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PAUL AND THE UNIVERSALITY OF TONGUES:
A RESPONSE TO MAX TURNER

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In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul refers to glossolalia (tongues) as one of the gifts God grants to the church. A thorough reading of these chapters reveals that, in spite of the Corinthian's misunderstanding and abuse of this gift, Paul holds the private manifestation of tongues in high regards.¹ Although Paul is concerned to direct the Corinthians towards a more mature expression of spiritual gifts "in the assembly" - and thus he focuses on the need for edification and the primacy of prophecy over uninterpreted tongues in the corporate setting - Paul never denigrates the gift of tongues. Indeed, Paul affirms that the private manifestation of tongues is edifying to the speaker (1 Cor 14:5) and, in an autobiographical note, he thanks God for the frequent manifestation of tongues in his private prayer-life (1 Cor 14:18). Fearful that his instructions to the Corinthians concerning the proper use of tongues "in the assembly" might be misunderstood, he explicitly commands them not to forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:39). And, with reference to the private manifestation of tongues, Paul declares: "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues..." (1 Cor 14:5).

Paul's words at this point, particularly the wish expressed in 1 Cor 14:5, have led many to conclude that Paul viewed the private manifestation of tongues as edifying and available to every believer. As a result, most Pentecostals and many Charismatics believe and teach that potentially every believer can be strengthened through the manifestation of tongues during times of private prayer. This conclusion and reading of Paul has recently been challenged in a thoughtful and engaging article by Max Turner. In my opinion, Turner's article, irenic in tone and addressed to those in the Pentecostal community, serves to stimulate exactly the kind of dialogue that we in the

¹ So also Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 659.

Christian community need. Turner's article and the ensuing responses will undoubtedly help us all better understand each other, our points of commonality, and why we may choose to differ on certain points. This sort of dialogue also challenges all of us to reexamine our positions in light of the Scriptures. Although this process will not always result in agreement, I believe that it will serve to build a sense of unity and mutual respect within the body of Christ. Ultimately, it will help us reflect more faithfully the mind of Christ. It is with this hope that I offer the following response to Turner's article, my attempt to contribute to this dialogue. Three major issues will be treated: first, the nature of the problem Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and its implications for our question concerning the potential universality of tongues; second, the force of the rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 12:30b, "Do all speak in tongues?"; and third, the significance of Paul's wishful declaration in 1 Corinthians 14:5, "I would like everyone of you to speak in tongues...." I will conclude by highlighting several areas of argument that emerge in the midst of the discussion.

THE PROBLEM AT CORINTH

Turner notes that 1 Corinthians 12-14 is polemical. Here Paul is attempting to correct problems in the Corinthian's understanding and use of tongues. At least some of the Corinthians appear to have viewed tongues as an expression of a superior level of spirituality. Thus, they valued tongues above other gifts and, in the context of corporate meetings, their spiritual elitism often found expression in unintelligible outbursts that disrupted meetings and did not build up the church.² This basic reconstruction of the problem at Corinth has found widespread acceptance. However, as Turner notes, one matter is less clear. Were all of the Corinthians caught up in this elitist form of spirituality (and thus standing in opposition to Paul) or was the church itself divided over the issue? The former position has been advocated by Fee, the latter by Forbes.³

Turner himself opts for the latter position, following closely the lead of Forbes. Thus, he suggests that at Corinth the gift of tongues was exercised by

² Max Turner, "Tongues: An Experience for All in the Pauline Churches?," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1/2 (1998), pp. 231-53 (235-36).

³ Fee, *The First Epistle*, pp. 4-15; Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), pp. 14-16, 171-75, 182-87, 260-64.

some to establish or reinforce their position as members of the spiritual elite. The exercise of tongues was, then, a part of the “power games” that divided the church at Corinth. Turner suggests that this in turn indicates that the exercise of tongues at Corinth “was a relatively restricted phenomenon.”⁴ He reasons, “if all or most could speak in tongues - if only as private prayer and doxology - then manifestation of the gift could provide no grounds for elitist claims.”⁵

Yet Turner’s reasoning here seems to miss a vital point: the central question is not whether or not all of the Corinthians *actually* spoke in tongues; but rather, did Paul teach or imply that this was potentially the case? Here it is worthwhile to note that if Turner’s reconstruction of the problem is accurate - that is, that an elitist group was disrupting meetings with outbursts of tongues because they felt this marked them off as part of a super-spiritual group - then Paul’s references to the potentially universal character of tongues as an edifying dimension of one’s private prayer-life is readily explicable. An analysis of Paul’s argument is instructive in this regard.

