

# ***Divine Inspiration* by Ebenezer Henderson: A Synthesis with Notes**

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Ebenezer Henderson, *Divine Inspiration; or, The supernatural influence exerted in the communication of divine truth and its special bearing on the composition of the sacred Scriptures : with notes and illustrations*, pp. 148–200.

In 1847 Ebenezer Henderson wrote a book on “Divine Inspiration.” His book totals ten lectures and 503 pages with notes and illustrations. Writing against the Continental rationalism of his day, Henderson argued for God’s Word as a divinely-inspired revelation. Whereas many scholars were ardently anti-supernatural and dismissive of Scripture’s inspiration, authority, unity, etc., Henderson makes a concerted argument to prove the various modes of inspiration and the final authority of Scripture.

In this context, he deals with the question of the miraculous gifts, something that he reports German scholars were grappling with in their philological studies—i.e., What does *glossa* mean? He also acknowledges that some in Highbury were trying to practice the gifts. So, while he wrote a generation or more before the Pentecostal movement, his testimony reminds us that there have always been some who have found the miraculous gifts to continue into the church age.

In short, on this subject, Henderson argues for a position where the miraculous gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 were given for the founding of the church, the confirmation of the apostles, and the verification of the gospel. What follows is an outline of his flow of thought. While it includes his arrangement, many of his proof-texts, and many quotations, I have inter-leafed my comments and developed the outline.

## **The Promise-Fulfillment Structure of Pentecost and the Gifts**

Beginning Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost, we see that the gifts of the Spirit must be interpreted in light of this epoch-making event. In short, the gift of the Spirit (with their corresponding gifts) are marks of a new era. They were promised of old, and Pentecost is most clearly seen then as a marker of prophecy fulfilled. It is less a paradigmatic event which repeats throughout the church age. Rather, like the significance of Christ’s cross, Pentecost is an historical event with on-going significance, not on-going repetition—i.e., multiple outpourings of the Spirit.

More will be said about the tongues in Acts 10 and 19 below. For now, notice the way in which Pentecost fulfills Old Testament promises.

- a. Promise – What was promised of old has come to fulfillment in the gift of the Spirit

- i. Psalm 68:18 – God promised gifts from on high.
  - ii. Joel 2:28–32 – God promised the Spirit would be poured out.
  - iii. Acts 1:5 – Jesus, before ascending to heaven, promised the coming of his Spirit.
- b. Fulfillment – We must read Pentecost in light of its historical significance. This is who Peter interpreted the events of the day. What was promised in Joel 2 has now come to fruition. In this light, the apostle’s unique ministry must be understood, as Henderson writes

And we find, accordingly, both in the history of the Pentecostal phenomena to which reference has just been made, and in that of the other super-natural events which distinguished the ministry of the apostles, a profusion of proofs attesting the realization by the church of the predicted and promised blessing. Not only were these primary and extraordinary ministers of Christ richly endowed with miraculous gifts themselves; they were also honoured instrumentally to communicate them more or less copiously to the first converts, who thus became qualified to perform those extraordinary services which the peculiar circumstances of the infant church required. (149–50)

## **Rightly Dividing 1 Corinthians 12**

In the New Testament corpus, we find no church is more endowed with gifts than the church in Corinth. Not surprisingly then, there is no letter more descriptive of the phenomena. First Corinthians begins with an acknowledgement of the Corinthian’s *charismata* (1:7), but does not address the topic fully until 1 Corinthians 12. There we must make a few observations.

First, the opening six verses set the stage for the discussion about miraculous gifts. Henderson believes the translation of *pneumatikos* is generally inconsequential—it could be spiritual gifts or spiritual persons. What is most important to notice is that the person of the Holy Spirit is the source of these gifts and that the great change has taken place between worshiping mute idols and now worshiping the true God who speaks through his Spirit.

