



## **History of Tongues**

*By Michael J. Burns*

*I have always loved history and the validation history brings to our understanding about a variety of subjects. When I was in high school I actually won an award in History/Social Studies with a scholastic average of 104 when 100 is the highest average one can normally achieve.*

Christians of 2021 have a rich history that is covered in both the Old and New Testaments. We should study the Biblical history which is of the utmost importance to us. At the same time we should also acknowledge that since Christ came and began the Church we also have a history that has spanned over 2,000 years. It is my opinion that much of the Church is unfamiliar with what has taken place over the past 2,000+ years with respect to the church and it's history.

This article will be directed to the subject of ***speaking with other tongues throughout church history***. Many believers do not realize that this supernatural gift has been a part of every generation since the 120 were gathered, with expectancy, in the upper room and received this gift in **Acts 2**. Some believe that since the day of Pentecost in **Acts 2** this experience has been unused and silent in the church world until the *Azusa Street Outpouring* in the early 1900's.

This phenomenon began in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago and has spread to the nations of the earth since then. It's not a Jewish or an American phenomenon. This experience came from heaven and was promised by the Lord Jesus Himself in **Mark 16:18; Luke 24:49**

**& Acts 1:8.** It would not be an exaggeration to say that the early church and its follower's relied heavily upon the *Holy Spirit* and this gift.

Howard Carter, who was the founder of the first Assembly of God Pentecostal Bible School in Great Britain is quoted as saying, **“...we must not forget that speaking with other tongues is not only the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit's infilling, but is also a continual experience for the rest of one's life. Speaking in tongues is a flowing stream that should never dry up, and will enrich one's life spiritually.”**

Statistically hundreds of millions of Christians have spoken in tongues over the years and currently there are still over 500 million Pentecostal and Charismatic believers throughout the world who claim this experience according to a study back in 2006 by the World Christian Database as reported by Pew Research.

By all accounts, Pentecostalism and related Charismatic movements represent one of the fastest-growing segments of global Christianity. Despite the rapid growth of the renewalist movement in the last few decades, there are few quantitative studies on the religious, political and civic views of individuals involved in these groups.

To address this shortcoming, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, with generous support from the Templeton Foundation, recently conducted surveys in 10 countries with sizable renewalist populations: the United States; Brazil, Chile and Guatemala in Latin America; Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa in Africa; and India, the Philippines and South Korea in Asia.

#### Pentecostalism: Key Terms

- **Pentecostals** are Christians who belong to pentecostal denominations and churches, such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ or the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.
- **Charismatics** are Christians, including Catholics and mainline Protestants, who either:
  - describe themselves as "charismatic Christians,"  
OR
  - describe themselves as "pentecostal Christians" (but do not belong to pentecostal denominations)
  - OR
  - speak in tongues at least several times a year.
- **Renewalist** is an umbrella term that refers to both pentecostals and charismatics as a group.

In this report, the term *Pentecostal* is used to describe individuals who belong to classical Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God or the Church of God in Christ, that were founded shortly after the famous Azusa Street Revival in the early 20th century, as well as those who belong to Pentecostal denominations or churches that have formed more recently, such as the Brazil-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

*Charismatics*, by contrast, are a much more loosely defined group. The term generally refers to Christians who have experienced the “in-filling” of the Holy Spirit but who are not members of pentecostal denominations. Indeed, most charismatics are members of mainstream Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox denominations. In the surveys, respondents were categorized as charismatic if they met one of three criteria:

- (1) they describe themselves as “*Charismatic Christians*”; or

#### Estimated Size of Renewalist Populations

The surveys find that the size of the renewalist population varies from country to country.

	Pente-costals	Charis-matics	Total (Renewalists)
<u>United States</u>	5%	18%	=23%
<b>Latin America</b>			
Brazil	15	34	=49
Chile	9	21	=30
Guatemala	20	40	=60
<b>Africa</b>			
Kenya	33	23	=56
Nigeria	18	8	=26
South Africa	10	24	=34
<b>Asia</b>			
India (localities)	1	4	=5
Philippines	4	40	=44
South Korea	2	9	=11

- (2) they describe themselves as “Pentecostal Christians” but do not belong to Pentecostal denominations; or
- (3) *they say they speak in tongues* at least several times a year but they DO NOT belong to Pentecostal denominations.