Paul seeks to correct the Corinthian’s misunderstanding: he highlights the variety and origin of God’s gracious gifts (1 Cor 12, especially, vv. 4-6), that everyone has a role to play (1 Cor 12:11-27), and that edification is the key goal (1 Cor 12:7). Specifically, with reference to tongues, he insists that in the assembly, unless tongues are interpreted, they do not edify the church and thus prophecy is to be preferred (1 Cor 14:2-5). In the context of his argument that prophecy is greater than tongues in the assembly, Paul also states that the private manifestation of tongues is edifying to the speaker and, furthermore, that it is not limited to an elite group, but rather available to all (1 Cor 14:5, 18). In other words, just as Paul notes that he is no stranger to tongues and thus qualified to speak of the gift’s significance (perhaps here he bests the Corinthians at the own game of elitist claims; 14:18), so also Paul undermines the Corinthian’s sense of superiority with his comments concerning the universality of the gift. If Turner’s reconstruction of the problem is correct, this then may indeed be the thrust of 14:5: All can be edified by the private manifestation of tongues (this is not reserved to a select group), but in the assembly it is more spiritual to prophecy (since this is intelligible and edifying).

In short, Turner’s reconstruction of the problem does not indicate that Paul viewed the gift of tongues as limited to a select group within the church. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Turner’s reconstruction actually offers a positive reason for Paul to affirm the universality of tongues. In the face of

⁴ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 237.

⁵ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 237.

elitist claims, we can understand Paul's words in 14:5 ("I would like every one of you to speak in tongues...") as a subtle corrective. While Turner's reconstruction might suggest that only members of the problem group at Corinth actually spoke in tongues, this is by no means necessarily the case. On the one hand, as Fee suggests, it is quite possible that we should see the entire church standing in opposition to Paul. If this is the case, then tongues might have been widely exercised by the entire church. On the other hand, even if the problem was localized in a group within the church, it is still quite likely that the private manifestation of tongues was not limited to this select group. The key problem at Corinth with reference to tongues was the abuse of the gift "in the assembly" (that is, when the church gathered together; cf. 1 Cor 12:28; 14:4-6, 9-19). It is certainly possible to envision the elitist group reveling in their *public display* of tongues, regardless of whether or not there were others who exercised the gift in private such as Paul (1 Cor 14:18).⁶ This public display of "speaking mysteries" (14:2) would be sign enough of their special knowledge and position, superior to any private usage. Of course, with this flawed thinking, Paul cannot agree. In this case, Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:5 would serve to remind the elitist group of the larger reality reflected in their midst (of which, they may or may not have been aware): all can be edified through the private manifestation of the gift.

PAUL'S RHETORICAL QUESTION (1 Cor 12:30b)

Turner next moves to the rhetorical question in 1 Cor 12:30b, "Do all speak in tongues?" As the Greek grammar indicates, the anticipated answer is "no." For those not wishing to deal with the complexities of Paul's argument, this statement is often taken as the final word on this issue. However, Paul's treatment of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 clearly warns us against making such a premature judgment. Upon closer analysis we see that Paul here is clearly dealing with the exercise of gifts "in the assembly" (1 Cor 12:28). In other words, when Paul asks, "Do all speak in tongues?," he is not asking, "Can all speak in tongues (in private or corporate contexts)?" Rather, he is making a point very much in line with what precedes in chapter 12: when we gather together, not everyone contributes to the body in the same way; not everyone

⁶ The contrast between 1 Cor 14:18 ("I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all") and 14:19 ("But, in the church...") indicates that Paul's autobiographical comments in 14:18 refer to the private exercise of tongues.

speaks in tongues or interprets in the corporate setting do they?⁷ Here Paul does not discuss the private manifestation of tongues. Questions pertaining to the sphere of usage for private tongues are simply not in view.