In this opening section, Henderson also observes a difference between the various expressions (gifts, ministries, works). *Gifts* are the various “miraculous endowments” given by the Spirit to certain individuals (153). *Ministries* are the various forms they were manifested. And *workings* are the various effects of the gifts. Most importantly, in opposition to those who conceive of God in impersonal terms, the Holy Spirit noted in 1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, 8, 9, 11 is personal. Just as the ministries are in service to the

person of Christ, and the workings come from the power of God the Father, so the gifts are delivered personally (and at the disposal) of the Holy Spirit (vv. 7, 11)

Next, Henderson affirms the way in which the gifts are given for the upbuilding of the church. He comments about verse 7,

The miraculous endowments by the exercise of which the influence of the Divine Donor was manifested, *were not conferred for the purposes of ostentation and vanity*, to which one of them at least had been awfully prostituted in, the Corinthian church, *but each recipient was so favoured that he might contribute that which in his particular circumstances might be most advantageous to the interests of the gospel*. (155, emphasis mine)

Henderson affirms the primary point of this passage, the gifts of the Spirit are for mutual upbuilding and not self-service.

Then third, he makes a number of general observations about the miraculous gifts which are worth recording in full.

- **Interpretation:** Paul's meaning in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10 has been lost because (1) the beautiful structure of verses 8–10 has been missed, and in its place (2) a contrived parallelism with verses 28–30 has been attempted. Henderson corrects

Only a fertile imagination, unbridled by habits of severe critical discrimination, could have advanced a theory so totally subversive of the meaning of language, and calculated, to the extent of its luxuriance, entirely to unsettle the interpretation of the New Testament. (156)

- **Relationship with 12:28–30:** The gifts of helps and governance are probably related to deacons and elders. (157)

That "helps," and "governments," should signify prophets and persons endowed with the faculty of discriminating inspired men and inspired matter, is contrary to all usage and analogy. They can only, with propriety, be referred to the administration of the affairs of the church: the one appropriately designating the Deacons, whose office it was to afford *aid*, to the poor, and otherwise assist in conducting the affairs of the church; and the other, the Elders or Bishops, on whom, . . . devolved its direction, in regard to worship and discipline. (157)

- **Miraculous Gifts:** The nine gifts are arranged into three sections. This ordering helps us see that the gifts listed here are all miraculous.

According to this division, "the word of knowledge" belongs to the same class with "the word of wisdom;" the "gifts of healings," "working of miracles," "prophecy," and "discerning of spirits," are assigned to "faith,"

as their *genus*; while the "interpretation of tongues" ranks with "divers kinds of tongues," with which it is naturally associated. Assuming what we shall afterwards prove, that by *pistis* here is meant what is commonly called the faith of miracles, it is self-evident that it was indispensable to the exercise of all the four species of *charismata* which are ranged under it, whereas it was not called for in exercising any of those which belong to the two other divisions, as will be shown in its proper place. (159)

## The Miraculous of Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10

After introducing the redemptive-historical context of Pentecost and the context of 1 Corinthians 12, Henderson considers each of the nine spiritual gifts. According to Paul's own language he divides these nine gifts into three sections.

The first two gifts are the utterance of wisdom and knowledge. The next, divided by Paul's use of *eteros* is faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discernment. Henderson understands faith to be a category distinction; all healing, miracles, require faith. Thus, faith is not its own category. And finally, the last two gifts are tongues and the interpretation of tongues.

Henderson makes much of this organization and he gives a grammatical arrangement on p. 159. Translated, it looks something like this:

FOR to one is given . . .	
	[1] the utterance of wisdom, through the Spirit
and to another	[2] the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit
<b>to another</b> [ἐτέρῳ]	faith by the same Spirit
to another	[3] gifts of healing by the one Spirit
to another	[4] the working of miracles,
to another	[5] prophecy,
to another	[6] the ability to distinguish between spirits
<b>to another</b> [ἐτέρῳ]	[7] various kinds of tongues,
to another	[8] the interpretation of tongues.