The Renewalist segment is basically a combination of the Pentecostals and the Charismatics. If you are interested in reading the rest of this article online here is the link; <https://www.pewforum.org/2006/10/05/spirit-and-power/>

Let me give you a fair warning that you must learn to ***be like an old wise cow...Eat the hay and leave the sticks behind.***

## **Let's take a dive into some of the history of speaking with tongues...**

The Bible is not only a book of Theological knowledge, but also a book of history. Obviously the Bible is more than *Theological knowledge* or a *Book of History*. It is that and much more. **All of the Biblical accounts of speaking in tongues occurred in the 1st Century A.D. and has continued through every generation since.**

“The speaking with tongues, however, was not confined to the day of Pentecost. Together with the other extraordinary spiritual gifts which distinguished this age above the succeeding periods of more quiet and natural development, this gift also though to be sure in a modified form, perpetuated itself in the apostolic Church. **We find traces of it still in the second and third centuries.**” Philip Schaff, History of the Apostolic Church, New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1853, pp. 197-198.

Among the Church fathers that lived following the death of John the Revelator in 98 A.D., Montanus of Phrygia stands as a leader in the support of *tongues*. Eusebius, a fourth century Church historian writes that the followers of Montanus would be “**carried away in spirit, and wrought up into a certain kind of frenzy and irregular**

**ecstasy, raving, and speaking, and uttering strange things.”** Klaude Kendrick, The Promise Fulfilled, Springfield, Missouri Gospel Publishing House, 1961, pg. 19.

Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp who was in turn a pupil of the Apostle John, wrote in his book “Against Heresies”

**“In like manner do we also hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of language and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men and declare the mysteries of God, whom also the apostles term spiritual”** Irenaeus, The Anti-Nicene Fathers, Ten Volume, New York: Charles xScribner’s 1885, Book III pg. 531.

Tertullian, who lived about the same time as Irenaeus in 160-220 A.D., writes a passage in his book “*Against Marcion*” which challenges Marcion to produce anything among his followers such as was common among Tertullian’s.

**“Let him exhibit prophets such as have spoken, not by human sense but with the Spirit of God, such as have predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision a prayer, only let it be by the Spirit in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him”** Tertullian, The Anti Nicene Fathers, Ten Volume, New York: Charles Scribner’s 1885, Book III pp. 445-447.

A few years later in the third century, a certain Pachomius was able to “**after seasons of special prayer, spoke the Greek and Latin languages, which he had never learned, under the power of the Spirit.**” Carl Brumback, What Meaneth This, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri, 1947 pg. 91.

Saint Augustine, who lived in the fourth century (354-430) also wrote:

**“We still do what the apostles did when they laid hands on the Samaritans and called down the Holy Spirit on them by the laying on of hands. It is expected that converts should**

**speak with new tongues.** John Sherril, *They Speak with Other Tongues*, Revell Company: Westwood, New Jersey, 1964 pg. 76.

## TONGUES IN THE DARK AGES

The introduction of the fifth century marks the beginning of the **Dark Ages**. *It is here that the Catholic Church rules with an iron hand and people were killed for not following its teachings.*

The absence of writings other than those of Roman Catholic is not surprising. It is the authors(**my**) opinion that the church was in hiding concerning this time, for I believe that God has always had a Church. *Nothing could dare be published or written concerning tongues for fear of it costing their lives.* **Alexander Mackie** in his book, “**The Gift of Tongues**”: puts in this way:

**“From patristic**(relating to the writings of the early church fathers) *times until the power of Reformation had made itself distinctly felt, the gift of tongues is an almost forgotten phenomenon. The attention which the Reformation drew to the Scripture is the reason for the reappearance of the gift. Men do not usually have the gift of tongues unless they know there is a gift of tongues.”* Alexander Mackie, *The Gift of Tongues*, New York: Doubleday and Company 1950.