Elsewhere I have pointed out the faulty logic presented by those who, on the one hand, have been quick to cite this text as a clear statement limiting the manifestation of tongues (public or private) to a select group within the church, and yet, on the other hand, have affirmed that everyone can prophesy.⁸ If, in spite of the rhetorical question in 12:29 (“Are all prophets?”), it is acknowledged that all can potentially prophesy (usually on the basis of 1 Cor 14:1, 31), why is it so different with tongues? If, as Turner notes, “The distinction between the narrower circle of those recognized as ‘prophets’ and a broader one of those ‘able (occasionally) to prophesy’ is...widely accepted,” why is it so difficult to see the distinction between tongues exercised “in the assembly” (the corporate setting) and the exercise of tongues in private, particularly when Paul clearly speaks of these two distinct functions (e.g., public: 1 Cor 14:27-28; private: 1 Cor 14:5, 18)?⁹ It is difficult not to feel that factors other than the text are controlling exegesis at this point. Turner, however, is helpful at this point in that he does offer reasons for his judgment.

Turner argues that there is little in the text which would “prepare the reader to think Paul’s question, ‘Not all speak in tongues do they?’ refers exclusively or primarily to the use of tongues in public worship.”¹⁰ Turner acknowledges that the larger context clearly focuses on problems related to congregational worship (chs. 8-14), with chs. 12-14 focusing specifically on the abuse of tongues “in the assembly.” The immediate context also focuses our attention on the corporate life of the church. Paul, who has just highlighted the importance and uniqueness of each believer’s role in the corporate life of the church (note the body metaphor, 1 Cor 12:12-26), declares in 1 Cor 12:27, “Now you are the body of Christ...” The list of ministries, gifts, and deeds of service and the associated rhetorical questions follow immediately (1 Cor

⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 623.

⁸ See my critique of D. A. Carson’s position (as expressed in *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987], pp. 50, 117-18) in R. P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 248.

⁹ The question concerning whether or not there are two distinct gifts of tongues (one for private edification and one for use in the corporate setting) is not germane. What is essential and a point upon which Turner and I agree is that “Paul distinguishes two spheres of use of tongues - public and private...” (Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 238).

¹⁰ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 240.

12:28-30) and are prefaced with the phrase, “in the assembly” (1 Cor 12:28). Elsewhere this phrase very clearly refers to the corporate gathering of believers, the local assembly (1 Cor 11:18; 14:19, 23, 28, 33, 35). For most this is enough to indicate that Paul has the local congregation at Corinth in view.¹¹ Fee states the matter clearly: “Since [v. 28] is coordinate with v. 27, with its emphatic ‘you are,’ meaning the church in Corinth, there can be little question that by this phrase [‘in the assembly’] Paul also primarily intends the local assembly in Corinth.”¹²

Turner, however, remains unconvinced. In spite of these contextual markers, he argues that Paul here has in mind the church universal rather than the local assembly in Corinth. This judgment follows from Paul’s reference to “apostles” (1 Cor 12: 28, 29): “There were not regularly (if ever) a plurality of apostles in the Corinthian meetings.”¹³ Nevertheless, no doubt feeling the weight of the evidence, Turner largely concedes this point and moves to his major objection:

Even if Paul has the Corinthian church primarily in mind (cf. 12:27), his description of what God has set “in the church” cannot easily be restricted in reference to what goes on when “the church in Corinth” meets in formal assembly for public worship, as opposed to what happens through believers (individually or as groups) in the variety of contexts that Corinthian life provided.¹⁴

Turner argues that the rhetorical questions, “Not all are apostles are they?,” “Not all are prophets are they?,” “Not all work miracles do they?,” “Not all have gifts of healings do they?,” indicate that Paul is talking about activities which cannot be restricted to what takes place in the local assembly. Paul is an apostle whether he is shipwrecked at sea, fleeing from persecution, or “in the church.” Similarly, prophets often prophesy outside the assembly (cf. Acts 21:4, 11) and the working of miracles and gifts of healings are normally described as happening outside the assembly (e.g., Acts 8:36-41; 28:7-8). In the light of all this, Turner asks, how can the reader be expected to discern that

¹¹ Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 618; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), pp. 262-63; R. Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), pp. 35-37.

¹² Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 618 n. 13.

¹³ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 240.