From this outline, he then unpacks each gift.

### 1. The Word of Wisdom

Henderson lists a variety of ways in which this gift has been understood. His list ranges from the way Greek philosophers might consider wisdom, to the kind of wisdom Solomon had, to the wisdom needed to interpret the Old Testament, to

what I might call “gospel wisdom,” the wisdom given by God which reveals his plans and purposes in Jesus Christ, the fullness of wisdom (cf. Colossians 2:3).

This is the kind of wisdom Henderson argues for, and he makes a compelling case from passages like 1 Corinthians 2:6–7; 3:10; 13:2; 14:6; cf. 2 Peter 3:15–16. To cite only the first two:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.<sup>7</sup> But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. (1 Corinthians 2:6–7)

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (1 Corinthians 3:10)

His argument makes most sense of the language, especially in the context of 1 Corinthians. It also explains why wisdom is the first gift mentioned—because for Paul, the gospel is of first importance.

Henderson’s clarity on this point is worth considering. First, he shows how the word of wisdom in 1 Corinthians 12:8 fits into the flow of Paul’s larger argument:

In the second chapter [of 1 Corinthians] particularly, after disavowing the use of the artificial means prescribed by human philosophy, the apostle takes occasion, from the introduction of the word *sophia*, to shew, that he nevertheless did teach wisdom ; — not indeed a wisdom originating in, or harmonizing with, the philosophy of the world, but the only system worthy of the name, and in itself truly divine, which, though concealed from all preceding generations, was to be traced to the eternal counsel of Jehovah, who had determined in due time to reveal it for the salvation of men. (Verses 6, 7.) (162)

Next, he reminds us that the gospel is not man’s wisdom and thus divine aid is needed. To know the wisdom of God is a spiritual gift, one specifically related to the apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

As the human mind could not have contrived such a system of divine philosophy, its unassisted powers were equally inadequate to the task of teaching it to the world. The apostles of Christ were in themselves totally disqualified for unveiling its mysteries. They required supernatural aid; and that aid was vouchsafed by the impartation of the *charisma* of which we here treat. (163–64)

Paul himself sees his calling as one who builds the foundation of the church, as Henderson observes,

Paul speaks of himself as "a *wise* master-builder," (1 Cor. iii. 10); and employs a tone of confidence and authority in his Epistles, which would have been altogether unwarranted, if he had not been miraculously endowed. (164)

While this language could be used analogously of a church planter today, it is unique that true churches today still build on Christ *and the apostolic message of the gospel*. In this way, when Paul speaks of wisdom, he has a very particular wisdom in mind. It is the wisdom of the gospel, as Henderson notes,

By *sophia*, therefore, in this passage, we understand the sublime truths of the gospel, directly revealed to the apostles, of which the *logos* was the supernatural ability rightly to communicate them to others. (165)

## 2. *The Word of Knowledge*

The second gift of knowledge follows very closely from the first gift of wisdom. To be sure, if the first gift is related to the gospel, so must the second. Only, this knowledge revealed at the time of Christ's apostles is not just saving knowledge, something previous generations would have had through type and shadow. Nor is this knowledge the more general philosophical knowledge (the Greek's *gnosis*) or natural knowledge of the world. Rather, knowledge is what follows after understanding God's mysteries and revelation.

On this point, two texts in 1 Corinthians are important:

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (13:2)

Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching. (14:6)

In these two verses, like 12:8, knowledge follows the revelation of things once hidden. When the mystery of God has been revealed, then gospel knowledge is had. Accordingly, this gift naturally goes with the word of wisdom, but they are not the same. As Henderson notes the latter gift is lesser and derivative of the first. He writes,

With respect to the nature of the gift itself, it appears to have consisted in *the immediate communication of an exact and competent knowledge of the truths*, which God had already revealed through the instrumentality of the inspired prophets and apostles, in consequence of which, those who

possessed it *became qualified, independently of the use of all ordinary means, forthwith to teach them to the church.*