**The first time that tongues appear in the Dark Ages** is in the Life of Saint Hildengard, who lived in the twelfth century. **SHE** was a German Abbess who was raised in a Catholic cloister but was not educated because she was sickly. Nevertheless, it was recorded that she was able to *“interpret Latin scriptures, and speak and interpret an entirely unknown language.”* Her first experience with this gift is said to have came as a part of a *“strange and powerfully moving religious experience, and following a long series of visions which she had not discussed with anyone.”* This also corresponds to the Encyclopedia Britannica which states that *tongues* or *“Glossolalia”* was present *“among the mendicant friars of the thirteenth century.”*

One of these friars was a young Spaniard by the name of Saint Vincent Ferrer, a native of Valencia, who supposedly spoke Limousin the local dialect. The Biographers of Ferrer tell of his ministry reaching and converting people all over Western Europe, many in isolated areas. He was reported to have been understood in the Alpine regions and other parts of Switzerland, in Brittany and Flanders, in the Savoy and Lyons, by people who know only the local tongue. While in Genoa he spoke to a group of men and women of mixed linguistic backgrounds, all of whom were said to have heard him in their own language. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 15 Volume, New York: Robert Appleton Co. 1912 XV, pg. 438.

The Catholic Encyclopedia notes that many biographers of Saint Vincent have held that he was endowed with the *Gift of tongues*. This is perhaps the closest parallel of Acts the second chapter that we find recorded in early Church History.

In the first half of the *sixteenth century* we find the same report about the two Catholic saints, Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Louis Bertrand. Both men were reported to have spoken in foreign language they did not know in the course of their missionary work. The bull by which Berland was canonized for his success in missionary “asserts that to facilitate the work of converting the natives, the apostle was miraculously endowed with the *gift of tongues*.” Ibid, pg. 439.

## **TONGUES FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

With the birth of Reformation, the Catholic Church no longer asserts iron rule among the Church world. The instances of tongues becomes more and more frequent, beginning with Martin Luther. **In a German work, Sourer's History of the Christian Church" it is stated that, Dr. Martin Luther was a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues,**

***and interpreter, in one person, endowed with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.***" Carl Brumback, What Meaneth This? Springfield Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1961, pg. 20.

"Soon following Luther came the French sect known as the Jansenists. This group arose in the Roman Catholic Church after the Council of Trent and was subjected to persecution following the issuance in 1705 of a bill condemning them. After persecution began, speaking in tongues was reported among this group." Klaude Kendrick, The Promise Fulfilled, Springfield Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1961, pg. 20.

Another group in France that exercised the use of tongues were known as the Cevennes. Among them in a revival of religious enthusiasm occurred similar to that of the Jansenists. Newman in "A Manual of Church History" tells us that:

***Respecting the physical manifestations, there is little discrepancy between the accounts of friend and foe. The persons affected were men and women, the old and the young, Very many were children, boys and girls of nine or ten years of age. They were sprung from the people for the most part unable to read or write, and speaking in everyday life the patios of the province with which alone they were conversant. Such persons would suddenly fall backward, and, while extended at full length on the ground, undergo strange and apparently involuntary contortions; their chests would seem to heave, their stomachs inflate. On coming gradually out of this condition, they appeared instantly to regain the power of speech.... From the mouths of those that were little more than babes came texts of Scripture, and discourses in good and intelligible French such as they never used in their conscious hours.*** Albert Henry Newman, A Manual of Church History, 2 Volume Philadelphil: American Baptists Publication Society, 1903 II pg. 478.

Some of the French prophets emigrated to England and made converts there, ***with tongues being a part of the British revival also.***

In this same period of time ***the Encyclopedia Britannica tells of tongues “among the converts of Wesley and Whitefield.”*** John Wesley once wrote a protest against a Dr. Middleton who wrote “after the Apostolic time, there is not, in all history, one instance...of any person who had even exercised that gift (tongues).” Wesley replied, “Sir, your memory fails you again, it has been heard more than once no further off than the valleys of Dauphiny.” Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This?*, Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1947, pg. 92.

