

**MODERN SPEAKING
IN TONGUES -
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
OR
HUMAN SPIRIT?**

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GIFT OF TONGUES - NOT FOR PREACHING

In 1 Cor. 12:8-10 the gift of tongues is mentioned among the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. What was the purpose of this gift? Some say it enabled Christians to preach the gospel in foreign languages. Others say it did not involve a known intelligible language but an ecstatic utterance unknown to anyone on earth used in prayer to God as a “heavenly prayer language,” not for preaching or speaking to man. Furthermore, it is believed by many today that speaking in tongues is a sign of being born of the Spirit, and therefore everyone who is converted to Christ should be able to do it. Those who don’t are not “born again.”

However, there was no need for the gift of tongues to make the gospel intelligible to people living during New Testament times, for Greek was very widely spoken in the world at that time. There is no reference in Scripture to a multilingual preaching of a miraculous kind being carried out. Had the gift of tongues been given for the purpose of preaching in a foreign language, its use in apostolic missionary work would surely have been recorded and encouraged.

There are five sections of Scripture which make particular reference to the gift of tongues, and a careful consideration of them soon reveals the primary purpose and function of this particular gift. The five sections are: Mk. 16:15-20. Act. 2:1-16. Act. 10:46. Act. 19:6. 1 Cor. 14:21-22.

MARK 16:15-20

Prior to his ascension into heaven, Jesus commissioned his apostles to go out into all the world to preach the gospel. “And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover ... And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following.”

The point to notice in this passage is that the apostles were not told to preach in “tongues.” Verse 17 states that the tongues were to be a “sign.” As such, they are placed in the same category as casting out demons, picking up serpents, drinking deadly things, laying hands on the sick.

Now, “signs” were usually a supplement to preaching. Preaching was

one thing and signs were quite another. This is particularly evident in v20 where we read that the apostles “went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following.”

Preaching the gospel was not the sign. The signs followed the preaching, and speaking in tongues is mentioned as one of those signs. A definite distinction is clearly made here between preaching the gospel and signs such as tongues.

Paul confirms this in 1 Cor. 14:22 where he states that “tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” As such, they would be included among the “signs” referred to in Heb. 2:3-4 which were sent by the Lord to confirm the apostolic preaching.

Signs, including tongues, were a divine confirmation - supernatural evidence - a divine witness to the authenticity and genuineness of the gospel message being preached in the name of Jesus. Such signs proved that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. They validated and vindicated the preachers, proving that they were commissioned by God and that their message was true.

Sometimes the signs were performed before the preaching and sometimes after. The actual order in which the signs appeared was of little consequence. Whether before or after the preaching, the effect was just the same; exciting interest among the people, making them more receptive to the gospel message. The gift of tongues was one of a number of “sign” gifts which had this effect as we shall see. The gift of healing and miracles had a similar effect.

It should be pointed out that the reference in Mk. 16:17 to “new tongues” does not mean languages never spoken by anyone, but new to those doing the speaking. The Greek word for “new” is *kainos* and Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says it “denotes new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old. The “new tongues” of Mk. 16:17 are the “other tongues” of Act. 2:4. These languages, however, were “*new*” and “*different*,” not in the sense that they had never been heard before, or that they were new to the hearers, for it is plain from v8 that this is not the case; they were new languages to the speakers, different from those in which they were accustomed to speak.”

ACTS 2:1-16

This account is well enough known without having to recount it in detail. On the day of Pentecost the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place, resulting in the apostles speaking with other tongues. This unusual event immediately excited an interest among the people and drew them from all quarters. Being a feast period, there were many Jews from many different countries visiting Jerusalem, and they were amazed, and marvelled because they could hear uneducated men fluently declaring the wonderful works of God in their own foreign languages.

Once again, a careful reading of this chapter reveals that the apostles were not preaching the gospel when they spoke in tongues. The reasons for drawing this conclusion are as follows:

(a.) After the apostles had finished speaking in tongues, Peter stood up and preached the gospel (verses 14-36). Why would Peter do this if the gospel had already been preached to the foreigners in their original tongue?

The fact that Peter was able to finally stand up and address the whole multitude from 16 foreign countries in one language, clearly shows that there was a language common to them all and that the gift of tongues was not required for such communication.

The gift of tongues was obviously not required to communicate the gospel to the people. There was at least one language common to them all by which this could be accomplished. However, something special and dramatic was required to draw the attention of the people and make them receptive. The gift of tongues achieved this, but it required the preaching of the gospel to prick the hearts of the people and bring about repentance. This point should not be missed! Tongues excited an interest, but did not prick the hearts of the people or bring about repentance. The preaching of the gospel in a language common to all was required to achieve this deep and solemn work.

(b) The second reason for concluding that the gospel was not preached in tongues on the day of Pentecost is drawn from a statement in Acts 2:11. It is stated here that the apostles were speaking in tongues “the wonderful works of God.” This is actually the comment passed by the visiting Jews when they heard the apostles speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is proof positive that the apostles were not preaching the gospel.

These Jews were, as we read in verse 5, “devout men.” That is, they

were Judaizers, totally dedicated to the law of Moses. This is indicated by the fact that they had journeyed long distances to keep the Jewish feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem.

Now, knowing their legal turn of mind as we do from other sections of Scripture, and their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, it is most unlikely that they would immediately respond to the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified, and marvel at it, acknowledging it as “the wonderful works of God.” The message of Christ crucified was a stumblingblock to the Jewish mind at that stage. It was an offence, as is particularly evident in Paul’s reaction prior to his conversion. Jewish expectations of Messiah made no provision for an ignominious death on a cross at the hands of gentile soldiers! To the Jew, Christ crucified was a blasphemous and repugnant doctrine. It violated everything that they believed and anticipated with regard to the promised Deliverer.

Therefore, before the gospel could be effectively preached to them, all the natural barriers of doctrinal prejudices which prevented them from receiving the gospel, had to be overcome. A supernatural “sign” was required to accomplish this, and this is precisely what took place. The gift of tongues was manifested.

As already pointed out: the speaking in tongues did not produce a pricking in the heart, repentance or remorse, as did Peter’s preaching which followed later. Quite the opposite! The Jewish onlookers “marvelled” (v7). They were clearly excited and impressed.

Whatever the “wonderful works of God” were, they were familiar with them and agreed with them. They understood and approved what they heard, and were profoundly impressed with the way in which the apostles were so fluently and professionally declaring them in foreign languages.

THE WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD

What then, were these “wonderful works” that were being declared in tongues? In order to answer this, we need to put ourselves in the position of the orthodox Jews to whom these wonderful works were being proclaimed. What would they regard as the wonderful works of God? The answer is, chiefly, the works of God as exhibited in the history of their nation and creation, as revealed in the Scriptures. Time and time again the Psalms particularly extol and praise God for such works.

For example: “O give thanks to the Lord; call upon His Name: make

known His deeds among the people. Sing unto Him, sing praises unto Him: talk ye of all His wondrous works ..." (Ps. 105). A careful reading of the whole Psalm reveals that by "wondrous works" the Psalmist particularly had in mind God's dealings with the nation of Israel from the very beginning of her history in the time of Abraham.

Emphasis is also made upon the "wonderful works" of God in Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31, and relates particularly to God's wonders in, and His control over creation.

It seems reasonable to conclude that on the day of Pentecost, the apostles, like the Psalmist of old, were recounting and reciting such wonderful works of God, praising and extolling Him for them. Had they done this in their own natural tongue it would have been impressive enough. But, instead of that, they were doing it in "new tongues" - languages foreign to their own which they had never learned or spoken before! And they were no doubt doing it with a fluency and skill never witnessed before, not even by those who had been taught the language from childhood.

What a sign! The apostles were not men of high intellectual attainment or of great scholastic ability. They were very ordinary men from the despised district of Galilee with no academic qualifications whatever. The supernatural outpouring of praise to God proved beyond all doubt that they were, in a very special sense, servants of the God of Israel. Who else could possibly be inspired to utter such wonderful praise? Truly, God's seal was upon such men! The phenomena of speaking in tongues was designed to produce such conclusions. And I must say that in all my experiences at Pentecostal meetings, I have never seen the gift of tongues operate as in Acts 2 i.e. I have never seen an unbeliever hear a tongue in his native foreign tongue and be converted by it. Various claims are made that it has happened, but it is always somewhere else, in another country, not locally. Some say unbelievers have been converted by the interpretation of a tongue message. But this is a back-to-front procedure and wouldn't have worked in Acts 2. The Jews were too smart for that. 1 Cor. 14:22 clearly says tongues are the sign, not the interpretation. Foreigners who heard and understood a message in their own native tongue didn't need it to be interpreted!

Interpretation was only necessary if a foreigner who knew the language was not present. For this reason the apostles did not have to interpret their messages in tongues in Acts 2.

If an unbeliever was converted by someone's interpretation of a

language that he could not understand, his conversion would be based on assumption. He would have to assume two things: proof of which he would have for neither. Firstly, he would have to assume that the foreign-sounding language he heard was a real genuine language, and not self-generated unintelligible gibberish. Secondly, he would have to assume that the interpretation he heard was valid i.e. a divine utterance and not a private interpretation.

As we shall see, modern Pentecostalism operates on this assumptive basis which is fundamentally different from what happened at the original Pentecost.

The speaking in tongues then, was a “sign.” It excited an interest and placed the people in a receptive frame of mind to hear and respond to the gospel preaching which was to follow.

The gift of tongues was clearly inspired supernatural worship and praise. Its primary purpose was to act as a sign to unbelievers. However, it goes without saying, that such inspired worship, when understood, would also have a very exhilarating and edifying effect on believers! Indeed it did, and the apostle Paul refers to this blessing of the gift in 1 Cor. 14. In this chapter he teaches that the gift of tongues, when operated correctly, acts not only as a sign to unbelievers, but also as a means of edification to the church. In fact, he makes the point that, if exercised properly, the gift of tongues is on a par with, and of equal value to the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5). The gift of tongues therefore served a double purpose. It acted as a sign to unbelievers and also provided edification for believers. There were not two different gifts of tongues, but simply two different effects from the same gift.

Nothing could be more edifying and exhilarating to a believer’s heart than inspired praise and worship! Who, left to his own natural ability and resources, can really do justice to God’s greatness and glory in praise? Our minds are too finite and our vocabulary too limited. Words fail us to express the kind of praise that God’s greatness deserves. The Psalmist was aware of this same inadequacy: “Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: I would declare and speak of them, but they are more than can be numbered” (Ps. 40:5). Again: “Who can put into words the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can express all His praise?” (Ps. 106:2). A certain hymn expresses it like this: “Who can Thy mighty deeds express, not only vast but numberless; what mortal eloquence can raise, a tribute equal to Thy praise.”

Praise to God in the natural realm, when depending entirely upon our own mental resources, is governed by memory, vocabulary and our own particular emotional feelings at the time. Those with a good memory and vocabulary, if they are feeling “spiritual” at the time, are therefore more likely to have a greater sense of satisfaction in prayer and praise than those who have a bad memory and vocabulary. And, because good memory and vocabulary are usually only possessed by those with a reasonably good intellect, powerful prayer and praise would be limited to the intellectuals unless God helped by His Holy Spirit. And this He does in order that fleshly pride (which intellectualism so easily produces) might not take control and dominate. God has a rather neat habit of deliberately choosing the unschooled, low-born nobodies, who tend to be despised by those who think they are “somebody,” and endows them with gifts and abilities that exceed their greatest expectation. Why? So that “no flesh should glory in His presence.”

INSPIRED SUPERNATURAL WORSHIP

In the operation of the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit releases the speaker from step by step thought processes. The conscious mind (intellect) is by-passed, and the speaker is released from dependence on word and phrase specifics. The Holy Spirit reaches beneath the conscious mind, and, by a supernatural quickening in the deep inner consciousness or sub-conscious mind, referred to as our “spirit” in Scripture, a spontaneous upsurge of praise in a foreign language takes place.

The speaking in tongues is a kind of tranced utterance, in which the speaker pours out an impassioned rhapsody, by which his faith receives both expression and exaltation. The speaker becomes almost like an outside listener. He is fully yielded to God, and simply carried by his will, as on a divine stream. He could hinder the expression but would not do so unless required by the circumstances. There is no effort to speak on his part, and not the least possible struggle. The whole experience is most sacred, the Holy Spirit playing on the vocal chords as on a harp.