*They differed from the apostles*, who possessed the word of wisdom, inasmuch as the latter had new truths revealed to them; whereas it was the department of the former, infallibly to explain truths and doctrines which had been previously divulged. They also *differed from ordinary teachers* — these being under the necessity of acquiring their knowledge of the great principles of revelation by a diligent study of the holy Scriptures, and all the subsidiary means at their command; whereas the primitive instructors, who were supernaturally endowed with the *gnosis* here specified, were at once prepared to discharge the duties of their office. They had imparted to them, clear, accurate, and connected views of the Divine dispensations; a profound acquaintance with the more intricate and obscure parts of the ancient inspired oracles; and such enlarged and definite conceptions of the doctrines preached by the apostles, as enabled them by their ministry greatly to contribute to the instruction and confirmation of the disciples in the faith of the gospel.

Their interpretations, proceeding from direct inspiration, possessed an authority which was tantamount to that claimed by the apostles for the new truths, which it was their province to reveal. According to this view of the gift, all difficulty in explaining 1 Cor, 14:6 is removed. (166–68)

Importantly, the gifts of wisdom and knowledge are not ongoing direct communications to the mind of Christ's followers. Rather, the gift of knowledge is the confirmation that the inspired prophets and evangelists—those who came after the apostles and were sent out by them—had the knowledge necessary to rightly proclaim gospel truth.

In other words, while the apostles received the divine wisdom that made clear the gospel of Jesus Christ, the prophets and evangelists—men like Luke, John Mark, Timothy, and Titus—were given the knowledge to preach the apostle's gospel faithfully. In this way, knowledge and wisdom are not the same in the founding of the church. But together they formed the necessary gifts to preach the gospel and rightly establish the church.

Twenty centuries later, these gifts are no longer in service because the foundation of the church has been built. Were these gifts to continue, then we would either have to build a new foundation or add to the foundation once for all delivered to the saints so long ago. Understood in this way, it becomes very clear why the continuationist position cannot persist.

### 3. Faith

Based on his arrangement, Henderson understands faith to be a category of gifts, gifts which need miraculous faith. (I don't agree with his arrangement precisely, but I think he is close).

This *pistis* is to be contemplated, not as a separate and distinct gift, but as the immediate source to which these endowments are to be traced, or the fundamental principle by which they were called into operation. (169)

Faith here is not saving faith but miraculous faith. Following almost all commentators from the time of Chrysostom, Henderson explains that the faith in question here

is in fact what the schoolmen called *fides miraculorum*, or a firm and undoubting confidence in God, produced by an immediate impulse of his Spirit on the minds of those who exercised it, that, in certain given circumstances, he would, through their instrumentality, perform acts surpassing the power of natural agency. (170)

That we can know this kind of faith is in view is supported by 1 Corinthians 13:2, where Paul says faith that moves mountains but lacks love is nothing. This mountain-moving faith harkens back to Jesus own words in Matthew 21:18–21, a faith rooted in God's power and promise to displace the mountains (kingdoms) of this age with his own. This faith is given by God and is also related to the gospel of the kingdom. Additionally, this kind of faith may relate to healing as it does in James 5:14–15 and which is the next gift on the list.

#### 4. *Healing*

What is important to see about this gift is the way in which it follows along with the power and authority given to the apostles. Just a few examples from the Gospels will suffice to show that healing, as a special endowment is something Jesus gave his immediate disciples. It is not something he promises to give to subsequent generations of disciples. But to his apostles who were with him and sent out by him, Jesus gave power to cast out demons and heal people.

<sup>13</sup> And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons. (Mark 3:13–15)

The definition of an apostle includes physical miracles, something we too quickly forget. Jesus explicitly identified his followers as those who had power to work miracles, but this is something Scripture simply reports. It does not teach it, command it, or expect it. Thus, as we can see in Matthew and Luke, the immediate generation sent out from Jesus were expected to perform miracles. But there is no definitive word that this will continue.