*The atmosphere of the revivals that followed the Wesleyan movement was one of informality, spiritual fervor, and religious enthusiasm. Crying out with groans and sobs in prayer, shouting and uttering of “unintelligible sounds” were common of this early period.*” Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled*, Springfield Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1961, pg. 23.

Another movement that displayed Pentecostal characteristics developed in England during the seventeenth century. **They were called the Society of Friends or Quakers.** W.C. Braithwaite, in “The Message and Mission of Quakerism,” quotes from Burrough’s preface to Great Mystery:

***“While waiting upon the Lord in silence, as often we did for many hours together, we received often the pouring down of the Spirit upon us, and our hearts were glad and our tongues loosed and our mouth opened, and we spake with new tongues as the Lord gave us utterance, and as His Spirit led us, which was poured down upon us, on sons and daughters, and the glory of the Father was revealed. And then began we to sing praise to the Lord God Almighty and to the Lamb forever*** “ Carl Brumback, *What Meaneth This?*, Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1947, pg. 93.

The Quakers were followed in the *eighteenth century* by a group that surpassed them in religious emotionalism. These were called the *Shakers*. The roots of the group extend back to both *Quakers* and the *Cevennes*, the early leaders having been *Quakers* who accepted the teaching of the *Cevennes* when they emigrated to England. Their conduct of worship was much like Pentecostalism in nature: Some who attended confessed their sins aloud, crying for mercy; some went into a trance-like state in which they saw visions and received prophecies of Christ's imminent second coming. Others shouted and danced for joy because they believed that the day was at hand for wars to cease and God's kingdom on earth to begin." Marguerite Melcher, *The Shaker Adventure*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941, pg. 5.

Along with other spiritual gifts, ***speaking in tongues*** was prominent among the Shakers.

Of all the groups mentioned during the Reformation, none has received as much notice as the *Irvingites*, a sect which developed in Great Britain about 1825. Edward Irving, a popular Presbyterian minister in London played an important role in the movement. When several demonstrations of religious enthusiasm occurred in his services, he encouraged them, believing they were of divine origin.

**"The Gift of Tongues"** was soon to follow and became a part of his services. A strong faction formed against Irving and his followers and ultimately they were turned away from the Presbyterian Church, The result was the formation of the Catholic Apostolic Church, often called "*Irvingites*" because of the leadership of Edward Irving. ***This body wrote a "tongues" tenet in its theology.***" Klaude Kendrick, *The Promise Fulfilled*, Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1947, pg. 93.

Back in England, the report of tongues began to appear in the wake of the preaching campaigns of Dwight L. Moody. Dr. R. Boyd, who was a very close friend of the famous evangelist writes concerning one instance:

When I got to the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association in Victoria Hall, London, I found the meeting on fire: The young men were speaking in tongues, prophesying. What on earth did it mean? Only that Moody had been addressing them that afternoon:" Ibid, pg. 24.

As the nineteenth century comes to a close, space limits me from listing all the instances of tongues that took place. In **1875** R.B. Swan writes that he and others spoke in tongues. **1879** – W.J. Walthall also receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues. In **1880** in Kara Kara, Armenia a strong Pentecostal Movement breaks out with speaking in tongues. The same year tongues is reported in Switzerland, and on and on. This also includes the revival of Topeka Kansas and the Azusa Outpouring in Los Angeles in the early **1900's**.

**All of them are a part of the vast spreading movement of the spirit of God as these last days grow to a close. No one can deny that there is definite historical proof to the presence of tongues in the Church throughout the centuries.** God has always had a people called out for his namesake. His word has always been a part of the hearts of men, and so it continues today even in the year 2021!

(Editor's note: Much of this information came from the Apostolic Information Service and can be visited at this link: <https://www.apostolic.edu/speaking-in-tongues-throughout-history/>)

**(If this teaching has helped you or if you have any questions about it, then email me personally at [mjbcjf@gmail.com](mailto:mjbcjf@gmail.com). PLEASE DO NOT USE THIS EMAIL FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE.)**

**Pastor Mike Burns =^)**