¹⁴ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 240.

when Paul asks, “Not all speak in tongues do they?” he is asking only about the expression of tongues in the assembly?¹⁵

Actually, several reasons indicate that this is exactly what we would expect. First, as we have noted, the context clearly focuses our attention on the corporate life of the church. Paul has stressed the need for diversity in the body of Christ. He now illustrates this with concrete examples from the life of the church in Corinth. The list and rhetorical questions of 1 Cor 12:28-30 offer examples of the variety of ministries and gifts which are exercised in the corporate life of the church. In this context, the references to “apostles,” “prophets,” “teachers,” etc., allude to the diverse *functions* these individuals exercise “in the assembly.” This is confirmed by the shift in the list from people (apostles, prophets, teachers) to gifts and deeds, literally “miracles,” “gifts of healing,” “helpful deeds,” “acts of guidance,” “different kinds of tongues.”¹⁶ All of the functions listed here could and quite naturally would have taken place in the local assembly in Corinth and, especially in light of vs. 28 (“in the assembly”), Paul’s readers most naturally would have viewed the list in this way. The thrust of the rhetorical questions is then abundantly clear: when we gather together, do all function in the same way to build up the body of Christ? Of course not.

Secondly, while Turner correctly notes that some of the ministries noted in these verses (12:28-30) might possibly take place outside of the formal assembly, it must be noted that all of the functions listed here refer to activities that take place in a corporate setting. None of the ministries or actions which Paul lists here can take place in a private setting (that is, by an individual in isolation from others). The only possible exception would be Paul’s reference to tongues. However, since elsewhere Paul clearly speaks of a corporate expression of this gift (in contrast to a private expression), Paul’s readers would have quite naturally understood the text in this way. That this is indeed what Paul intended is confirmed, not only by the context, but also by the collocation of rhetorical questions pertaining to tongues and the interpretation of tongues (the latter demands a corporate setting; cf. 1 Cor 14:5) in 1 Cor 12:30.

Thirdly, Turner’s lack of faith in the ability of Paul’s readers to pick up on these contextual markers is striking when he himself acknowledges that Paul clearly distinguishes between the private and corporate expressions of the gift of tongues. If Turner can see this distinction in the text, why assume Paul’s

¹⁵ Turner, “Experience for All,” p. 241.

¹⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle*, pp. 621-22.

readers could not? In light our discussion above, it would be odd if the Corinthians had missed this point. In any event, we need not.

One final point with reference to 1 Cor 12:28-20 is worth noting. Turner seeks to justify those, like D. A. Carson, who see this passage as restricting tongues to a select few, yet understand prophecy to be available to all. He notes that prophecy is “an established ministry,” and thus some function in the gift more frequently and profoundly than others. While all might prophesy (1 Cor 14:31), not all are prophets. The problem with tongues, we are told, is that there was no established ministry of tongues, or at least the terminology to speak of such a ministry was lacking and certainly not employed by Paul. Yet is not the distinction between those who exercise the gift of tongues in a corporate setting with interpretation for the edification of all and those who exercise in the gift in a private setting for their own edification rather obvious? Although Paul does not coin a special term for individuals who exercise the gift of tongues in the corporate setting, the distinction between these distinct *functions* is very clear. Indeed, it would appear that the distinction between the corporate exercise of tongues (12:28-30) and the private exercise (14:4-5) is more easily discerned than the distinction between those who prophesy in a particularly profound way and those who do so only occasionally and less powerfully. Does Paul in 12:28-29 refer to the office of the prophet or the function of prophecy more generally? Fee states “the answer is probably Yes and No.”¹⁷ This ambiguous answer makes my point: the distinction here between the office of prophet and the function of prophecy (Paul actually seems to be stressing the latter) is not as clear as the distinction between the corporate and private expressions of tongues.

What is too often missed in this discussion is that Paul’s concern here, whether in relation to prophecy or to tongues, is *not* to delineate who may or may not function in these gifts. Fee correctly notes that Paul’s “rhetoric does not mean, ‘May all do this?’ to which the answer would probably be, ‘Of course.’ Rather, it means, ‘Are all, Do all?’ to which the answer is, ‘Of course not.’”¹⁸ In other words, just as Paul in these verses does not intend to exclude anyone from potentially uttering a word of prophecy (all may, but not all do); so also, Paul does not intend to limit anyone from potentially uttering a message in tongues (with interpretation) for the benefit of the church (all may, but not all do). What should be even clearer is that Paul’s words here have absolutely nothing to do with limiting the scope of those who manifest tongues in private to a select few.

¹⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 621.

¹⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 623.

PAUL'S WISH (1 Cor 14:5)

We now come to the *crux* of the matter. How shall we interpret Paul's words, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy" (1 Cor 14:5a)? This passage has been frequently abused over the years, as Turner correctly notes.¹⁹ Turner, along with Fee, rejects the notion that Paul here, as elsewhere, is "damning tongues with faint praise."²⁰ Turner specifically rejects the notion that in 1 Cor 14:5a Paul grants "what he will effectively withdraw through the strategy of the *whole* discourse."²¹ He acknowledges that Paul values tongues quite highly. As we have seen, Paul explicitly states that the private manifestation of tongues is edifying to the speaker (1 Cor 14:4) and he himself frequently exercised the gift and was thankful to God for this fact (1 Cor 14:18). Thus Turner finds little evidence of irony in Paul's wish and regards it as genuine. Yet, and this is the key for Turner, all of this does not mean that Paul felt the wish would actually be realized. It is a genuine wish, but Paul does not expect it to be fulfilled. According to Turner, this judgment is supported by Paul's use of the grammatical construction, "I would like...but rather....," which is also found in 1 Cor 7:7. Here Paul expresses the wish that all could be celibate as he himself is: "I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God..." (1 Cor 7:7). Turner correctly notes that we would not want to press this "to mean Paul really does set forth that *everyone can* and (perhaps) *should be* unmarried and celibate." However, I would add that we know that this wish cannot and should not be universally fulfilled, not because of the grammatical construction Paul uses, but rather because the context explicitly tells us this is the case. As Turner notes, 1 Cor 7:2-6 tells us of the need that some have for sexual relations in the context of marriage, and the wish is qualified in vs. 7 so as to bring out this point. The context of 1 Cor 14:5 is strikingly different. In 1 Corinthians 14 there is nothing that suggests that here Paul's wish cannot or should not be fulfilled. The context actually suggests the opposite.

1 Cor 14:5 forms part of a larger unit (1 Cor 14:2-5). Paul's argument here can be analyzed in terms of the structure of the passage. The passage contains three couplets which consist of parallel statements concerning tongues

¹⁹ See Turner, "Experience for All," p. 245, and the references he cites in n. 30.

²⁰ The quote is from Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 653. For Turner's comments, see Turner, "Experience for All," p. 245.

²¹ Turner, "Experience for All," p. 245 (italics his).

and prophecy. Paul has just encouraged the Corinthians “to eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1). He then tells them why this should be the case (“for,” 14:2). Each couplet moves from a description of tongues as beneficial for the individual and thus fitting for the private setting to a description of prophecy as beneficial for the body and thus fitting for the corporate setting. The couplets build to the final point: in the assembly, prophecy is preferred above tongues, unless interpreted, because it is edifying to all.

For

- a) The one who speaks in tongues speaks to God (private setting)
 Indeed, no one understands him
 He speaks mysteries by the Spirit
- b) The one who prophesies speaks to people (corporate setting)
 edification, encouragement, comfort

- a) The one who speaks in tongues edifies himself (private setting)
- b) The one who prophesies edifies the church (corporate setting)

- a) I would like every one of you to speak in tongues (private setting)
- b) but I would rather have you prophesy (corporate setting)

(Thus in the assembly:)

He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified.

This analysis of the structure of 1 Cor 14:2-5 highlights several important aspects of Paul’s attitude towards tongues. First, it is evident that for Paul, tongues is edifying and appropriate in its proper context, the private domain. Of course at least some at Corinth did not properly understand this point. Second, Paul’s wish that all would speak in tongues (1 Cor 14:5a), must, as the structure and logic of his argument indicate, refer to the private manifestation of the gift. The contrast with 1 Cor 14:5b indicates that here Paul is talking about uninterpreted tongues. It would be incomprehensible for Paul to desire that all should speak in tongues without interpretation in the assembly. Third, since tongues like prophecy has a positive (albeit largely non-congregational and thus lesser) contribution to make, it would appear that both may be exercised by anyone in the community. As we have noted, nothing in the context suggests Paul’s wish that all would speak in tongues cannot or should not be realized. And, the parallelism between 14:5a and 14:5b (and throughout 14:2-4) suggests that both prophesy and tongues are open to all within the community of believers. That is to say, since Paul seems to believe

that all may prophesy and indeed encourages the Corinthians to do so (1 Cor 14:5b; cf. 14:1, 31), it would seem that in light of 1 Cor 14:5 (cf. 14:18) it is most probable that Paul had a similar attitude toward the private manifestation of tongues. Indeed, if the gift of tongues has merit in its private expression, why would God withhold it?²²