And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. . . . Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay. (Matthew 10:1, 8)

And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:6)

Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you.<sup>9</sup> Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' (Luke 10:8–9)

To be sure healing continues through the church age until today, and we are called to pray for healing as we pray for all things (Ephesians 6:19). In James, the elders are called to lay hands, anoint with oil, and pray for healing. Still, these men must pray for healing. They do not have the authority to heal like Paul and Peter did. Significantly, both men are portrayed as miraculous healers in the book of Acts. Consider two texts, Acts 5:14–16 and Acts 19:11–12.

And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,<sup>15</sup> so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.<sup>16</sup> The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. (Acts 5:14–16)

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,<sup>12</sup> so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. (Acts 19:11–12)

That Paul performs the same kind of miracles that Peter did puts their apostleship on the same plain. In fact, so symmetrical is Luke's presentation that he not only gives Peter and Paul a general statement of their healing powers (see above), he also tells two resurrection stories, one for Peter (raising Tabitha, Acts 10:36–43), one for Paul (raising Eutychus, Acts 20:7–12). From these types of miracles, God affirmed the apostles words. Still, at the end of their lives they point their followers to the Word, not to the succession of the apostolic office.

What does this mean? Chiefly, the office of apostle is not intended to be continual. Therefore, the "workings of power" given to the apostles and prophets are also intended to be discontinued.

## 5. *Workings of Power*

He identifies the works as those which were “wrought by the our Saviour . . . sometimes it expresses the power by which they were performed; sometime the effects of that power in the miracles in themselves” (174). Some of the proof texts include Matthew 11:20, 21, 23; 13:54; Mark 5:30). He also points to the fact that the mighty works, for that is a better translation than miraculous works, are found at the hands of Jesus (Mark 6:5) and Paul (Acts 19:11). Ultimately, Henderson writes,

To the production of more extraordinary and astonishing miracles of this description, the *charismata* we are now considering was applied. The restoration of the limbs or of the senses; the resuscitation of the dead; the innocuous use of empoisoned liquor; the dispossession of demons; the infliction of blindness, and even of death itself, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira — were such stupendous effects of omnipotent intervention as could not but claim for those, in connection with whose ministry they were produced, all the deference which was due to teachers sent from God. (176)

While Henderson is surprisingly brief with regards to “workings of power,” his point is clear. The mighty works are given to those “teachers sent by God” to prove the content and authority of their message. From Moses to Elijah to Jesus to the Apostles, God’s messengers—his “sent ones”—have been confirmed with mighty works. Moreover, God’s testimony of power is sent to confirm his sent ones.

Henderson does not make this larger redemptive-historical argument, but it is important to observe: whenever Scripture is being written, signs and wonders are given. It is true that signs, wonders, and works of power are given to more than apostles. But it is also true that, technically speaking, Scripture is written by more than apostles. The New Testament Prophets and Evangelists also needed confirmation, and these workings of power also confirmed or denied their message.

Hence we should see that these powerful works are not just radiation from the power of God’s presence, they are separate gifts given to build up the body of Christ, or better to lay the foundation of the church based upon a material that is different from later living stones.

## 6. *Prophecy*

For starters, prophecy can be used in various ways. Take for instance women prophesying; this is affirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:4–5, but qualified by 14:34, so that on the surface these two statements don’t seem to be the same—one affirms women prophesying, one appears to limit it.

Likewise, chapter 14 distinguishes prophecy as a gift of teaching on par with earlier and latter “prophets.” But most clearly, Henderson argues prophesy in this catalogue has to do with foretelling the future, a subset of prophecy throughout the Bible, which is seen in the days of the New Testament. For instance, he writes,

- a. Acts 11:27–28 – Prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and one of them Agabus foretold the future
- b. Acts 21:1–11 – Agabus, by the Holy Spirit, foretold of Paul's suffering.
- c. 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14 – There were prophecies made about Timothy, his gifting, and his calling
- d. 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation – The future description of Christ's church and the antichrist would constitute a certain kind of prophecy.

