidentifiable language.

An author by the name of R. Marie Griffith wrote about her own experiences with Aglow International, also a large Pentecostal organization like IHOP, in her book, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*. Here she discusses the perspective of women in the Pentecostal religion, their beliefs, experiences, and stories. In her research she frequently posed the question if "whether or not I believe that the intense religious experiences pentecostal

and charismatic Christians claim to experience are ‘real,’ meaning whether they are of divine origin” in which she comes to the conclusion that her “analysis sets aside such questions, neither affirming nor negating the possibility that what happens in prayer is truly ‘of God’ but instead focusing on what is human” (Griffith 1997:22-23). For these women, like the attendees of IHOP, there “is an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to effect healing and transformation in and through them, power administered through the bestowal of the spiritual gifts” to which they call themselves “spirit-filled” (Griffith 1997:61). These people acknowledging a Power greater than themselves and surrendering to the Power.

Griffith speaks of an example at an Aglow conference that is similar in nature to the kinds of things I experienced at IHOP. Griffith says a woman came on stage and

*“suddenly, she stops and shouts out for anyone who has experienced shame of whatever kind to hand her burden over to Jesus, to let God cleanse her and heal her. The background music intensifies as Gwen begins to cry and moan while continuing to urge her audience to come and receive healing, her pleas growing louder and increasingly fervent. Her prayers are interspersed with cries of resistance against Satan: ‘Devil, we come against you, we rebuke you, in the name of Jesus!’[...] many weep in their seats”* (Griffith 1997:56).

For these people, the charismatic scene is less extraordinary than ordinary. These events for participants, give a “sense of miracle and mystery, as the women come to feel healed, inwardly transformed, and outwardly set free through the power of the Holy Spirit” (Griffith 1997:57).

During one of their meetings a woman, Vivian, was healed when she was prayed over by a group of women and as a result says “five and a half years later [...] she has no symptoms of multiple sclerosis and has used no medications or other stimulants. ‘My perfect health and strength cause me to praise the Lord continuously’ (Griffith 1997:81). Now, these kinds of events do not happen every time but they are frequent. Another example is of a woman named

Sandra who was “diagnosed with incurable cystic fibrosis as a baby and given only eighteen years to live” and as a result, she “began learning about faith healing and says she heard God speak to her, ‘I am going to heal you.’ In just a couple of weeks Sandra experienced a ‘divine warmth’ moving through her pancreas and lungs, clearing them out and purifying them completely” (Griffith 1997:84).

## CONCLUSION

From my research I believe that the Holy Spirit is active as part of the Trinity just as much today as in Biblical times. However, I am skeptical. I believe there is great evidence for the spirit still working, and I do not deny his work, but, I am not quick to take someone’s word or experiences as gospel. I have hesitancy believing people’s spiritual experiences because I want to be certain that what people have experienced can not be explained another way - is it really the Holy Spirit that they encountered or the result of something else?

My personal experience at IHOP was slightly unsettling because speaking in tongues, prophesying, and spiritual healing was advertised as something an individual could do on command. Perhaps one can, but is it that way for everyone? I found myself listening closely to those supposedly in glossolalia because I wanted to determine if it seemed real and intense enough not to be made up. I also realized that I put a wall up as the young woman at IHOP was prophesying to me. I had a tendency to think, is she speaking really generically or does this apply specifically to me? The same with the spiritual healing, the girl that was healed from her arthritis was a girl I knew and had come to the conference with but I asked her questions which strictly sounded like I was denying her claim. I said, “Are you sure? Does it really not hurt anymore?”. After the spiritual healing day of the conference, I ended up crying in the car on the way back to



our room because I felt like one of the Pharisees - seeing healing right in front of me and yet not believing. What does it take to really believe?

Marie Griffeth's perspective on AGLOW has similarities to mine at IHOP. She observed individuals in mass meetings with group pressure upon their shoulders to speak on command glossolalia. At IHOP, the pastor encouraged people to be speaking gibberish and that it would turn into tongues. How many of those people really spoke in tongues though? Is group pressure like Marie Griffeth and I witnessed the right way to bring out spiritual gifts? Do you bring out spiritual gifts at all or do they come out on their own? I was uneasy with IHOP's tactics believe I do not believe that all spiritual gifts are promised to all Christians. Some Christians may never experience glossolalia no matter how much they try or desire - that does not make them any less Christian. Salvation is not dependent on the spiritual gifts an individual does or does not possess.

How the Spirit shows itself today may make people disagree. But I believe the Spirit is still active in spiritual gifts - perhaps it just may look different today than from what is read in the Bible. The Holy Spirit moving in spiritual gifts of contemporary culture reminds us that he is not an impersonal being but for those who believe in Christ, is actually living inside people stirring in them to follow what God desires. When we talk about the Holy Spirit, it reminds us of his working and that he is not just constrained to history. Hopefully in having this discussion, Christians can experience new spiritual flourishing in society today. In my research I addressed what the Bible said about the Holy Spirit and the validity of spiritual gifts, while also looking at the historical development in thinking about the Holy Spirit and the development of the Pentecostal Church/Charismatic Movement, and lastly, how we see spiritual gifts and the Spirit in contemporary society. I conclude that the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, the spiritual

gift of prophesying, and the spiritual gift of healing are all gifts that are still being practiced today but the rules in which these are used and the way it looks is still uncertain. The Holy Spirit is a mysterious being and although we can know him personally through salvation, it is hard to understand him. Research that seeks answers about the Holy Spirit is not wasted but is certain to not get very far when dealing with a higher being who is not meant to be understood by human minds. Isaiah 55:8-9 reads, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the LORD. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Bible Gateway).

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