

[1967. Review of *What about Speaking in Tongues?*, by Anthony A. Hoekema. *The Gordon Review* (Winter).]

*What about speaking in tongues.* By Anthony A. Hoekema.

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The author introduces his subject by a brief history of speaking in tongues. The phenomenon has occurred at various times and places from the second century on, but its greatest manifestation began with the Pentecostal movement in 1901 and has more recently spread to some old-line denominations.

The middle chapters of the book examine the Pentecostals' theology of tongues. Dr. Hoekema has no trouble in showing that 1 Corinthians contradicts the Pentecostal idea that all Christians ought to speak in tongues (pp. 86-87). That it is a second blessing subsequent to conversion meets the fate of Arminian perfectionism. Tarrying meetings and agonizing, methods used by the Pentecostals, are not the manner in which tongues were given in the New Testament. Similarly and Pneumatology make it clear that tongues are not the only nor even the pre-eminent evidence of having received the Spirit.

This solid theological material and the evidence adduced that the phenomenon has sometimes been intentionally fraudulent and is often an induced emotional upheaval nevertheless do not add up to a strictly logical demonstration that tongues cannot be the work of the Spirit today. There are places where the argument falters.

For example, in one place Dr. Hoekema says, "I am not suggesting that the disciples actually used tongues in witnessing to foreigners, for we have no evidence that they did (even on the day of Pentecost Peter apparently preached in Aramaic . . .)" (p. 68). Now, no doubt Peter preached in Aramaic, but is not Acts 2:8 the required evidence for the other disciples? Granted, this verse does not help the Pentecostals very much, but it also seems to weaken Dr. Hoekema's argument.

A more formal flaw in the argument comes later. The author admits that the Pentecostal interpretation of Acts 19:2, based on the K.J. version, is possible, is possible by Greek grammar. But he adds, "The question is, however, whether the context

demands it.” (p. 74). Undoubtedly the Pentecostals, to prove their case, must show that the context demands it. But to prove that the Pentecostals are wrong in this one point, it would be necessary to show that the K.J. version gives an impossible translation. The reviewer’s notion is that both parties fail to prove their points.

Then there is another puzzling passage. The general background is that the apostolic church *needed* tongues and miracles to attest the Gospel, but that the church today does not *need* tongues. Now, for one thing, this is a subjective judgment that could be doubted in the light of contemporary apostasy. Nor is it clear that the Pentecostals in asserting this need “overlook the finality of Scripture.” Then the author immediately continues, “The words of Abraham to the rich man in the parable may be recalled here: ‘If they [the rich man’s brothers] hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead’ (Luke 16: 31)” (p. 110). But if Abraham’s remarks show that the twentieth century church does not need tongues, do they not equally show that miracles and tongues were not needed in Christ’s day?

The reviewer’s judgment is that Dr. Hoekema has with complete success refuted Pentecostal theology. He has also shown the improbability that speaking in tongues today, as distinct from the theological interpretation, is the work of the Spirit. Improbable, yes: but not logically impossible.

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