The position which the apostle assigns to prophecy between "miracles" and "the discerning of spirits;" his classing it along with mysteries, knowledge, and faith of the highest description (1 Cor. xiii. 2); and his distinguishing it from doctrine on the one hand, and from revelation and knowledge on the other (chap. xiv. 6); clearly show, that, in all these passages, he intended it to be taken in a superior sense to that in which he employs it, when describing the more usual mode of communicating public instruction. But there is no other, except that of predicting future events, which is not included in one or other of the terms, which he here employs. That there existed, in the apostolic age, an order of men who possessed the gift of predicting future events, is beyond dispute. (178–79)

And this sort of prophecy is necessarily dependent on the miraculous gift of faith, for without it, how could one of the apostles be bold enough to speak of future realities? On this, he writes,

Now without the special assurance *pistis* that they were divinely called to deliver these predictions, and that God would, in due time, carry them into fulfilment, they could not have ventured to publish them to the world. By uttering or recording them, they staked their own reputation in all future time on their accomplishment or non-fulfilment. It is, therefore, not without reason, that this gift is assigned to "faith" as its operative principle. (180)

## 7. *Discerning of Spirits*

Once again, Acts bear witness to many instances of this 'discernment.' For instance,

- a. Acts 5 – Peter discerns that Ananias and Sapphira are lying to him and to the Holy Spirit. This insight goes beyond human comprehension, as does the ability to speak and see these two fall dead.
- b. Acts 8:20–24 – Peter "sees" Simon Magnus's covetous spirit and rebukes him. This perception into the human heart goes beyond human comprehension.

- c. Acts 13:7–12 – Elymas, a magician, opposed the apostles. Paul confronts him, calls out his wickedness and pronounces blindness on him. The result of this action, significantly, is the faith of Sergius Paulus. What made him believe? Was it the work of power? No, “the procounsel believed, when he saw what occurred, for he was astonished *at the teaching of the Lord*” (v. 12)
- d. Acts 16 – Paul discerned the demon in the girl. Paul commands the demon to flee and she is set free from her the divining spirit.

The same is true in 1 Corinthians. The gift discernment is evident.

- a. 1 Corinthians 5:3–5 – Paul, though absent, says he is with them in spirit and that his judgment applies to them. How does this work unless his apostolic authority is in view?
- b. 1 Corinthians 14:25 – The gift of discerning spirits also permits “the secrets of the hearts to be disclosed,” such when an unbeliever enters the church he is brought to conviction like Simon Magnus.

With this gift, the Spirit protected the church by providing divine guidance in guiding the first apostles and prophets. Importantly, the church did not have a New Testament. Therefore, how would they fight error? One answer: not very well. As many churches demonstrated. The other answer: through the gifts of the Spirit, which enabled many churches to survive in the womb of the world. This is how Henderson puts it:

It cannot be doubted that the excitement which was produced by the exhibition of the gifts in the Corinthian and other churches provoked many to imitate the spirit and actions of such as possessed them. Nor is it at all improbable, that numbers became the dupes of enthusiasm, and actually believed that they were the subjects of a divine impulse, while they spake from their own spirit. Against the influence of both descriptions of persons, it was highly important the first disciples should be put on their guard; but in the circumstances in which the church then was, this could only be effectually done by a positive determination on the part of the Omniscient Searcher of hearts, through such instruments as he should select for the purpose. Where the apostles were present, being possessed of this and all the other gifts, they could at once detect impostors and persons who were deceiving both themselves and others; but in their absence, and in the non-possession of their writings, by proper attention to which the church has since been able to judge of those who have pretended to inspiration, as well as of the truth of doctrine, a special order of divinely-accredited men was required. (180–81)

## 8. Tongues

Introducing the subject, Henderson notes how German scholars began addressing tongues the matter in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C (184–85). Then, likewise, in Scotland Henderson speaks of tongues being practiced in 1847: “by the renewed claims to its possession, which have been advanced in our own country” (184)

By contrast, he explains, the earliest writers always understood tongues to be a another language: “Whenever it is referred to either by the Greek or Latin Fathers, it is always taken for granted that it consisted in the ability imparted to certain members of the first churches to give utterance to divine things in languages which they had never learned” (184).

His argument at this point is not the continuation or cessation of the gift, but its nature. He makes a compelling case for tongues as another spoke language.

- a. First, speaking to the differences in the tongues, he argues against inarticulate spiritual utterances and for articulate speech in another language. First he asks, “How could they really differ, if they were alike unintelligible?” (187). Then he continues, “There are . . . so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification,” (ver. 10,) shows, that he never meant to extend his argument beyond the appropriation of real languages.” (187)
- b. Second, Paul’s own description of tongues and its uses requires language and interpretation: “The very use of the terms “interpret” and “interpretation,” as applied to this subject, also proves that he could only have intelligent language in view : — it being a contradiction in terms to speak of interpreting that which has no meaning.” (188)
- c. Third, the utility of tongues is not missed either; it is for gospel proclamation in a world filled with diverse languages.

“But the object of its original bestowment appears from the unstrained purport of the narrative to have been to qualify the first Christians for the work of publishing the gospel in the different languages, spoken by those to whom they had access: consequently its future collation was designed to furnish the means of instruction to those, who must otherwise have been debarred from enjoying the benefit of their labours. Its importance to the members of the Church at Jerusalem, who were so soon to be scattered abroad amongst various nations, and who, when thus scattered, went everywhere preaching the word, (Acts 8:4); to Cornelius and his family, who were thereby qualified to publish the glad tidings to the mixed population of Caesarea, (ch. 10:44–46); and to the disciples at Ephesus, the much frequented capital of Ionia, (ch. 19:6) — must be apparent to all. (193)

From this understanding of tongues, two things result. First, it is a spoken language, not a spiritual, inarticulate utterance. Just like the Spirit gave language to confuse and curse people at Babel; the Spirit gave languages to conjoin and bless people at Pentecost. Second, once the church was truly established, this gift was not necessary. As tongues were not given to the Samaritans, because their language was known, so as the gospel went into all the languages around the Mediterranean, its spontaneous gift was not give again. Therefore, as Henderson concludes,

On the whole, we consider the gift of tongues to have been an endowment, by which those who received it were miraculously furnished with such a knowledge of languages, which they had never learned, as enabled them to communicate to those, by whom these languages were spoken, the glorious truths of the gospel of Christ. Its impartation, which had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah, (28:11, 12 ; 1 Cor. 14:21,) took place on the day of Pentecost, and during the continuance of the first age of the church: and, while it lasted, not only presented a standing miracle to the view of unbelievers, but paved the way for the more rapid spread of Christianity in the world. (198–99)

Due to this understanding of tongues, it makes sense that interpretation was also necessary.

#### 9. *Interpretation of Tongues*

Very briefly, Henderson concludes that tongues need no interpretation for the foreigners who understood the language. Thus, in evangelistic settings they were perfectly normal. And Paul used them. Perhaps in Athens? But in the congregation, like in Corinth, a foreign tongue needed an interpreter. Like in missionary report today, the church must supply an interpreter so that the can understand what testimony is being reported.

This is the natural outworking of tongues in the early church. Still, as it may have some analogues today, this gift of interpretation, given in the early church, also has distinctions. In fact, it may have been a spontaneous gift, like tongues, given to interpet the language spoken. In such a case, the gift is not adding meaning to the guttural tongue, like adding meaning to indiscernible code. Rather, it is translating the meaning of one person's speech to that of another.