Some tongue speakers were not able to tell others the meaning of what they were saying, while others received this additional power; and there were those who, though not speaking in tongues themselves, were able to interpret what the inspired speakers were saying. In all cases there seems to have been a kind of immediate inspiration, so that what they did was not the effect of calculation or preparation, but of strong present

impulse.

One more point is worth presenting to show that the apostles were not preaching the gospel in tongues on the day of Pentecost:

It is clear from Acts 2:6 that the apostles did not speak in tongues because they had an audience. They were speaking before the crowd arrived. The crowd gathered because they heard them speaking their languages in tongues.

This suggests that the apostles would have spoken in tongues whether the crowd had gathered or not. They would hardly have done so if they were preaching the gospel. Reason alone teaches that it would have been pointless standing up to preach the gospel if there was no audience. However, their action makes sense if they were praising God. They could continue doing this with great benefit to themselves whether a crowd gathered or not, because it would edify and build them up, and magnify God.

It seems evident that whatever they were saying, it didn't matter if the majority of their audience arrived on the scene some time after they had started. Once again, this would hardly apply if it was a gospel message that was being preached. But it would make no difference if they were engaged in praise and worship.

ACTS 10:46

In this third passage of Scripture dealing with the gift of tongues, it again becomes evident that the gift consisted of praise and not preaching, and that it was primarily a “sign” gift.

Up until this period in Acts 10, the gospel had been confined and restricted to the Jewish people. The Jewish Christians, including the apostles, were still very prejudiced against the gentiles, regarding them as “unclean,” and unworthy of the gospel. In fact, racial prejudice was so great that they regarded it as being unlawful for a Jew to keep company with a gentile, or to enter his house and eat with him (Acts 10:28. 11:3).

However, God's purpose in His son involved the gentiles as well as the Jews and the time finally came for the call to go out to them. Peter was chosen by God to initiate the new move, and, through a vision and the arrival of visitors providentially sent; he was directed to the house of a certain gentile named Cornelius. Reluctantly he entered his house, knowing full well how the rest of his Jewish brethren and friends would react when they found out. After entering the house, and coming under the

conviction that God was not a respecter of persons, Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and all who had gathered there.

“While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the Word. And the Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were astonished, because that on the gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter: “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?”

The gentiles, like the Jews, also had a “Pentecost.” The Holy Spirit was poured upon them and was manifested in the same way through speaking in tongues. And, as in the case of Acts 2, the gift of tongues also functioned as a “sign” gift. It came as a sign to overcome Jewish prejudice and unbelief. It was a sign to Jewish unbelievers who did not believe the gentiles could belong to the body of Christ. Without this sign, the Jewish Christians would never have accepted that God was calling the gentiles, and would have continued in unbelief of His purpose. When Peter and his Jewish companions heard the gentiles magnifying and praising God (probably in the Hebrew tongue which would be a “new tongue” to them), they knew from this “sign” that God had indeed accepted them. And the other Jewish apostles and brethren in Judea were also forced to bow before this divine appointment due to the unmistakable sign of tongues which took place (Acts 11:18).

When Cornelius and his friends started speaking in tongues, they were clearly praising God and not preaching the gospel! Verse 46 is quite explicit when it states that the Jewish visitors heard them “speak with tongues, and magnify the Lord.” The word “magnify” means to make great, increase, enlarge. It is the same word used in Lk. 1:46 where Mary said: “My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.” On this occasion she was praising and extolling the Lord.

A moment’s reflection soon reveals that it would have been most unlikely that Cornelius would preach the gospel in tongues before being converted and baptized. Peter had already preached it in a language common to all present! Thus, prior to speaking in tongues, Peter had already preached the gospel, and all present believed and accepted it. However, not all believed that God would accept the gentiles into His fold, so the gift of tongues was bestowed as a sign and evidence that He had.

Now, it must be emphasized that, while it is true that the gift of tongues functioned as a “sign” on this occasion, it would be wrong to

restrict its benefit to that purpose alone. It also induced excitement and astonishment among the Christian believers, and, without a doubt, ministered edification to them all, speaker and hearer alike. Such supernatural outbursts of praise could not fail to stir even the coldest Christian heart, warming and edifying it with the glow of the manifest presence of God. It functioned both as a sign to dispel unbelief and as a means of edification to upbuild faith. We have once again in this episode, the dual purpose of the gift demonstrated.

ACTS 19:6

On this occasion Paul met certain disciples at Ephesus who had not received the Holy Spirit since they believed. They had only been baptized into John's baptism, and "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." These disciples clearly had not seen or heard anything about the Holy Spirit. Nobody had taught them about the gifts of the Spirit and they had not seen manifestations of them. Due to no fault of their own, they were in a state of unbelief concerning the whole matter. It was therefore very significant and appropriate that when Paul laid hands on them after they were baptized in the name of Jesus, "the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied."

This time the gift of tongues was accompanied by the gift of prophecy, providing an unmistakable sign and evidence that confirmed Paul's preaching and teaching. Such gifts also assured them of their acceptance by God. They were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13), by which also they were edified, exhorted and comforted.

When these disciples at Ephesus spoke in tongues, they were clearly not preaching the gospel. Paul had just preached it and by this time all present had become believers.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:21-22

In this fifth section of Scripture the apostle Paul quotes Isa. 28:11-12 saying: "Through men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people, and yet for all that they will not hear me, says the Lord." Paul then says: "Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to those who do not believe ..."

The context of Isa. 28 is set in a period of history when Israel was apostate. She refused to listen to God's warning of judgement given in her

Hebrew language through the prophets and ended up mocking them and treating them with disdain. God warned them that in the coming judgement He would send a foreign nation against them whose tongue they would not understand. He was referring to the invasion of Palestine by the Assyrians whose language was unknown to Israel. The Israelites refused to listen to the Word of God declared to them in their own language by the prophets, but when they heard the foreign tongue of the invading Assyrians in their land, it was an unmistakable sign that God's Word was true and reliable. However, in spite of this, they did not repent or reform.

The significance of Isa. 28:11-12 goes back to Deu. 28:49 where the Lord prophesied that He would bring a nation against Israel "whose tongue you shall not understand."

The word "tongues" in 1 Cor. 14:21 clearly relates to the Assyrian dialect; a known and spoken language. The Greek word is "glossos" and is derived from "glossa," which is translated "tongues" in the next verse (1 Cor. 14:22). It occurs about 15 times in the same chapter. It is clear from 1 Cor. 14:21-22 that Paul puts the gift of tongues ("glossa") into the same category as a known and spoken language such as the Assyrian tongue.

This is also evident in Act. 2. The Greek word for "tongues" in v4, 11 is also "glossa," and as we have seen, it relates to the actual languages known and spoken by people from 16 different foreign countries who were visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

This is confirmed in Act. 2:8 where the Greek word "dialektos," from which we get the English word "dialect," is translated "tongue," and in v6 it is translated "language." Dialektos is clearly used synonymously with "glossa" and means a known spoken language.

Dialektos is also translated "tongue" in Acts 21:40, 22:2, 26:14 and refers to the known and spoken Hebrew language.

The word "glossa" primarily means human language, but several times in the New Testament it refers to the literal tongue which of course is the organ of speech, without which the gift of tongues could not operate. Glossa is used some 30 times in the Greek Old Testament (the LXX or Septuagint) and always its meaning is normal human language.

SUMMARY

We have seen that the gift of tongues was not the ability to preach the gospel in a foreign language, but rather inspired praise. Its

initial purpose was to confirm and vindicate preaching, acting as a sign to unbelievers. Its function as a “sign” is specifically stated and emphasized in Mk. 16:17 and 1 Cor. 14:22, and is implied in Heb. 2:3-4.

It was precisely for this reason that the gift of tongues was manifested at both the Jewish and gentile Pentecost in Act 2 and 10. On these occasions a supernatural sign such as tongues was required to dispel Jewish prejudice and unbelief, and to vindicate the apostle’s testimony.

The gift of tongues was the most effective way of accomplishing this - even more effective than the gift of healing. Others besides the Christians could and did heal. The sons of the Pharisees, for instance, were able to heal and even Beelzebub was regarded as having power to work in this manner (Lk. 11:14-19). But, to hear unlearned and illiterate men fluently reciting and recounting the wonderful works of God from the Old Testament Scriptures which were near and dear to every Jewish heart, not in a meaningless babble but in real intelligible foreign languages which they had never learned or spoken before, was something altogether too wonderful and miraculous to be surpassed. It was unprecedented in the history of the nation. Healings had taken place, and even the dead brought back to life in the days of Elijah and Elisha, but nothing like this. It was unprecedented and could not be treated lightly or be rejected.

We have also seen that although the gift of tongues functioned primarily as a sign gift, it was not limited to this operation or effect. It also had edification value for believers, and this point is emphasized in 1 Cor. 14 as we shall see. When used properly, the gift of tongues, along with all the other gifts, could “profit” or benefit the church (1 Cor. 12:7), and was put on a par with the gift of prophecy (14:5).

It must also be self evident from what we have considered so far, that the gift of tongues was an actual language which, although it had never been learned by the speaker, was nevertheless a real language or dialect spoken somewhere by someone. Tongues, to be a “sign” to unbelievers, had to be recognized and understood by the unbeliever! If they did not recognize and understand the language, they could easily regard it as unintelligible gibberish and conclude that those who were speaking were mad.

It is certainly clear that the Jewish visitors referred to in Acts 2, heard the apostles speaking in their own foreign languages and dialects. And it is equally as clear that the “tongues” in which Peter and his companions heard Cornelius and his friends magnify God, was also a recognized language. It would have to be a language that the Jewish spectators could

recognize and understand in order to overcome and dispel their prejudices. If they couldn't recognize and understand the language being spoken, their strong Jewish prejudices, if not that of their brethren back in Judea, could easily convince them that it was merely unintelligible gibberish emanating from excited flesh, inspired by satan, and not a genuine language inspired by the Holy Spirit at all; making it subject to suspicion.

Peter tells us that “the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15), and that God “gave them the same gift that He gave to us” (Acts 11:17), “putting no difference between us and them ...” (Acts 15:8-9). These Scriptures leave us in no doubt that the gift given to these gentiles was a real language, such as was given in Acts 2 to the Jews.

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CHAPTER TWO THE UTTERANCES OF EMOTION

Most of the controversy relating to tongues arises in 1 Cor. 12 to 14. On the basis of certain statements in this section of Scripture, particularly chapter 14, some believe that Paul refers to another quite different type of gift of tongues from what we have been considering up to this point. It is believed in some circles that there are two different and distinct kinds of tongues.

The first kind is that which we have been considering in Acts 2 and 10, which was an actual language or dialect known and spoken among men somewhere upon the earth.

The second kind of gift of tongues, to which 1 Cor. 14 is supposed to refer, is understood in some circles to be unintelligible ecstatic utterances in no known language - utterances which are not known or spoken in any human language or dialect upon earth, and which, therefore, “speak not unto men, but unto God.” As one writer puts it: “A spontaneous upsurge from the subjective mind or subliminal consciousness, especially when induced by strong emotional excitement, resulting in the outpouring of apparently unintelligible ecstatic praise, thanksgiving and devotion.”

In some circles this is sometimes called a “heavenly prayer language,” and is regarded as expressing feelings rather than logical thought. Because the Greek word is “glossa,” some refer to this heavenly prayer language as “glossolalia.” It is regarded as being specially designed to edify our “spirit” and not our “mind.”

1 Cor. 14:4 is often regarded as teaching this: “He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself.” Also v2: “ ... in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” It is believed that this particular gift of tongues is designed especially for private prayer and devotion. Unlike the other tongues gift, this one is supposed to never function as a sign to unbelievers, because, not being an actual language known or spoken by anyone on earth; no unbeliever in any part of the earth would recognize or understand it.

So then, a distinction is made between the gift of tongues referred to in Acts 2 and 10, and the gift of tongues referred to in 1 Cor. 14. The former was an actual language that ministered to unbelievers because they recognized and understood it, and the latter, referred to as an “unknown tongue” in 1 Cor. 14, is regarded as a language not known or spoken by anyone on earth, and therefore those who speak it “speak not unto men, but unto God.”

Before looking at the reasons why people make this distinction, it should be reiterated that: (A) The Greek word “glossa,” translated “tongues” in 1 Cor. 14 is related to a known and spoken language such as the Assyrian dialect in v21. (B) In v10 Paul relates tongues to the many different languages in the world, “none of which are without signification” (i.e. dumb or meaningless). (C) “Glossa” in Acts 2:4, 11 is used synonymously with “dialektos,” which is translated “tongue” in v8 and “language” in v6 and is related to 16 known and spoken foreign languages in the world at the time (v9-11).

If tongues are not a proper language known and spoken somewhere, then no linguist would be able to recognize them. This would mean they could not be put to an objective test, which means self-generated unintelligible gibberish could be uttered, and there would be no way of knowing the difference. How convenient! Just the kind of arrangement you could expect from the devious and deceitful human heart!

A woman who believed she had the gift of tongues once said to me: “I accept your gift (teaching) why can’t you accept mine?” My reply was: “Because no one knows what you are saying but what I say can be tested because I speak in a language that can be understood.” I suggested that I take a tape recording of her speaking in “tongues” and send it to linguists at a university for analysis, but she declined the offer.

Various reasons are put forward to support the view that tongues involves unintelligible ecstatic utterance:

THE TONGUES OF ANGELS

In 1 Cor. 13:1 Paul says: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels ...” Reference here to tongues of angels has caused many to conclude that the gift of tongues referred to in 1 Cor. 12 to 14 inspired people to speak the language spoken by angels. It is then assumed that angels speak a language that is not known or spoken by anyone on earth, other than those who are inspired to do so. I have underlined the word “assumed” because nowhere is it stated in Scripture that angels speak a language that is different from any language that has ever been spoken upon the earth.

Would it not rather be reasonable to conclude that the original language in which God Himself, through His angels, communicated with man, was the same language in which He communicated with His angels in heaven? Reference is made in 1 Kng. 22 to a prophet hearing an angel

communicating with God and he understood what was being spoken. It is quite possible that their language is that in which the original Scriptures were dictated and written, and in which all nations may ultimately speak during the millennium, not to mention the saints.

One thing is certain: angels do not speak unintelligible gibberish. There are many references in Scripture to them communicating with each other, man and God, and in every case they communicate with definite words which have definite meanings. In view of the fact that 1 Cor. 13:8 says tongues were destined to cease, it is evident that it cannot refer to the tongues of angels because they will never cease. According to Jesus, true believers will be equal with the angels in eternity (Lk 20:36) and will speak with them, as well as join them in praise to God.

It should also be pointed out that Paul's reference in 1 Cor. 13:1 could very well be a hypothetical statement, and not an actual statement of fact. He says: "Though I speak ... with tongues of angels." The word "though" suggests he is speaking hypothetically. It is in the same hypothetical context that Paul also refers to understanding all mysteries and all knowledge (v2). This is clearly a hypothetical statement for there has never been a man upon earth who has fitted into such a category. Such an one would have to be omniscient like God Himself. Even Paul confessed a little further on in the same chapter that "we see through a glass darkly" i.e. puzzling reflections in a mirror. Jesus also confessed that he did not know everything. He did not know the date of his second coming, and he said that the angels didn't know either (Mk. 13:32).

There could also be another reason for Paul speaking hypothetically. In a later section it shall be shown from Scripture that not every member of the body of Christ received the gift of tongues. God distributed the gift to different people according to His will. Quite a substantial group of Christians did not have the gift of tongues. They received different gifts. Therefore, when Paul said: "Though I speak in the tongues of men ..." he could have been allowing for the fact that some don't. Those who don't may have the gift of prophecy or knowledge or faith, and for that reason he refers to these gifts as well in the same section of 1 Cor. 13.

A LANGUAGE SATAN CANNOT UNDERSTAND?

Another reason advanced to support the second type of tongue gift is that it enables us to communicate with God in a language that Satan cannot understand, and therefore prevents him from thwarting our prayers.

This idea, which has penetrated many circles over the years, is absolute nonsense. Nowhere in the Word of God is it stated that the gift of tongues was given for this reason. Not one single Scripture can be produced which teaches that the gift of tongues was given so that Christians can communicate with God in a language that Satan cannot understand. Such a concept turns the gift of tongues into a very dramatic and adventurous experience, and gives it a sense of power, waging war with supernatural beings; and for that reason has been eagerly sought after by many people. There are however, much higher and more noble reasons for the gift of tongues than this.

If Satan is as tradition falsely teaches, a fallen angel, how could the speaking in tongues of angels confuse him? Being an angel himself, and, as many believe, having occupied a prominent position among the angels in heaven where he communicated with them, he would be quite familiar with their language. Not only that, but Paul stresses throughout 1 Cor. 14 the importance of messages in tongues being interpreted. If Satan could not understand the message in tongues, and the message was given for that reason, why would Paul insist on each message being interpreted? All Satan would have to do is hang around and wait for the interpretation! Would Paul be so foolish as to play into his hands and negate the very purpose for which the gift of tongues was given? By no means! He clearly did not regard the gift of tongues as being given to confuse Satan. He certainly does not teach this concept anywhere in his writings.

“UNKNOWN TONGUE”

The frequent use of the phrase “unknown tongue” is also taken to mean that the language is not known or spoken by anyone anywhere among men. It should be pointed out however, that the word “unknown” is in italics in the Authorised Version. This indicates that it does not appear in the original Greek manuscript. It has simply been added by the Authorised Version translators. Even if it did belong to the original manuscript, it still would not necessarily mean that the tongue was not a known language spoken by someone somewhere. Because the tongue had not been learnt by the spirit-endowed speaker, and was “new” to him, it would be “unknown” to him, but not to those to whom the message was being spoken. The word “unknown” is to be understood in relation to the speaker - or to a congregation which lacked a person with the gift of interpretation. But there is no justification for concluding that the tongue

was foreign to any language spoken upon the earth. Otherwise it would be unintelligible gibberish - incoherent meaningless jargon.

“ECSTATIC UTTERANCE”

Some modern translators refer to the gift of tongues as “the language of ecstasy” or “ecstatic utterance.” On this basis it is sometimes concluded that “tongues” are an unintelligible ecstatic utterance in no known language.

According to the dictionary, “ecstasy” means “an exalted state of feeling - a state of deep, joyous emotion.” The phrase: “ecstatic utterance” therefore conveys the idea of utterances induced by strong emotional excitement. This, unfortunately, suggests an upsurge which originates in, and emanates from excited flesh. In other words - flesh inspired. That such phenomena can take place as a result of strong emotional excitement is well attested throughout history, particularly among certain native tribes, who, after prolonged emotional excitement induced by repetitious singing and dancing, get into a trance-like state and frenzy, and start jabbering and babbling incoherently with their tongues.

From time immemorial it has been a characteristic of fakirs and others who make no profession of Christianity to get into a state of highly wrought emotional excitement (ecstasy) in which state ecstatic babblings take place. In a T.V. documentary on Bali, priests and priestesses could be seen in a self-induced trance in which their hands and body were shaking and they started speaking in “tongues,” laughing and weeping and getting hysterical. Their utterances, although incoherent and not understood, were regarded as coming from the gods. In various ways they get themselves into a semiconscious hallucinatory spell in which they believe they are in contact with their gods. As they fall into a state of euphoria, it is almost as if they are drugged. Drugs, in fact, are sometimes used to induce a state of euphoria.

Stirring music and whirling dancing are also used to whip up the emotions to create an ecstatic experience resulting in outbursts of “tongues.” The repetitive music and dancing puts the mind into a neutral gear enabling the emotions to take over. As the worshippers experience ecstasy, they are lifted above the level of ordinary experience into an abnormal sense of consciousness, experiencing an exhilarating condition involving good feelings which releases them from the cares and concerns of daily life, giving a great sense of escapism. Such worshippers feel

fantastic and believe they have communed with their gods. Testimonies by some Pentecostal-charismatic believers describe a similar experience. They attribute various states of euphoria to the Holy Spirit, particularly in relation to the gift of tongues. Their conclusion is: “I felt so good ... I never felt this way before ... it’s got to be God.” But this does not necessarily make it God at all.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, the city of Corinth was filled with pagan priests and priestesses, sorcerers and soothsayers. People involved in idolatry got carried away in various states of ecstasy, claiming to possess divine power from their gods and to be under divine inspiration. Members of the church at Corinth had got caught up in this and carried away by it prior to conversion. Paul indicates this in 1 Cor. 12:1-2: “Now concerning spiritual gifts brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as you were led.”

They had been led away and caught up in the emotional euphoria and ecstasy generated by the flesh in its pursuit of a spiritual experience with the gods, and there was always a danger of falling prey to the same carnal emotions and impulses in relation to their pursuit of a spiritual experience with the One true God.

THE UTTERANCES OF EMOTIONS

There is nothing wrong with emotion in itself. God has created us with emotion. It is a very important and integral part of our being and expresses itself in various ways. It has several abilities and functions. Crying, sighing, groaning and laughing are some of them. They are a safety valve to release pent-up pressures and frustrations and feelings of joy or sorrow and grief.

Bottling up emotion is not good and can be dangerous. It can cause all sorts of psychological problems, frustrations and hang-ups which can ultimately explode in a rage of temper or fit of violence. In times of distress and frustration it is better to release the tension by groaning or crying, than bottling it up till it bursts forth in actions that may be regretted later.

A dictionary definition of “cry” is “loud inarticulate utterance of grief, pain, fear (joy).” Thus, a cry is an **UTTERANCE**. True, the utterance is inarticulate; the language is unknown and unintelligible; the words or sounds are incoherent. But it is an utterance nevertheless,

expressing very real things. Everyone's laugh and cry is different!

The reason why the utterance of a cry or groan is inarticulate is because the fear, pain, burden or grief causing it is too deep, upsetting or complicated to be expressed in words. The mind and words are not sufficient to cope or comfort. So the heart (emotions) come to the rescue and release the pent-up grief, frustration, pressure and burden.

This is one of the reasons why condolence cards are produced. They contain carefully worded messages of comfort which the average person finds difficult to express.

Discerning people understand the language of a sigh or cry or groan. God certainly does! Many times in the Psalms in particular we read about God hearing the cry of His servants and responding to it as to a prayer. Reference is also made in Mk. 8:12 to Jesus sighing deeply in his spirit, and his words which follow reveal the frustration and disappointment that his sigh signified. His Father knew the significance of the sigh before Jesus stated it in words.

Sometimes in our weaknesses and infirmities, it is difficult to find the right words to pray, and we end up with "groanings that cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26) i.e. inarticulate groans - "sighs too deep for words" (Revised Version). But He who searches the hearts and knows the mind of our spirit intercedes for us, and sees to it that all things work together for our good.

Laughter likewise is a God-given language. It is inarticulate and unintelligible, but it has a message; it expresses something not easy for words to express. Much more pleasure, joy and satisfaction is felt by the release of the emotion of laughter, than could be felt by only using words to describe how funny or joyous the situation was that made us laugh.

Laughter is an expression of joy (or sometimes scorn). But, like crying, sighing and groaning, laughter is not a supernatural divinely inspired utterance. It is simply the outworking of natural inborn abilities or functions with which God has created us, which enable us to release pent-up emotions.

I believe that many of the modern tongues utterances fit into a similar category i.e they are an emotional release - the outworking of natural processes and not supernatural. True, there may be some emotional or psychological benefit, but if it is not of the spirit it is of the flesh and is therefore not worshipping God in spirit and in truth, no matter how satisfying, exciting, enjoyable and exhilarating it might be.

BABY LANGUAGE

When words fail to express feelings, the emotion can take over and release the feelings in inarticulate and unintelligible sounds or words. A similar process occurs when a baby reaches the stage when it wants to express its feelings but cannot, due to lack of word power. It makes all sorts of unintelligible words and sounds. Some get into quite a conversation with themselves, chattering away as if they knew and understood every word that they were saying. Fluent as it might be, it is not, of course, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly enough, it is quite common for Pentecostals to refer to tongues as “the baby language.” There is more truth in this than what is generally understood and appreciated! I remember hearing a man speaking out in tongues, and all he said was: “Ba Ba Ba ...” repeating the same word like a baby countless times. But we are told in 1 Tim. 6:20 and 2 Tim. 2:16 to avoid vain babblings i.e. empty sounds - speech that has no value. If known speech, empty in value, is unacceptable, how much more unknown speech, especially if it is unintelligible gibberish?! The English word “babble” is derived from Babel where confusion of tongues took place. Modern translations render Matt. 6:7 as: “Do not go babbling on,” “do not use a lot of meaningless words.” Jesus was against jargon.

We read this in 1 Cor. 13:11: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Again in 1 Cor. 14:20: “Brethren, don’t be like children in your understanding ... be men.” “Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor. 15:34).

One Pentecostal penned these words: “Sometimes our praying is hindered because we find it hard to put our deepest thoughts and feelings into words, and yet we don’t want to lapse into silence either. And here the gift of tongues is an enormous help because we can simply babble our love and longing to God, not worried by inadequate vocabulary or inaccurate grammar ... we can babble to God, much as a toddler talks scribble to its delighted parents.”

TALKING SCRIBBLE

The comparison between tongues and scribble is rather interesting. Modern art is often abstract involving just a scribble - a lot of senseless lines, roaming at random, heading in no particular direction and

forming no particular shape or form. Once upon a time artists would have regarded it as an abuse or adulteration and violation of art. But, once one or two respectable and highly esteemed artists accepted it and practised it, promoting it and putting their names to it; it became the in-thing to do. People would then stand back and say: “Wow” (“Praise the Lord”) as they imagined that every meaningless stroke or line conveyed a message. Out of one hundred people who offered their own interpretation, one hundred different interpretations could be given!

Almost anything, no matter how bizarre, can become acceptable and respectable to many people if respectable people give credence to it! Such is the fickleness of man.

Some years ago the Museum of Modern Art in New York hung “Le Bateau,” by Matisse, upside-down for 47 days before they discovered their mistake. It confirmed what many have always believed about art. Many are being led around by the nose by high society peer pressure. They dare not reveal their ignorance by expressing their true feelings about a so-called “great master.” They bleat a sigh of sheer joy at such supposed skilled workmanship, when in truth, much modern art expression looks more like something a four year old brings home from pre-school painting, or like the result of an elephant making random strokes on a piece of paper with a paint brush held in his trunk.

There is a lot of truth in the famous story of “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Only the “wise” could see the fine material, but the folly of this was exposed by the honesty of a young lad. He, like many others, couldn’t see the material, but only he had the honesty to openly admit it, calling out in a loud voice: “The Emperor hasn’t got any clothes on!”

God wants us to live in the real word of honesty and truth, and not be duped or deceived into imagining that self-generated unintelligible gibberish is Holy Spirit inspired utterance, no matter how “respectable” those who do it might be. It only needs someone honest like the young lad in the story of the Emperor to call out and say: “Modern tongues is self-generated by the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit and is only gibberish,” and many would come out of the woodwork and say: “Yes, I have always believed such to be the case but was too afraid to say so.”

Many today who once spoke in tongues, freely admit they always had serious doubts that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and felt it was self-generated. Some, unfortunately, have given up on God due to disillusionment caused by those who insist that all Christians should speak in tongues.

TO SOME, THE UNINTELLIGIBLE IS MORE SPIRITUAL

In extreme cases, some who speak in tongues put more value on speaking and hearing unintelligible words than they do on hearing and teaching sound exposition from the Word of God in a language they can understand. The former gives them more of a “buzz” than the latter and they regard it as being more “spiritual.”

This tendency to be more keen to hear unintelligible utterances than good sound intelligible teaching can be likened to the man sitting at a radio telescope who had no desire to read or hear the volumes of clearly written intelligible edifying revelation in the Word of God, but who would become ecstatic if he could hear an unintelligible meaningless “bleep” come from space.

There was once a newspaper article relating to radio telescopes with the heading: “Is someone out in space calling us?” The answer is: “Yes.” But we don’t need radio telescopes or unintelligible sounds to hear the voice. God, the creator of space, is calling us and has given us a book called the Bible, containing thousands of intelligible words which reveal who He is and what His purpose is for our lives!

The true gift of tongues is clearly Spirit inspired and not flesh inspired. Therefore, the phrase “ecstatic utterance,” which tends to suggest utterance induced by human emotion, is not an altogether appropriate designation, and can be very misleading. Significantly enough, the Greek words used in relation to the gift of tongues in the New Testament have no affinity with the word “ecstasy.” Not the slightest hint is given in the original Greek words that the gift of tongues was induced by emotional excitement. This is purely the idea of certain modern translators who, in their usage of the phrase “ecstatic utterance,” have not given a true translation of the original, but merely their own interpretation (possibly influenced by what they have observed at certain “Pentecostal” meetings). Unfortunately, such translations can easily lead to the deliberate whipping up of emotion in religious meetings in order that tongues might be manifested. One cannot help but become suspicious when tongues are manifested when preceded by a highly charged emotional atmosphere.

* * * * *

CHAPTER THREE

“SPEAKS NOT TO MEN BUT TO GOD”

While it is true that the gift of tongues is inspired by the Holy Spirit and not human spirit or emotion, it does not therefore follow that emotion is never involved or allowed at any stage. Emotion is the effect and not the cause of Spirit-inspired utterances. The gift of tongues is not produced by emotion, but rather emotion is produced by the gift of tongues! That is, when the Holy Spirit moves upon a person, inspiring him with a supernatural utterance, it inevitably produces an exalted state of feeling - a state of deep joyous emotion. Some believe that the miracle of tongues on the day of Pentecost caused joyful exuberant laughter and excitement among the apostles, causing onlookers to think they were drunk (Act. 2:13). Even in cases where the speaker may not understand what he is saying, the experience of having his spirit quickened by the divine anointing, has an edifying and exhilarating effect within.

Thus, in 1 Cor. 14:4 Paul says: “He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself.” Though he may not understand with his mind what he is saying, a tongue speaker can nevertheless edify himself in his spirit in the knowledge that the praise or prayer is faithfully reflected in some foreign tongue, and that God, who knows all languages, understands it. The sense of intensity of that brother’s experience, even though it may not convey a clear message to his mind, stirs up feelings of joy in his heart and spirit. The experience creates a sense of marvel and “builds up” and strengthens feelings of love, praise and adoration. Under such circumstances, when the mind does not understand the message, the “edification” is more in the realm of feelings of exhilaration in the deep inner consciousness of the spirit. This could be compared with the effect of spiritual music. Although there may not be any words accompanying the music, and even if the listener is ignorant of the words; the fact that he knows the music is giving glory to God, it can have an edifying and uplifting effect upon him.

The apostle Paul permitted and encouraged the brother who could not understand the tongue in which he spoke to “keep silence in the church, and speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor. 14:28). Paul does not give this counsel because the tongue was some special heavenly prayer language that could not be understood by anyone on earth. Nowhere in his writings does he teach that. He clearly teaches that the tongue speaker must remain silent “if there be no interpreter” (v28). In other words: the tongue

message was given to be interpreted and understood, but if an interpreter was not present in the congregation, the speaker must not speak out, but remain quiet, speaking to himself and God in his spirit.

In passing, it should be pointed out that it would be a mistake to conclude that a person can only speak to himself and God in his spirit by speaking in tongues. There are many examples in Scripture of people meditating, worshipping and praying to God in their spirit in their own language. For example: Eph. 5:19: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Also Ps. 19:14: "Let the ... meditation of my heart be acceptable to Thee O Lord." When Jesus said that those who worship God must worship Him in spirit (Jn. 4:24), he did not mean they must do it in tongues. If so, all believers would have to have the gift of tongues, but as we shall see, not all were given this gift.

So then, there is no justification for concluding that there was a second type of tongues gift involving unintelligible ecstatic utterances in no known language, simply because some modern translators give us the phrase "ecstatic utterance." The original Greek does not justify such a translation as shall become more obvious as we proceed with this study. And it should also become apparent that Paul nowhere refers to a gift of tongues designed to operate exclusively in a private capacity. He does not divide tongues into two groups: one for private use and one for church use.

Unfortunately, the common practise of dividing the gift of tongues into two different categories is quite artificial and false. There was only one gift. This one gift could be exercised in two different ways, but it was still one and the same gift. The two different ways in which it could be exercised were determined by the circumstances at the time. And these circumstances had to do with whether or not interpretation was possible. If interpretation was possible, the gift was exercised in a certain way. If interpretation was not possible, it was exercised in another way.

Nowhere in 1 Cor. 14 or elsewhere, does Paul divide his statements concerning tongues in such a way as to form them into two separate gifts. Nowhere does he say that some of his statements apply to a private situation and some apply to a church situation.

From the beginning of 1 Cor. 12 through to the end of chapter 14, Paul is talking exclusively about the operation of spiritual gifts *in a church situation*. The subject throughout is *body ministry in the church*. He refers to one and the same gift throughout - the gift as it was to operate

in the church and for the common good of the church. If there was a separate and distinct tongues gift which operated exclusively in a private capacity, Paul never refers to it in 1 Cor. 12-14.

In 1 Cor. 14 Paul refers to the “church” seven times. The first reference occurs very early in the chapter in v4, showing that right from the start he had the church situation specifically in mind. And, prior to that, ignoring the parenthesis of chapter 13; Paul had also been concentrating his thoughts on the church where he refers to it as a “body.” Not once does he refer to the exercising of spiritual gifts outside the church context, in a private context. Yet, if the distinction between the supposed private and church gift of tongues was as clear as some suppose, one would expect to find at least one positive statement to this effect. Instead, Paul says nothing in his writings about such a distinction.

“... SPEAKS NOT TO MEN, BUT TO GOD”

How then, are we to understand the statement in 1 Cor. 14:2 which says: “He who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men, but to God, for no man understands him: howbeit in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”

Seeing that the gift of tongues referred to in Acts 2 and 10 did speak to men inasmuch that they understood the message, it is concluded that Paul must refer to a different type of gift in 1 Cor. 14:2 because he says those who speak it, “speak not to men but to God, for no man understands him.” On this basis it is believed that the gift of tongues in Act. 2 and 10 spoke to men in a human language, but the gift of tongues in 1 Cor. 14 spoke to God in a heavenly prayer language not known or spoken by humans. At the outset it is natural to wonder why God would want to communicate with Himself through a person in a language the person does not understand. It is hard to make sense of God inspiring a man to do this, when He could just as easily inspire him to speak in his own language as he has done on countless other occasions.

It is important to remember that in 1 Cor. 14 Paul is specifically talking about a church situation, and his statement must be interpreted and understood in that context. And a careful reading of the statement in its context reveals that Paul has in mind the situation when a brother gives a tongue utterance which no one in the assembly can interpret and therefore cannot understand. Under such circumstances, he “speaks not to men, but unto God, *for no man understands him.*” This last statement, “for no man

understands him,” explains why it is that one speaking in an unknown tongue is speaking only to God and not to men! It does not mean that God has given him the ability to speak some unique “heavenly” language that neither he nor anyone else on earth can understand! It simply means that no one present in the congregation can understand it if it is not interpreted.

This is why Paul, in the same section of the chapter goes on to emphasize the importance of interpreting a tongue message. In v5 he says: “Greater is he who prophesies than he who speaks with tongues, *except he interpret, that the church* (“men”) may receive edifying.” In other words, the “unknown tongue” was a real language capable of interpretation, but unless it was interpreted, the speaker would be speaking “not unto men, but unto God.”

ABUSE AND MISUSE OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES

In this whole chapter, Paul unquestionably has in mind a specific church situation, involving the abuse and misuse of the gift of tongues. Meetings were taking place in an indecent and disorderly manner. Messages in tongues were flowing thick and fast without much concern for interpretation. All those who possessed the gift of tongues were speaking at once, causing confusion. There was just one loud din and nobody could understand a word that was being said, resulting in no edification at all. It was almost as if each tongue speaker was seeking to out-do the other. For many of them, the exercising of the gift had become an ego trip - a means of attracting attention to themselves and showing how spiritual they were. But in actual fact it revealed the opposite, for it showed how proud and carnal they were. We can see from this that spiritual gifts and spirituality are not synonymous. Spiritual fruit however, and spirituality are synonymous, and one does not need supernatural power to produce the fruit.

The gift of tongues is a more spectacular or ostentatious gift than some of the others, and the Corinthians’ passion for it, and disorderly display of it was a kind of childish ostentation. Their passion for it was like the child who craves bright and noisy toys. The brighter and noisier the toy, the better they like it. Their handling of the gift of God was totally unbalanced and out of order, and was bringing reproach upon the church. Unbelievers who came to their meetings left just as quickly, concluding that they were mad. They were very zealous, but very immature. Hence Paul issued this exhortation to them: “Brethren, cease to be childish and

immature in your thinking and outlook: Be as innocent of evil as babes, but be grown-up in your thinking and understanding” (v20).

So then, the statement: “He who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not to men, but to God” relates to a church situation and not some second-type gift for private use. It does not mean that the “unknown tongue” was some unintelligible language, not known or spoken anywhere except by God. It simply refers to a message given in the church which cannot be interpreted or understood by anyone present. Under such circumstances, the tongue speaker “speaks not to men, but unto God.” Or, as v9 puts it: “You shall speak into the air.” Only God can understand it, and the congregation is left in the dark, totally ignorant of the meaning of what has been uttered, and therefore not the least bit edified. The whole of verse 9 reads like this: “If your tongue does not produce intelligible speech, how can anyone know what you are saying? You will be talking into the air.”

In view of this, Paul instructs all those with the gift of tongues to only speak if an interpreter is present. And failing that, he encourages them to pray for the ability to interpret themselves so that the church might be edified. Failing that, they are told to remain silent and refrain from giving verbal expression to their “tongue,” and to be content with speaking quietly to themselves and God.

SILENCE

“**I**f there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and God” (v28). The Greek word translated “silence” means “hush.” It means absolute silence. (Compare its use in Acts 15:12-13. 21:40). It does not mean whisper or mutter! Paul is extremely clear about this. He refused to allow a tongue speaker to even whisper or mutter a message unless it was interpreted. Such a tongue speaker had to “hush” and speak to himself and God in his inner consciousness or “spirit.” And, as Paul says when concluding his instructions: “If any man regards himself as being spiritual, or a prophet, let him acknowledge that the things I write *are the commandments of the Lord.*” Refusal to conform to what Paul says is a sign of ignorance (v38), pride, conceit and rebellion. Abuse and misuse of the gift of tongues is not a sign of spirituality but of carnality.

The practise of some Pentecostal churches, especially at prayer or home meetings, of all speaking out aloud together in tongues (so much so

that anyone who has an intelligible utterance to offer has to either wait for the din to die down before his words of edification can be heard, or has to speak them out without being heard) is one of the most clearly defined unscriptural practises in which a church can indulge. It was in fact, this kind of practise that caused Paul to pen the fourteenth chapter of first Corinthians. In Paul's view, such practise is childish, confusing, mad, indecent and disorderly, and is calculated to bring reproach upon the church from the very people the church is trying to reach. I personally know of a number of folk who, as a result of encountering this kind of noisy incoherent outburst at a meeting, were completely turned off, being convinced the people were "mad," and have never returned since.

It is rather ironical, that some who ended up in the various Pentecostal groups used to criticize the Roman Catholics for their Latin liturgy, but now allow a babble of unintelligible gibberish in their own meetings. At least the Latin language is a real intelligible language and only spoken by one man at a time, and most devout Roman Catholics understood what it meant.

There could be more to that name: "Mystery Babylon" (Rev. 17) which is written on the head of the harlot (apostate Christianity) than what meets the eye. "Babylon," of course, means "confusion," and traces its origin to the babble of voices at the tower of Babel (Gen. 11), which was due to the Lord's judgement and condemnation.

CONFUSION IN CHRISTENDOM

But of course the charismatic movement has infiltrated and influenced many different sects and denominations in Christendom. There are members in practically all of the main-line churches who speak in tongues, including Roman Catholics and protestants, Mormons and spiritualists etc. Some of the groups believe in, and practise christening of babies and some are opposed; some believe in, and practise baptism, involving the full immersion in water of people old enough to believe, and some are opposed. There is much "confusion" in Christendom among all the different groups due to disagreement on doctrine, and some fairly fundamental doctrines at that, like the worship of Mary, papal infallibility, the doctrine of substantiation, purgatory, celibacy, clergy-laity distinction and communicating with the dead.

Now, all the conflicting doctrines in Christendom cannot all be right. Some of them have got to be wrong and not according to God's truth, in

which case they would be false (lies). Yet people in all of these groups with conflicting teaching speak in tongues. How could this be in view of the fact that God only gives His holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Act. 5:32) and it is given to confirm and vindicate His truth, not lies. The answer is self-evident: it is not by His Spirit that they are speaking in tongues!

It is true that some churches which allow abuse of the gift of tongues have attracted many people and their congregation has swelled in number. There is a certain type of mind which is attracted to this kind of atmosphere, and a percentage in society fits into this category. Circuses, side-shows, entertainment and noisy crowds have always attracted crowds and some modern churches are like that. I've seen meetings treated like a lolly scramble at a picnic where the pastor threw handfuls of lollies out into the congregation resulting in people scrambling to get them and chew on them during the service. I've seen visiting evangelists run up and down the aisles on the backs of seats and act like clowns indulging in foolish jesting and telling carnal jokes. Fortunately the Lord is not interested in quantity but quality. He is looking for a church that consists of people who have a "sound mind" and who are "sober-minded" - a people who do things "decently and in order" and keep to divinely ordained rules.

A friend of mine who attended a sound church moved on to join a Pentecostal church. When I asked him why he made the move, he said: "Because it is very entertaining." He did not appreciate that true spirituality is not proved by fun and frivolity, jokes and jargon. God is Holy Spirit not the jolly spirit. The temptation to compromise is often great, especially when the congregation is small and when it is felt that such compromise will result in a larger congregation. But the Lord builds the church and the judgement day will declare what He has built and what man has built. There will be a lot of "wood, hay and stubble" consumed on that day. "Many are called, but few are chosen."

The whole point of emitting sound is to convey some intelligible message, even if the means by which it is done is an inanimate musical instrument. Such is the teaching of Paul in 1 Cor. 14:7-8. Unintelligible language is like piping or harping without distinction of sounds. If one note cannot be distinguished from another, failing to produce a definite tune or melody, (as in the case of a child blowing the same discord on a mouth organ or incessantly hitting the same note on a piano), it can be very distracting and wearisome, and not the least bit edifying or helpful.

Paul says it is unprofitable, uncertain and meaningless to those who have to put up with the noise. Such abuse, sometimes caused through lack of love and understanding, turns the gift of tongues into a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1).

The practise of some Pentecostals to commence a prayer or conclude a prayer with a vehement outburst in tongues, or to use tongues as a form of exclamation or greeting without offering interpretation, is never advocated or encouraged by Paul. Quite the opposite! He clearly teaches that words without meaning, or sounds without sense which convey no instruction or edification, should never be verbally uttered in company. To do so is a mark of immaturity or emotional instability or ego, and is analogous to a child entering company, beating noisily on a drum seeking to draw attention to self and be heard.

“HOWBEIT, IN THE SPIRIT HE SPEAKS MYSTERIES”

We have seen that Paul’s reference in 1 Cor. 14:2 to a tongue speaker “speaking not to men but to God” relates to the situation where “no man understands him,” due to the message not being interpreted, resulting in only God knowing what has been said. The message ministered nothing to men because they couldn’t understand a word that was spoken. And, in Paul’s estimation, this was by no means a desirable state of affairs. Throughout 1 Cor. 14 he speaks against such practise and discourages it as we have seen. He is adamant that tongue messages should never be given in company unless interpreted, even though God understands them.

“Howbeit,” continues Paul, even though a person’s tongue utterance may not be understood by those present, “in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” What does this mean?

Some translators give the word “spirit” a capital “S,” and give us the word “by” instead of “in,” causing it to read like this: “by the Spirit he speaks mysteries.” This conveys the sense of “being inspired by the Holy Spirit ...” In fact, the New English Bible reads: “He is no doubt inspired.” And the Amplified Bible reads “in the Holy Spirit.”

There can be no doubt that a man possessing the gift of tongues was inspired by the Holy Spirit. However, Paul may not have been emphasizing that particular aspect in the phrase before us. There is no definite article in the Greek, and the Interlinear Greek-English etc agree it should be translated “in spirit.” The “spirit” with a small “s” refers to the

spirit of man as in verses 14-16, which, of course, has to be quickened by the Holy Spirit before the gift of tongues can operate.

If so, Paul would be saying that although men may not understand a tongue message through failure for it to be interpreted, nevertheless, in his spirit the speaker speaks mysteries. The phrase “he speaks mysteries” does not mean he speaks in a mysterious unintelligible language.

In the New Testament the word “mystery” does not mean something mysterious and unintelligible, but “revealed secret” i.e. something that was once hidden and concealed but now revealed by the Spirit. For example:

1. Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:7-10).
2. God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).
3. The gospel that we are saved by faith and not the works of the law (Rom. 16:25. Eph. 6:19. 1 Tim. 3:9).
4. The church as the Bride (Eph. 5:32).
5. The call of the gentiles (Eph. 3:1-11. Col. 1:26-27).
6. Israel’s blindness (Rom. 11:25).
7. Changed in a twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:51).

The phrase “he speaks mysteries” in 1 Cor. 14:2 is rendered as follows by other translations:

Berkley: “he is uttering secret matters.”

Rotherham: “he is speaking sacred secrets.”

Amplified: “he utters secret truths and hidden things (not obvious to the understanding).”

In this light, the point that Paul seems to be making is this: Although a brother’s tongue utterance may not be able to be interpreted or understood by any of the men present, he is nevertheless inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is therefore uttering secret truths in his spirit. That is, his spirit is unmistakably under the influence of the Holy Spirit, causing some edifying revelation to be uttered. Just because the words cannot be understood by anyone present, and therefore cannot and should not be verbally expressed, it would be a mistake for anyone to conclude that they are empty and valueless, and not of God. Rather, they should pray the more earnestly for the interpretation in order that all might understand and be edified.

When the sacred secrets generated in a Christian’s spirit by the Holy Spirit are interpreted, they have as much edification value as the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5). But if they cannot be interpreted, the brother must remain silent, speaking only to himself and God in his spirit.

In an earlier section we saw from Acts 2:11 that the gift of tongues enabled a person to “speak the wonderful works of God.” It was also pointed out that among the “wonderful works of God” were His dealings with the nation of Israel and His creative acts at the beginning. The Old Testament Scriptures refer to many other wonderful works also. In the Old Testament there are many references to the ultimate divine purpose in Christ and the church, but during Old Testament times they were not understood; they were kept secret and hidden. A veil was over the eyes of those who read them. But in the New Testament times those secrets were gradually unfolded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This was done particularly through the gift of teaching. However the passage now under consideration in 1 Cor. 14:2. indicates that hidden secrets were also revealed through the gift of tongues. Hence, if interpreted, the gift of tongues was of great value in terms of edification. As in the case of the Psalmist whose inspired praises frequently produced revelation, bringing hidden matters to light, providing wonderful edification; so also in the case of the gift of tongues when properly used.

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CHAPTER FOUR EDIFICATION OF BOTH SPIRIT AND MIND

We have seen that if an utterance in tongues could not be interpreted, the brother must remain silent, and speak only to himself and to God. Although this meant that he was unable to edify the congregation, his own spirit was nevertheless edified.

However, as far as Paul was concerned, speaking quietly to oneself and God in the church in a language that could not be understood by anyone present, was not the real purpose of the gift and was by no means the ideal or ultimate with which one should be satisfied. It is never taught in Scripture that the purpose of the gift of tongues was that a man might be able to pray quietly within himself in a language that he couldn't understand! Paul never encourages men to be content and feel fulfilled by praying in tongues with their spirit and not with their mind i.e. to be content with not understanding what they are saying. It is important to realize that Paul's instruction concerning a tongues speaker speaking quietly to himself and God was only given because of failure to attain to the ideal - because of failure of interpretation and understanding. It was simply a temporary expedient - a compromise, and not a state with which one should be totally satisfied.

When Paul speaks of those who speak not to men but to God, for no man understands them, he is not encouraging such practise, but discouraging it. He is simply stating the position of those whose tongue cannot be interpreted by anyone present in the meeting.

The same applies to Paul's instruction concerning a tongues speaker speaking quietly in his own spirit. Paul does not say that this was the actual purpose of the gift. It is simply instruction for those who find themselves in a situation where the main purpose for their gift cannot be achieved; i.e. where the church cannot be edified by an interpretation.

Paul teaches that the gift of tongues was by no means fully operational and providing its intended maximum benefit if it only edified the spirit. When operated fully and properly, it ministered to, and edified both spirit and mind. It was never intended by the Lord that the gift of tongues should only edify the spirit. Those who limit the gift to this area only receive half of its intended benefit.

Throughout 1 Cor. 14 Paul lays great importance upon the edification of the mind. He teaches that understanding is vital. In fact, throughout both the Old and New Testament the Holy Spirit repeatedly emphasizes

the importance of understanding. A quick reference to the word “understanding” in a concordance soon reveals how frequently it is used and encouraged in the Word of God. “Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, but with all your getting, get understanding” (Pr. 4:7). “In understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14:20).

The criteria governing the use of all gifts is *edification* of both spirit and mind. The word “edification” means “build up” and relates to promotion of spiritual growth in knowledge and understanding. For this reason Paul says “desire spiritual gifts, but rather that you may prophesy,” because “he who prophesies speaks to men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:1, 3). In verse 6 Paul says that speaking in tongues is unprofitable to the church unless what he says can be understood, and thus impart revelation, knowledge, and teaching. It is here, as pointed out before, that he illustrates this with the example of inanimate, lifeless instruments such as the flute and harp, or trumpet. If they do not give distinct notes - if one note cannot be distinguished from another, no one will know what tune is being played. It will all be an uncertain and unpleasant sound (verses 7-8).

“So likewise ye, if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how shall it be known what is spoken? for you shall speak into the air” (v9). Words without meaning convey no instruction to the mind. They are merely sounds without sense. But Paul teaches that all speech must be intelligible, comprehensible, rational and coherent. It must be “known;” there must be “signification;” precise meaning must be conveyed. For this reason, a tongues’ message must be interpreted.

“There are,” says Paul, “many different languages in the world, and none of them are meaningless (Grk. “aphonos” i.e. “dumb”). Therefore if I know not the meaning of the language, I shall be unto him that speaks a Barbarian, and he who speaks shall be a barbarian to me” (v11). That is: “If I do not know the meaning of the sound the speaker makes, his words will be gibberish to me, and mine to him” (New English Bible).

“So also you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in building up and edifying the church. Therefore let him who speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he might interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

In this passage, the word “understanding” comes from the Greek word “nous.” Strong’s Concordance says it refers to the mind or intellect. Vine says it “denotes, speaking generally, the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding,

and those of judging, feeling and determining.” “Nous” occurs 24 times in the New Testament and is translated “mind” 17 of those times.

For this reason, many modern translators give us the word “mind” in 1 Cor. 14:14 instead of “understanding” as in the A.V. The phrase “my understanding is unfruitful” is rendered as follows:

Revised Standard Version - “My mind is unfruitful.”

New English Bible - “My intellect lies fallow.”

Jerusalem Bible - “My mind is left barren.”

Notice very carefully then, what the apostle Paul is teaching here. He says that if one prays in an unknown tongue which is not understood or interpreted, his spirit prays, but his mind or intellect gets no benefit. If the mind cannot understand the meaning and significance of the language, it remains unenlightened, inactive and therefore unproductive. And Paul makes it clear that this is not a desirable position to be in.

To settle for speaking in tongues without understanding the significance of what is being said, results in no growth in knowledge, and this is what was happening in the Corinthian church, causing Paul to say: “Be not children in understanding ... be men.” “Some of you have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor. 14:20. 15:34).

CONSCIOUS AND SUB-CONSCIOUS MIND

It has now been ascertained beyond any possible question that in addition to the ordinary objective consciousness, man has beneath this a subjective or sub-conscious mind which is continually controlled by suggestion. It is this subjective mind with which the hypnotist plays his pranks when he has lulled the ordinary objective consciousness to rest.

Much could be said about the incredible potential and workings of the sub-conscious mind, but not now. The main point at this stage is that the sub-conscious mind is referred to in Scripture as man’s “spirit.” Because it is beneath the conscious mind it is referred to as “the spirit of the mind” in Eph. 4:23. So then, as far as 1 Cor. 14 is concerned, “mind” refers to the conscious mind, and “spirit” refers to the sub-conscious mind.

The “spirit” or sub-conscious mind is a function which is highly susceptible to suggestions, and can produce amazing results. The term “auto-suggestion” relates to this i.e. we can brain wash our own mind, by talking ourselves into believing, saying and doing things without realizing it. It is akin to self-hypnosis. There is a natural built in process in the

sub-conscious by which problems can be worked out and solved - even while we are asleep! It is believed that the sub-conscious is some marvellous recording machine which loses nothing. It is due to our sub-conscious mind or spirit that we can worship God and meditate on His Word while the conscious mind is busily engaged in mundane affairs.

An evidence of the efficiency of our mental “tape-recorder” is referred to by one writer in a short memory course of his. He mentions a serving girl who worked for a student of Hebrew who frequently read aloud. In old age and under anaesthetic she uttered phrases of Hebrew! She had never made a conscious effort with her conscious mind to learn the Hebrew words. She simply heard them and they went straight into her sub-conscious mind where they were silently recorded and stored away. Under anaesthetic, when the conscious mind was rendered inactive, the sub-conscious released a flow of Hebrew words, the meaning of which she did not know, but which a Hebrew student would recognize and be able to interpret. It was a case of her “spirit” speaking while her mind lay dormant. It immediately reminds us of what Paul says in 1 Cor. 14 concerning the gift of tongues which enabled a Christian to speak a foreign language with his spirit which his mind could not understand. The obvious difference being, of course, that such a Christian was not put to sleep (his mind was still conscious), and the words that his spirit uttered were supernaturally generated by the Holy Spirit.

Study and research has revealed that certain words expressed in tongues by a novice in Pentecostal churches sometimes resemble words expressed by others in the congregation who speak in tongues which have been recorded in his subconscious. It is not uncommon in some Pentecostal churches for one who speaks in tongues, to even help someone else speak in tongues by putting his own words into his mouth and asking him to repeat them after him. No wonder such a recipient ends up with words in so-called “tongues” similar to the one who taught him! Among the many testimonies given on this subject, involves a man who said that when his father spoke in tongues he usually said: “ho lee shah hin doo,” and when he began speaking in tongues he unconsciously incorporated the same words. He had not consciously learnt them, but they were recorded in his subconscious.

WHAT IS IT THEN?

The important question that must be asked and answered is this: Is it something to be greatly desired to pray with our spirit and not with our mind? Does Paul encourage this? Does he encourage Christians to pray in a language that they cannot understand and which leaves their mind or intellect barren? Does Paul teach that the ideal type of prayer is that in which the mind is abandoned and made to hang loose, and never understands what is being said? By no means! Quite the opposite in fact. If Paul was alive today, he would have a serious encounter with “Pentecostals” on this issue!

In relation to this whole subject, Paul asks the pertinent question: “What is it then” (1 Cor. 14:15). In other words, he asks: “What is the answer to all this?” - “What am I to do?” - “What is my conclusion to the matter?” - “What is the ideal situation?” - “Shall I recommend just praying with the spirit, or just praying with the mind, or both?”

His answer is as follows: “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also” (i.e. “intelligently” New English Bible). He says: “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless with the spirit, how shall those who cannot understand you say amen to your giving of thanks? For you may give thanks in an excellent manner, (i.e. with a great outburst of tongues), but no one will be edified. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than all of you, yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my mind that mean something to me and are understood by others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. Brethren, be not childish in your outlook - in understanding be men.”

The important point to notice is how Paul places equal emphasis upon praying with both the spirit and the mind. *Nowhere in his writings does he encourage Christians to pray with only the spirit and not the mind!* It is clearly taught in Paul’s writings and the rest of Scripture that “understanding” is impossible without “mind.” God has created man with a “mind” or intellect in order that he might “understand.” For this reason, the translators of our Bible have translated the Greek “nous” into the two English words “mind” and “understanding.” They are used synonymously, for there can be no understanding without mind. For this reason Paul insists that all messages in tongues be interpreted in order that the mind might understand.

Initially, the operation of the gift of tongues involved the suspension

of the normal activity of the conscious mind. Normally it requires a great deal of conscious mental effort to learn a foreign language and to be able to speak it fluently. The gift of tongues by-passed these channels and supernaturally quickened the deep inner sub-conscious, causing the tongue to fluently utter a foreign language never learned by the conscious mind. A tongue speaker hears in his deep inner consciousness (“spirit”) and not with his natural ears, a “voice” speaking in a language he has never learnt. His voice becomes en-rapport with the voice within, and he gives expression to it. The “spirit” of the speaker is almost entirely passive, an instrument on which the Holy Spirit plays heavenly melodies in words or song.

A NEED FOR BALANCE

So absorbed were certain Corinthians with the sheer joy, exhilaration and emotion that this experience generated deep within their spirit, they were remaining satisfied with it and neglecting the importance of understanding with the mind. The emotional part of the experience meant more to them than understanding what they were saying. Joyful and uplifting feelings in the spirit took precedence over enlightenment of the mind. They placed little value on mind development and growth in knowledge in the things of God.

In fact, some of them may have concluded, like some extremists today, that it is not a good thing to exercise the mind. By a pernicious twist of facts, there are some today who regard as carnal those who diligently exercise and apply their mind in the Word of God. They regard those who place great value on growing in knowledge and understanding as being unspiritual. There are those who would be more than happy and content to speak in “tongues” day and night not understanding a word that they say and not receiving the slightest increase of knowledge and understanding, finding total satisfaction and fulfilment in the uplifting feelings and vibrations generated in their spirit. To them, religion is wholly and solely an emotional experience - a “buzz” or “trip.”

The apostle Paul would not share with them in this attitude. His counsel is to pray for the ability to interpret so that both mind and spirit can be edified.

Many today who want to let the mind hang loose all the time and never apply it to diligent reading, study and meditation of God’s Word, are basically lazy and irresponsible. Many of the younger generation are using

“tongues” as a kind of substitute for drugs. And, like narcotics, the effect fades, necessitating another “fix” and another, preferably in bigger doses ending up in the bizarre. Tongue speaking has become, in many instances, a “spiritual trip” - a form of escapism. They don’t want to learn or become acquainted with the deeper things of God. They are not interested in attending Bible studies or teaching sessions and seminars. They are content with good feelings which don’t tax or challenge the mind. It is basically a flesh-motivated religion they are seeking - selfish and self-centred. No wonder the churches which pander to such desires have no trouble attracting numbers! “Fools hate knowledge” (Pr. 1:22).

Much of what is taking place today in various circles is a mental escape from the discipline of objective teaching to a world of subjective experiences. This is not new! The first temptation (Gen. 3) was that Eve should disregard the objective truth of God’s Word, in favour of a promised subjective experience which would open up a whole new field of experiences and pleasures. It would be about as edifying for an unbeliever to walk into an assembly of people who were all talking in tongues at once as it would be for us to walk into an Arab mosque during prayer time! In fact, I once overheard a visitor comment as he was walking past the room where a “rip roaring” Pentecostal prayer meeting was in progress, that it sounded like a group of Arabs had mistaken the building for a mosque.

The gift of tongues, like all the gifts, was not given merely for the self-aggrandisement of the recipient nor for exhibitionism or to amuse the idly curious. Certainly, the recipient received personal benefit through exercising it, but this was not the primary purpose of the gift. Speaking about the gifts of the Spirit (including tongues), Paul says “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man *for the common good*” (1 Cor. 12:7). Such is the way in which the Revised Standard Version, Moffat, Weymouth etc render it.

Other translations render it like this:

Berkley: “for the common welfare.”

Companion Bible: “for profiting, i.e. for the profit of others.”

Emphatic Diaglott: “for the benefit of all.”

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CHAPTER FIVE SHOULD ALL CHRISTIANS RECEIVE THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

We now turn to the rather controversial question: should every Christian receive the gift of tongues? Most Pentecostals believe they should.

As pointed out before, the common concept is that there are two types of gifts of tongues. It is believed that Acts 2 and 10 refers to the first type, and 1 Cor. 12-14 refers to the second type. It is believed that the first type was a proper language or dialect which was only given to some Christians, and the second type was not a proper language, and was given to everyone.

To prove this, amazingly enough, reference is often made to the fact that all who received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and 10 spoke in tongues. But the point has been completely overlooked that if Acts 2 and 10 relate to the first type of gift which not all Christians receive, how can it be used to prove that everyone should receive the second type? If the gift in Acts 2 and 10 which involved proper languages is quite different from the gift in 1 Cor. 12-14, how can the former be quoted to prove anything in relation to the latter? Just because all spoke the first type of tongues gift, it does not necessarily follow that all therefore would have to speak the second type, if there was such a type.

If we followed the argument through to its logical end, we would have to conclude that all Christians should speak the first type of tongues gift which was an actual language. However, this would be a questionable conclusion in view of the unquestionably unique nature of the occasion in Acts 2 and 10. They were clearly inaugural occasions in which the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place among the Jewish and then Gentile Christians, and Scripture does not indicate that what takes place during inaugural occasions should become the fixed rule for all occasions in the future.

If the third reference to tongues in the book of Acts (19:6) stated that all were given the gift of tongues, the matter might stand differently. But the fact of the matter is that not all spoke in tongues on this occasion. Some spoke in tongues and some prophesied. There were therefore only two occasions on which all spake in tongues, and those occasions were so clearly unique and exceptional, it would be dangerous to use them as the yardstick against all future operations of the Holy Spirit. It would be like

the Jews expecting the same signs and wonders which occurred at Sinai at the inauguration of God's law, to occur at the official induction of every Jew.

Had those occasions in Acts 2 and 10 been designed to teach us that all who receive the Holy Spirit should speak in tongues, we would expect to find explicit teaching to this effect elsewhere in Scripture. Nowhere however, is it stated in the Word of God that everyone who receives the Holy Spirit should speak in tongues. Quite the opposite in fact. It is clearly taught in 1 Cor. 12 that the gift of tongues is only one of nine gifts, each of which are distributed to different members of the body. Some members receive one, and others receive another. Just as a human body consists of different members which all have a different function to fulfil, so each member in the body of Christ receives a different gift with which he functions in the church.

Paul's concluding remarks in 1 Cor. 12 are decisive: "Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the church God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages (tongues). Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have the gift of miracles, or all have the gift of healing? Do all speak strange languages (tongues), and all interpret them?" (Jerusalem Bible).

Paul's questions here are clearly of a rhetorical nature. The answer to each question is clearly "no." Not all Christians are apostles, and neither are they all prophets and teachers. Not all have the gift of healing and the gift of miracles. And, equally as clearly, neither do all speak in tongues or interpret. If all interpreted, the problems referred to in 1 Cor. 14 of tongues messages not being interpreted would never have arisen. And if the gift of tongues was given to every member of the body, then Paul's analogy between the human body and the church becomes a farce. To insist that every member of the body of Christ should speak in tongues would be like every organ on the human body wanting its own tongue. Imagine having a tongue on our hands and feet etc!

Nowhere in Scripture is the gift of tongues singled out above the others as the exception to the rule concerning distribution of the gifts. Neither does Scripture give top priority to this gift. Far too much is made of this gift in many Pentecostal circles today. The emphasis and prominence given to this gift in many quarters is quite contrary to

Scripture. There are many who judge the spirituality of a fellowship by its operation of the gift of tongues. There are some in fact, who would regard a meeting in which only the gift of tongues was manifested, as being the best kind of meeting. They are not so impressed with a meeting in which a tongues message may not come forth, in spite of the fact that some good teaching from the Word of God and words of exhortation and edification are ministered!

“I WOULD THAT YOU ALL SPOKE WITH TONGUES”

Sometimes 1 Cor. 14:5 is quoted to prove that all should speak in tongues: “I would that you all spoke with tongues ...” Now, the fact that Paul, in the same section of this letter (12:30) has already stated that not all Christians speak in tongues, surely suggests that this other statement cannot mean that all Christians should. If so, he would contradict himself. It should also be pointed out that when Paul said “I speak with tongues more than ye all” (1 Cor. 14:18 A.V.) he did not mean that he spoke in tongues more often than anyone, but that he was able to speak in more languages.

Paul was thankful to God for this for several reasons:

1. It gave his ministry wider and broader scope.
2. No one could accuse him of sour grapes or envy when he spoke against the way they operated the gift of tongues.

If Paul could not speak in tongues, his instruction in 1 Cor. 14 could easily be misconstrued to mean sour grapes. But he could speak in tongues, and was thankful that he could. As we have seen, he would have been pleased if all could. Paul did not want a monopoly of any of God’s gifts.

What then, does Paul mean when he says: “I would that you all spoke with tongues?” Does he mean that he wants all those who possess the gift of tongues to all speak together at the meetings? No, he cannot mean that for he makes it clear in 1 Cor. 14:23 that he does not allow that. Does he mean that he wants all who possess the gift to each have a turn at speaking at each meeting? No, he cannot mean that either because he says in verse 27 that three at the most were allowed to give a message at each meeting.

What then, does he mean? Well, one thing is certain: the fact that he says “I would (i.e. “wish”) you all spoke in tongues,” clearly implies that not all did! If all spoke in tongues, there would be no need for Paul to express a wish that they did. And remember - Paul is writing to Spirit

filled Christians!

Paul's use of the word "would" in other parts of the same epistle throw some light on the subject. In 1 Cor. 7:7 he says: "For I would (wish) that all men were even as I myself. But every man has his own special gift from God, one of one kind, and one of another." Here, Paul expresses a wish that all men were in the same unmarried state as himself, in order that they might serve the Lord with greater single-mindedness and less fleshly distraction. Of course, he realized that in reality it was not at all possible because all have different gifts. Nevertheless, it did not stop him expressing the wish that such was so. It would obviously be wrong to interpret his words "I would that all men were even as I myself" to mean that all men should be! And it should be equally as clear that his other statement: "I would that you all spoke in tongues," does not mean all should. Paul is merely expressing a wish which, in the light of previous comments he makes on this subject, he never seriously expected to come true.

Another example of this kind of wishful thinking can be seen in Num. 11:29. On this occasion the Holy Spirit fell upon 70 elders, causing them to prophesy. Joshua became very jealous for Moses, because up until that time the prophetic ministry had virtually been exclusively confined to him. Moses answered Joshua and said: "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." Moses no doubt knew that his wish would never come true, but it did not prevent him from giving expression to it, indicating his humility in not wanting or expecting a monopoly of the gift.

Paul followed up his wish for all to speak in tongues by saying: "... but rather that ye (all) prophesied." If, therefore, his wish that all spoke in tongues must be interpreted to mean that all Christians should, then to be consistent we would have to interpret his second wish to mean that all Christians should prophesy! More so in fact, because he says he would rather they all prophesied than speak in tongues. Why is it then that all the emphasis in many Pentecostal churches is upon new converts getting the gift of tongues and not the gift of prophecy? And why is it that so many speak in tongues yet so few claim to be able to prophesy? The whole situation is very unbalanced and not according to apostolic example.

SELF-INDUCED TONGUES

If the gift of tongues is supposed to only be distributed to some members of the body of Christ and not all, how do we account for the fact that the majority in Pentecostal circles today speak in tongues?

A possible answer to this as pointed out earlier can be found in the commendable frankness of many Pentecostals who admit that they are plagued with a suspicion that they are generating the whole thing themselves, being conscious of mouthing syllables in an effort to start the flow of tongues. One cannot help but conclude that, if at any stage one feels the gift might be self induced, the boundary between psychological experience and the so-called miraculous gifts is dangerously thin. In such cases, they are unlike the indisputable miracles of Christ and the apostles, and on this ground their genuineness must be seriously open to question.

Surely the boundary between the natural powers of the flesh and the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit is not so thin that it is difficult to tell the difference! Should anyone have the slightest doubt that his “tongue” might be flesh inspired (“of the devil”) and not Holy Spirit inspired, then there is a very real possibility that his doubts are well founded. When the real miracle-working power of God operates in a man’s life it leaves no doubt as to genuineness. The generating power of the Holy Spirit far transcends the self-inducing power of the flesh. One who has been truly baptized in the Spirit would know that it is genuine and would not be constantly plagued with doubts.

Tongues, unfortunately, above all the other gifts, can be self-induced and imitated. The flesh, under the right conditions, can quite easily produce a counterfeit. I personally know of people not committed to the Lord who can, by letting their mind hang loose and letting their tongue roll, produce quite an impressive sounding foreign language. There are also those who, like the old lady who spoke Hebrew while under anaesthetic, have poured forth utterances in their sleep while their conscious mind was in a lulled state. The continual hearing of messages in “tongues,” coupled with a strong desire to speak in tongues, can, in some instances, through natural processes, produce a counterfeit, especially upon the bed when the conscious mind is subdued and the sub-conscious is left unhindered to release what it has recorded - often in a very mixed up and jumbled fashion!

The fact that the easiest gift to imitate is the very one that so much is made of these days, and which almost every Pentecostal claims to possess,

gives rise to deep suspicion in any thoughtful mind.

It is not an unhealthy thing to be wary and suspicious. Scripture often refers to the fact that the heart of man is very deceitful, and warns that in the last days there will be much deception. We are therefore warned to “test the spirits to see whether they be of God.” The Old Testament also contains many references to men who were deceived by their own spirit into thinking their utterances were inspired by the Holy Spirit. “Thus says the Lord God; Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing” (Ezk. 13:3).

If a man is led to believe that he has not been filled with the Holy Spirit unless he speaks in tongues, and firmly believes this is true, and desperately wants to do it; a perfect psychological basis exists upon which tongues can be self-induced by the flesh. If it happens to not be the will of the Spirit to give him that particular gift, he can nevertheless, through persistent pressures finally “come through” speaking in tongues. I have personally seen many cases where people have been told, when everything else fails, to simply mouth the words of some other “tongue speaker,” and, having done that, are pronounced to have “come through” with much jubilation.

In many cases, tongues is a learned skill in the charismatic movement. Many charismatics have openly admitted that they basically learned to do it, sometimes by copying others. Often a person is encouraged to self-generate foreign sounding words (gibberish) to get the tongue started, hoping that the Holy Spirit will keep it going. It is common for those who are trying to talk in tongues to be told to “keep practising.” One person I know was told: “Come on, you’re not trying hard enough.” One thing is certain: the apostles weren't practising to speak in tongues in the upper room for 10 days before they gave their utterances! And they certainly didn't need to tell Cornelius or anyone else to practise or keep trying!

Within the charismatic movement, there is great peer pressure to belong, to perform, to have the same gifts and power that everybody else seems to have, especially tongues which are regarded as the badge of attainment - the sign of being born of the spirit and the solution to spiritual problems. Failure to speak in tongues can create a pre-occupation and obsession which easily leads to self-generating it out of desperation, especially when all your friends can do it and are pushing you to do it. It is easy to see why tongues became the great common denominator, the be-all and end-all for everyone involved.

Tongues can sometimes also be psychological. The tongue speaker

goes into motor automatism, which is clinically described as radical inward detachment from one's conscious surroundings. Motor automatism can result in disassociation of nearly all voluntary muscles from conscious control. An example of this can sometimes be seen at rock concerts where, in the excitement and emotion, teenage girls literally give up voluntary control of their vocal chords and their muscles. They fall to the floor or ground and just start flopping.

Given the right set of conditions, particularly where there is a great deal of fervour and emotion involved as sometimes happens at Pentecostal meetings, certain types of people can easily slip into a state where they are no longer consciously in control, and incoherent babbling and uncontrollable shaking can occur.

As in the case of hypnotism, people with a high susceptibility are particularly vulnerable to suggestion. They easily submit to the power of suggestion and do whatever is being suggested.

There is no way to analyze each speaker in tongues and come up with an absolute reason for his behaviour. But there are many explanations for tongues, particularly in regard to learned behaviour, psychology, hypnotic effects and even deliberate deceit. Tongues can exist today in the counterfeit form, disconnected from the Holy Spirit, as in the pagan religions. Putting the Christian label on it is what makes it so deceptive.

“STRANGE FIRE”

It is a very serious sin to offer God a counterfeit of His Holy Spirit fire and it can have dire consequences. In Lev. 10:1-2 we read of men who, instead of putting fire in their censer from the altar of God, offered “strange fire” before the Lord and were devoured by fire from the Lord as a judgement. The “strange fire” was fire they kindled themselves i.e. self-generated fire. Speaking presumptuously in the name of the Lord also incurred the death penalty (Deu. 18).

There can be other bad effects also from self-induced tongues. Sometimes the battle that can take place in the mind of certain people who struggle under peer pressure to speak in “tongues” and who have difficulty doing so, can have an unhinging effect in the mind. I know of people who ended up having to spend time in a psychiatric unit because of this. One of them was the son of a court judge. It was not the spirit of God that had this effect, for: “God has not given to us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Sometimes those praying for others to speak in tongues do so in an extremely loud, overbearing voice, bordering on shouting, as if to force or intimidate the person into making an unintelligible utterance. But God is not deaf and does not need to be shouted at! Sometimes hands are laid on with force, using a forceful pushing motion on the forehead as if forcing the person to speak gibberish or fall over. Often it is the case of empty hands being laid on empty heads.

However, the Proverb is true which says: “Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.” Before very long, those who “come through” speaking in tongues in this manner, get very serious doubts as to the authenticity of their experience, and many finally fall away. In some Pentecostal churches they have gone out of one door as fast as they come in the other.

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CHAPTER SIX TONGUES TESTED BY LINGUISTS

In the final analysis the test for the genuineness of the gift of tongues is simple, namely: is the utterance a genuine foreign language known and spoken somewhere in the world - a language not learned previously by the speaker and which declares things in harmony with the Word of God to the glory of God?

William Samarin, professor of linguistics at the University of Toronto, wrote: "Over a period of five years I have taken part in meetings in Italy, Holland, Jamaica, Canada and the United States. I have observed old fashioned Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals. I have been in small meetings in private homes as well as in mammoth public meetings. I have seen such different cultural settings as are found among Puerto Ricans of the Bronx, the smoke handlers of the Appalachians and the Russian Molakans of Los Angeles ... I have interviewed tongue speakers, and tape recorded and analyzed countless samples of tongues. In every case, glossolalia turns out to be linguistic nonsense. In spite of superficial similarities, glossolalia is fundamentally not language" ("Tongues of Men and Angels" p.103-128).

William Samarin is one of many men who has made a study of glossolalia. These studies bear out that what we are hearing today is not language; and if it is not language, then it is not what the Bible says the gift of tongues really is.

Numerous other researchers have examined hundreds of recorded specimens of "tongues" without ever identifying such sounds with a national language or native dialect.

It is not difficult to self-generate foreign sounding words. Almost anyone can do it if they try hard enough and long enough. One pastor who spoke to a woman who had difficulty speaking in tongues, asked her if she could remember when she used to say, when she was a little girl: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; a peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?"

The woman could remember saying it but said she always got the words mixed up.

"Exactly!" the pastor exclaimed. "Now I'm going to tell you some words like that. I want you to repeat them after me. You will get them mixed up too, but don't worry about it. Keep saying them over and over, and soon you will be speaking in tongues."

She agreed to do it. The words he asked her to keep repeating after him were: “Blessed Jesus, suffering Saviour, save the sin-sick souls of sinful sinners. We wait, willingly, wantonly, wonderfully, wistfully right now.”

The pastor led the woman around the room. Fast, then slow; then fast again, surrounded by a group cheering them on. When she began to mix up the words, he sped up the pace. Soon she was standing with her arms lifted high and tears streaming down her face while she repeated garbled incoherent words. To the watching group, the pastor announced that she had been baptized in the Holy Spirit and what they were hearing was the gift of tongues. How fickle is that?!

When I was a young boy, long before the charismatic move commenced, my father, who was not a church-goer and knew nothing about tongues, used to pretend to speak in foreign languages as a joke. He sounded particularly impressive when he mimicked the Chinese language. Had he spoken out like that in a charismatic congregation, they would have accepted it as the gift of tongues.

I know this is true because I have personally put it to the test. As part of my spiritual education when I was a young man, I joined a Pentecostal church. Like my father, I was able to self-generate foreign sounding words, and listening to the Pentecostals speak in tongues, I felt that they were doing the same. So I put it to the test. One Sunday morning, at the appropriate time, I spoke out in my “tongues.” Not only that, but I followed it up with a prayer which I knew would be regarded as the interpretation. (Even if I had offered an entirely different prayer, they still would have regarded it as the interpretation of the tongue message! Such is the subjective nature of the whole thing. I remember a little old lady who used to always say exactly the same words in “tongues” at meetings, and every time a new and different interpretation was given. Whoever gets in first with the “interpretation” usually gets away with it, especially if it is positive and spoken loudly, confidently and fluently!)

The pastor was impressed and regarded my “tongues” as a genuine bonafide manifestation of the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation. He said: “There was nothing wrong with that.” But I knew there was everything wrong about his assessment and I also knew that this false discernment would be typical of all Pentecostal and charismatic churches i.e. I could have gone into any of them and done the same thing and be regarded as having the gift of tongues, because this is what their own speakers in tongues are doing. The only difference is that many don’t

realize it is a self-induced and self-generated operation by the human spirit, and have been deceived into thinking it is Holy Spirit inspired. This point should be emphasized: Many people do not know that foreign sounding words can be self-generated and that almost everyone has the potential to do it. When it happens in a church context involving prayer, and a background of spiritual music and worship, it is naturally concluded by such people that it is supernatural.

FOOL'S GOLD

In response to this someone may ask: “How do you explain the highly motivated zeal and enthusiasm and joy that is so often the effect on someone who comes through into speaking in tongues and is so characteristic of Pentecostal and charismatic churches? Surely this is proof of it being the genuine gift of the Holy Spirit and not a counterfeit.”

Not at all! This example might help: To a person who does not know of the existence of fool's gold, or who lacks discernment to recognize it, he will react with the same joy and enthusiasm at the discovery of it as he would to the discovery of real gold. Why? Because he believes it is real gold! He will have a grin from ear to ear till he reaches the assayer's office where judgement will be given and the moment of truth and rejection takes place. “Thou fool” would be the fitting response to those who, as a result of lack of discernment, are conned and deceived by fool's gold. They may resent being told it is fool's gold and regard the person telling them as a kill-joy, but true facts cannot be denied!

When someone acquires something that is not the genuine article, but desperately wants to believe that it is, they resort to all sorts of measures to convince themselves that it is. For this reason, many Pentecostals and charismatics who have (for very good reasons) doubts about the validity of their experience of speaking in tongues, being haunted by the feeling that it is self-generated; are continually told by their leaders that such negative thoughts are inspired by the devil who wants to rob them of their gift. They are therefore urged to take authority over the devil and encouraged to assert themselves by speaking in tongues more regularly and more vehemently. And sometimes “revival meetings” are held for this very purpose, when it is sensed that the “tongues thing” is fading out in the congregation. In one such meeting all the members of the congregation were asked to stand and raise and shake their clenched fist and shout out repeatedly to the devil: “Go, go, go ...” Needless to say he

was back again the next night! Such speaking in tongues was not according to the will of God but the whim of man.

It does not occur to them that doubts about the validity of their experience might be quickened in their conscience by the Holy Spirit, and by being encouraged to resist this, they resist the Holy Spirit and sear their conscience. If anyone has doubts about their “tongues” being empowered by God they can almost guarantee they aren’t!

Let it be repeated: the boundary line between the power of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit is not so thin that it is difficult to tell the difference between the two. Of all the 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gift of tongues is by far the easiest to self-generate by giving expression to foreign sounding words. It therefore immediately gives rise to deep suspicion that it is this gift on which Pentecostals major and claim that everyone should possess - especially in view of the fact that Scripture clearly teaches that not all Christians receive this gift.

One does not have to be a rocket scientist to decide what conclusion should be drawn when the Bible says the Holy Spirit does not give the gift of tongues to every member of the church, yet all true Pentecostals claim to possess it. One thing is certain: what they have cannot be inspired by the Holy Spirit, in which case it must be inspired by the human spirit.

SELF-GENERATED PROPHECY

In view of the fact that the 9 Spirit gifts were a package deal and operated concurrently in the original new Testament church, one would expect the same today if the same gifts are still operating. If the tongues in Pentecostal and charismatic circles are genuine, then the other 8 gifts should be in evidence as well.

Take the gift of prophecy for example. My experience in Pentecostalism revealed that the so-called gift of prophecy that was exercised there was as self-generated as tongues. Friends of mine in Pentecostal churches elsewhere in the country reached the same conclusion. Basically, the majority of the so called prophetic utterances boil down to wishful thinking. People “prophesy” what they want to believe i.e what their own human heart dictates and therefore speak off the top of their head.

An elder I knew in a Pentecostal church openly admitted to me that his “prophecies” came off the top of his head. He said that elders were expected to prophesy on a regular basis and this put pressure on them to perform, to justify or vindicate their office.

Pages could be written of such “prophecies” which failed to eventuate, like the prophecy over a sick child declaring that he would be healed and grow up to be a strong fruitful Christian, but who died the next day. Also the prophecy over a newly baptized convert that he would develop into a mighty minister of God winning many souls to the Lord, but who backslid shortly afterwards and never returned etc etc.

True, some prophecies may appear to have been fulfilled. But even some of the prognostications in horoscopes come to pass for some people! Many don’t either. This hit and miss, win some lose some is typical of human predictions inspired by the human spirit, but is by no means typical of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit predictions never fail. This is the hallmark of the divine. No errors! Infallible! It is the “more sure word of prophecy to which we all do well to take heed as to a light shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19).

There is nothing new under the sun. From time immemorial, false prophets have existed and deceived the naive and gullible. In Ezk. 13:1-3 we read that God told the prophet Ezekiel to prophesy against the false prophets in Israel. He said: “Say to those who prophesy out of their own hearts (imagination), Hear ye the Word of the Lord; Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.” Jesus also warned that one of the signs of his coming would be the rise of false prophets who would come in his name, and even perform signs and wonders and deceive many (Matt. 24).

When the true Spirit of God is in action, prophecies never fail to be fulfilled; God-inspired tongues can be validated as genuine languages by linguists; the blind receive their sight and the deaf their hearing; paraplegics walk away from their wheelchairs; lepers are instantly healed and the dead are raised back to life again. Using the ministry and operation of the Holy Spirit through Jesus and his apostles in New Testament times as a yardstick, modern Pentecostalism in many respects is many yards off the pace!

And the effect of this is summarised in a letter sent to the Wanganui Newspaper some years ago by a Wanganui resident:

“Sir - I see from an advertisement in your paper that Wanganui is to be treated to a “miracle crusade.” I watched one in Dunedin a couple of years ago after seeing a similar advertisement with its astounding claims, and think that the deaf, dumb, blind and crippled might be interested to know what happened. It so happened that I went on the final night of a six-day campaign, and all the healed from previous nights were asked to

identify themselves. About eight or ten did and, yes, one old dear did claim to have been, well, at least partly deaf in one ear before she was declared healed in the name of Jesus. There was another who had been instantly cured of an addiction to tobacco, and he proudly and determinedly ticked off his 48th hour without a fag. I seem to remember someone who had a phobia of some kind. She still looked pretty nervous to me. The others had vague aches and internal “troubles” that had miraculously been cured. Anyhow, that night I witnessed an appalling spectacle, in which a man in a wheelchair who had obviously suffered a stroke and couldn’t walk or speak was allegedly healed by the power of God. After much loud prayer with supporting shouts and cries from the congregation, a microphone was thrust under this poor man’s nose and he was exhorted to praise God for his healing. Unintelligible groans were broadcast into the auditorium and with each an eruption of “Thank you Jesus” and “Praise God” swept the congregation. It sickened me to the core to see the almost hysterical joy on the faces of the congregation as this still crippled and disfigured old invalid desperately tried to frame some intelligible English with lips from which only groans and saliva issued. Later I saw a blind person being led home. I challenge anyone to present a single case of a blind or deaf or truly crippled Wanganui resident, cured at the end of this crusade. I may then review my opinion that what I witnessed at the last “miracle crusade” was just a lot of hysterical nonsense.”

JESUS NEVER SPOKE IN TONGUES

An honest man, who knows there is no thin boundary line between the flesh inspired and Spirit inspired utterances will not be induced or deceived into imitating the gift. There are many great men of God who have been used mightily by the Holy Spirit who did not speak in tongues.

Some of the most humble, loving and spiritual people I have met do not have the gift of tongues, but they have the fruit. There is no record of Jesus speaking in tongues! The gift of tongues is no free passport to love and humility, neither is it necessarily a sign of spirituality. There are some very proud and unloving folk that I have met along the way who are very good at speaking in “tongues.” It all comes back to 1 Cor. 13: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I become like a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal.” The Christian with the best possible gift of the Spirit who fails to exercise true Christian love and

humility in his life is, as Paul puts it, “nothing” - a nobody - of no value in a Christian fellowship.

So then, the “baptism” is not all tongues. We can live in the Spirit and worship God in spirit in our own language. The Bible was not written in “tongues.” It is an error of the most fundamental kind to imagine that one cannot be “in the Spirit” unless he talks in tongues. Scripture abounds with literally thousands of examples of men and women ministering in the Spirit in their own language. The Holy Spirit’s function is often to take hold of the natural tongue in which we speak, quickening it to speak forth words of edification, or words of knowledge and wisdom.

On most occasions when the prophets were “in the Spirit,” the message they heard from God was in their own native tongue and they proclaimed it in the same tongue. So let us not allow ourselves to be brought under condemnation by those who insist that we have not received the Holy Spirit and cannot be saved if we do not speak in tongues.

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