Of course Paul's primary intent in this passage is not to give his readers a detailed treatment of the private manifestation of tongues. He is, as we have noted, seeking to correct misunderstandings and abuses concerning the exercise of tongues in the assembly. Nevertheless, we may properly ask what implications emerge from Paul's instruction at this point for our question. Although Paul's wish of 1 Cor 14:5 forms part of a larger argument which seeks to encourage the Corinthians to value prophecy in the assembly, it does offer valuable insight into the mind of the Apostle on this issue. In view of Paul's positive attitude towards the private manifestation of tongues (1 Cor 14:2-4, 18) and the lack of any clear limitation for the wish beyond placing tongues in the private setting, it is most probable that Paul understood this wish, not only to be genuine, but to express a potentially realizable state of affairs.²³

CONCLUSION

Biblical exegesis is the bedrock of sound systematic reflection. Our different and varied systematic formulations reflect our different appraisals of specific texts. In this essay, I have attempted to explain why I believe Paul encourages us to see the private manifestation of tongues as edifying and available to every believer. Max Turner will probably disagree with my assessment of the biblical data and thus want to formulate matters differently. Nevertheless, there are substantial areas of agreement. By way of conclusion, I would like to highlight several which I feel are particularly significant.

First, I do believe that Pentecostals are correctly challenging many to reassess their previous rather negative reconstruction of Paul's attitude toward

²² Turner notes that Judaism, and especially the OT, anticipated a universal outpouring of prophecy; yet with respect to tongues, the Jewish traditions are virtually silent. So Paul had "good scriptural grounds" for a universal expectation with respect to prophecy, but not for tongues (Turner, "An Experience for All," p. 246). However, this misses the important fact that tongues was clearly viewed, at least by Luke, as one expression of prophecy (Acts 2:17-18).

²³ Fee, *The First Epistle*, p. 623.

the gift of tongues. 1 Corinthians 12-14 is often treated as Paul's attempt to put down the practice of glossolalia, even though Paul's rhetorical flourishes often contain comments that might at first glance seem to affirm it. This reading of Paul needs to be challenged and, it is noteworthy, that on this point Turner and I are in full agreement.

Secondly, while I believe for the reasons stated above that Paul did believe all could be edified by the private manifestation of tongues, I would agree that the exercise of this gift does not take us to the center of Christian spirituality. There are a whole range of questions theologians must ponder, and while this question is not insignificant, it is not as significant as many. In short, the question of tongues does not take us to the core of the Christian faith and, indeed, does not in my opinion represent the most important theological contribution Pentecostals have to make to the larger body of Christ. I believe that the Pentecostal appraisal of Spirit-baptism has more far-reaching implications for the life of the church and is more clearly supported in the Scriptures.²⁴

Thirdly, when Turner questions the appropriateness of seeing in tongues the "evidence" of Spirit-baptism, he challenges us to recognize the limitations of our human formulations.²⁵ All theological formulations represent human attempts to come to terms with the significance of the word of God. These human formulations often have strengths and weaknesses. While I believe that the classical Pentecostal doctrine of tongues as the "initial physical evidence" of baptism in the Holy Spirit captures well the sense of expectation inherent in Paul's words, I would acknowledge that the statement is not without its limitations. The focus on evidence can lead to a preoccupation with a single, crisis experience. Evidential tongues can also be easily confused with a badge of holiness, an experience which signifies that one has entered into a higher degree of spiritual maturity. At a popular level, Pentecostals have too often succumbed to this Corinthian temptation. Turner's article might serve as a call for Pentecostals to be clearer on these points.

I have found Turner's proddings on the issue of tongues, and particularly Paul's attitude towards the gift, to be extremely helpful. We Pentecostals have at times simply assumed that our position is correct and thus not always thought through carefully nor communicated clearly our various theological positions. We should value friends like Dr. Turner, who through their

²⁴ See R. P. Menzies, "Evidential Tongues: An Essay on Theological Method," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1/2 (1998), pp. 111-23 (122-23).

²⁵ Turner, "Experience for All," pp. 249-50: "One does not receive the impression that the God of the Bible looks particularly favorably on the human search for 'proofs'"

good-natured proddings challenge us to deal with issues that we might otherwise overlook. This dialogue has challenged me to engage the text in a fresh and rigorous manner and helped me better understand those with whom I disagree. This in turn gives me hope that we may indeed “follow the way of love” and encourage one another to all move toward the goal of more faithfully reflecting the mind of Christ.