

normal need to examine religious practices to see if they conform to Scripture, there are certain factors which demand that a study be made. The primary factor is that there is disagreement between large sections of the church concerning the nature and practice of this gift. Although mainline Pentecostals all agree that the gift of tongues is necessary as a sign of the postconversion "baptism of the Spirit," they do not agree on the nature of the gift. Some believe that it is a heavenly language not known to man; others believe that it is miraculous ability to speak foreign languages. The other charismatics, known as neo-Pentecostals, also disagree on the nature of tongues; in addition they disagree on whether it is a "sign," disagree on the necessity to speak in tongues, and often stress the private or devotional use of tongues in contrast to the public exercise.

The charismatics are a veritable tangle of different opinions on the nature and practice of tongues-speaking. They agree only on the issue that this gift is available today. This disagreement alone is enough to require a thorough study of the gift of tongues, since the charismatic proponents have never come to unanimous agreement on tongues. To further complicate the situation, large segments of orthodox Christians do not believe that this gift has been present since the apostolic age. This viewpoint includes theologians and Christians familiar with the Bible. Although many try to equate such a view with a few diehards who should be ignored, this opinion has been the position of orthodox Christians since the first century. The opinion that tongues are given today by the Holy Spirit is a modern view contrary to the accepted opinion of Christians for 1800 years. This orthodox opinion cannot be dismissed lightly. The "new" opinion of the charismatics needs to be Biblically verified.

One of the issues that Edgar raises concerns the nature of the gift. Is tongues the gift of rational, meaningful languages foreign to the speaker but not foreign to all hearers, or the act of producing irrational, meaningless ecstatic utterances foreign to speaker and hearers alike?

b. The Views of Some Writers on the Question of Continuance/Non-Continuance of the Gift of Tongues_

Edgar (pp. 262-263, 275-278) states: