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THE GIFT OF TONGUES

We do not for one moment question nor deny that there is such a thing as the gift of tongues, for the Scriptures plainly state that there is. One might as well deny all the gifts of the Spirit as to deny the gift of tongues, but I desire to point out some of the errors concerning the present-day teaching in the movement known as the "Tongues" movement.

It is well to remember that all fanatical movements have some truth, but usually it is distorted truth.

The first error is that of giving an undue emphasis and prominence to the gift of "tongues," putting first what God put last in the order of the gifts. In I. Cor. 12:28 we find the numerical order of the gifts, given, no doubt, according to their relative value; and the last mentioned is "diversities of tongues." We commit a grievous error when we put last that which God puts first; or first that which God puts last. We must learn to leave truth in the place and order that God puts it, for God puts first things first, and last things last.

This is why I do not make use of the term, "the fourfold gospel." One says, "Do you not believe in the fourfold gospel?" I would answer, "Yes, I believe in a hundred-fold gospel." Then why object to the term "fourfold?" Because it places the subject of divine healing and of the second coming of Christ on an equality with the subject of pardon and sanctification,—as though of equal importance. While I am a glad witness to divine healing, and rejoice in the glorious hope of Christ's coming, I am persuaded that it is infinitely more important that men should be saved and sanctified than that they should be healed of physical ills, or accept our view of the Lord's return. And yet the multitude will seek physical health before they will obtain holiness of heart.

The second error of the "Tongues" movement is in the teaching that **all** may have, and should have the gift of tongues. After enunciating the gifts, Paul raises the question: Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?" (I. Cor. 12:29). Of course, this is just another way of saying that all **do not** have the same gift. And no man would teach that all should be apostles, or that all should be prophets, or teachers, and yet, when it comes to the "gifts of healing" and "tongues" it is urged that if they were just right and living up to their privilege all should speak with tongues. This we deny, and insist that it is wholly unscriptural. As well urge that all should be apostles and prophets as to urge that all should speak with tongues.

It should be remembered that all the gifts are in the sovereignty of God and that "all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as HE will," (I. Cor. 12:11).

A third error is that of insisting that the speaking with tongues is the necessary accompaniment and evidence of the Pentecostal experience. This is as though the sun in the solar system needed a tallow dip to prove that it is in the neighborhood. The Holy Ghost bears His own witness, and can do so in ten thousand different ways. One might as well insist that unless "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and the "cloven tongues of fire" were visible, and all the other phenomena of the historic Pentecost were present, the Holy Ghost had not yet been received. Not only so, but it is **not** said in the 2nd chapter of Acts that they spoke with "unknown tongues" but with "**other** tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This is different from the "gift of tongues" in that there was no interpreter necessary on the day of Pentecost "because every man heard them speak in his own language," and this was for the amazement of the multitude as they exclaimed, "How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" The exercising of the "gift of tongues" always requires an interpreter, and is positively forbidden and prohibited in the church when there is no interpreter. "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church," (I. Cor. 14:28).

A fourth error is in the assumption that the "gift of tongues" is an evidence of advanced spirituality and superior piety. We would insist that all the gifts are on this side of the 13th chapter of First Corinthians,—that after enumerating all the gifts, the apostle says, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way," and gives them the 13th chapter of First Corinthians, indicating that Perfect Love is more excellent" than any of the gifts. While evidently the Corinthian church had the "gift of tongues," it may be well to note that this church gave the Apostle more trouble than any other church in the New Testament; that they had "divisions;" had gone to law, "brother with brother;" had misused the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; had among them gross immoralities, such as were "not so much as named among the Gentiles;" and evidently had misused the gift of tongues,—which called forth the restrictions of the 14th chapter, in the exercise of this gift. He said of them, in the 3rd chapter, that they are "yet carnal," and "babes in Christ." So the gift of tongues among them did not prove advanced spirituality and superior piety.

The fifth error is in supposing that any sort of mysterious gibberish or jargon—though not understood by themselves or anyone else—is the "gift of tongues." The falsity of this claim has been proved by numbers who have sincerely supposed they had the gift of tongues, and have gone to the various missionary fields, only to find they could not speak so as to be understood by the natives at all,—though they were sure before going that the Lord had given them the language, and had called them to those fields. Indeed, there have been ex-

ceeding few, if any, of real authenticated cases of the gift of tongues in these latter days. It should be remembered that Satan can manipulate our vocal organs just as certainly as he can any other part of our being, as in the case of witchcraft, sorcery, spirit-rapping, etc.—hence we need to heed the injunction, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God." "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

I do not seek the gift of tongues,—first, because I have that which is "more excellent" and would not know what to do with the gift of tongues if I had it. Second, because the command is, "Covet earnestly the **best** gifts," and the gift of tongues is not the best,—for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret." (I Cor. 14:5). With Paul, "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." Follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Why should I seek that which is inferior as to its usefulness, when I am exhorted to "covet earnestly the best?" Third, I do not seek it, because I could not exercise the same without an "interpreter," and I can not afford to carry one with me for the business. Fourth, because if I should speak in tongues without an interpreter and without regard to the restrictions placed upon the use of this gift, I should appear as "a barbarian" and as "mad" to them that heard me—even as many who have claimed to have this gift in these days. Fifth, because if I seek it for a month, and obtain it, and die tomorrow, it would be no longer of use to me. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease," (I. Cor. 13:8).

I prefer to seek that which "abideth" and is "the greatest."—C. W. Ruth.

BE PATIENT

Beware of the impetuosity of your temper! It may easily lead you awry. It may make you evil affected to the excellent ones of the earth. The longer I live the larger allowances I make for human infirmities. I exact more from myself, and less from others. Go thou and do likewise.

What advice you would give another, take yourself.—John Wesley.

A new Hebrides chieftain sat peacefully reading the Bible, when he was interrupted by a French trader. "Bah," he said, in French: "why are you reading the Bible? I suppose the missionaries have got hold of you. Throw it away! The Bible never did anybody any good, in my opinion." "Let me tell you," said the chieftain calmly, "that if it wasn't for this Bible, you'd be in my kettle there by now."—Anon.