



# **TONGUES SPEAKING TODAY**

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SPIRITUALITY OR DECEPTION?**

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by  
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## FOREWORD

Articles of exposition on 1 Corinthians appearing in the Berean Expositor included useful comment on the most important question of 'Speaking in Tongues'. The wide misunderstanding today of the purpose and context of this gift of the Holy Spirit has led us to issue a specially edited article on the subject.

The supply of our first issue was soon exhausted, being met with such wide-spread appreciation and response, that we have been encouraged to reprint it in a fuller form dealing with wider aspects involved.

Copies of this leaflet can be obtained from the address on the cover for 6p. each. We are, however, anxious to secure the greatest use of this publication, and if financial cost is a bar we will willingly meet your needs to the extent of a free supply.

The references to C. K. Barrett refer to Professor Barrett's translation of 1 Corinthians in his exposition of that Epistle. His book is published by A. & C. Black.

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## TONGUE SPEAKING TODAY

### A mark of spirituality, or deception?

In chapter fourteen of 1 Corinthians the Apostle Paul deals with evidential gifts of the Acts period, specially that of tongues. First of all we shall note his assessment of this gift, and the way it should be controlled in the Corinthian assembly. Pentecostalism and tongue speaking in particular seem on the increase today. Tongue speaking is openly considered by some to be the hall-mark of spirituality and the filling of the Holy Spirit. We intend here to give Scriptural consideration as to whether such opinions are true or not.

Actually the Apostle *never counsels the Corinthians to seek for the gift of tongues separately as though it was the highest and best of the gifts* (as is asserted by most Pentecostalists). What he does do is to emphasise once more the importance of *love*.

"Pursue love as your aim. Strive for spiritual gifts, and specially that you may prophesy"

(14:1 C. K. Barrett).

Love must be sought for with the eagerness of pursuit. No half-hearted regard will do. This comes first always in importance where spiritual growth, Christian witness, and service are concerned. It is quite obvious from what follows that Paul is down-grading the gift of tongues; not that it had no value, but it was *not* the most important gift. The Corinthian believers were over-rating it.

We must first of all point out there is no justification for the word 'unknown' in the A.V. throughout this chapter. The word is not in the original and should be omitted as in the R.V. and modern translations, for it is misleading. How are we to understand the word "tongue"? There are two divergent views on this. One is that it refers to existing *languages*. Another is that the reference is to *ecstatic speech*. The best way to decide this is to go back to the inception of tongues at Pentecost, and here there is no doubt whatsoever that languages or dialects are meant. The opening verses declare that there were Jews gathered at Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost from "every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Luke goes on to tell us that they were confounded because "every man heard them speak in his own dialect" (language). They ask, "how hear we every man *in our own dialect* (language), wherein we were born?" (verses 8 and 11).

The Lord had told the eleven disciples that they were to be witnesses for Him "in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8).

In order that this should be rapidly accomplished, God removed the speech barrier to the spread of the gospel and the Kingdom message. This was a reversal of the confusion of tongues at Babel. Seen in this light, the gift of tongues makes sense and was one of the miraculous signs that accompanied the earthly Kingdom ministry in the Acts, first to Israel and later on to the Gentiles who were admitted as wild olive grafts into the true olive tree (Israel), in order to "provoke them (the Jews) to jealousy" and stir them up to obey the Divine command to repent and turn to God (Acts 3:19-26). Then, through their mediation, the restoration of the earthly Kingdom to them might become a fact and be realised all over the earth.

Some insist that the gift of tongues at Pentecost was recognized languages, but at Corinth it was different, being akin to ecstatic speech. But this is by no means proved. Corinth was a port and would have a mixed flow of races passing through it. That strangers visited the assembly is clear from 1 Corinthians 14:23 where the Apostle Paul refers to "unlearned and unbelieving" coming in. These would certainly need a message in their own language if of foreign extraction, and a believer with the gift of tongues could minister this followed by another with the gift of interpretation so that the whole assembly could benefit. It is interesting to note that *hermeneuo* can mean 'translate' as well as 'interpret' (see Arnt and Gingrich). *The New Bible Dictionary* states that the Greek words for 'interpret' always mean 'translate' except Luke 24:27 (p. 1287). It is a good principle of interpretation that the unknown should be interpreted by the known, in which case 1 Corinthians should be interpreted by the Acts of the Apostles, which is the historical book dealing with this church from its beginning.

Paul's and Luke's terminology agree, for both use the word *glossa*, 'tongue', and Luke further defines it as being a *dialektos* (Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14), which in every case refers to a language of a nation or region, and it is most unlikely that the experience of tongue speaking, described by the two writers in identical terms, would be dissimilar.

Moreover, the Divine intention was that this gift should be a *a sign to hard-hearted and Christ-rejecting Israel* (1 Cor. 14:21, 22), as prophesied in Isaiah 28:11, and it took its place with the other Kingdom signs of the Acts period. In what way could unintelligible ecstatic speech be such a sign? Such speech occurred in the excitable worship in the pagan temples around and therefore would not speak with Divine conviction to any Jew, or Gentile for that matter.

When one sees *glossalia*, or speaking in tongues in its Scriptural setting, it makes sense and falls in line with the evidential miracles of the Acts period. It will be remembered that it was this Acts

period that followed Israel's rejection of the Lord's earthly ministry and was a time of further opportunity after Calvary for them to repent and become usable so that they might take the knowledge of the Lord as Saviour and King to the ends of the earth (Acts 3:19-26). To take the gift of tongues out of the place that God put it originally is misleading and dangerous, and this is just what Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals have done.

They teach, for the most part, that one may be saved apart from the baptism of the Spirit, but without this experience which they claim is *subsequent* to salvation, one does not have full consecration or power for service, so that one's Christian life is incomplete and one's ministry hampered. If this is true, one has a right to ask *why such spiritual giants as Luther, Calvin and many others accomplished so much for the Lord without the gift of tongues?*

Pentecostals should honestly face up to this. They are often exhorted to "tarry before the Lord" in order to receive this special baptism of the Spirit, the outward evidence of which, they teach, is speaking in tongues. Luke 24:49 is adduced as Scriptural ground for this, but this is a misuse of this verse. The eleven were not kept waiting to prove them or to encourage them to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues. They had to wait *because the feast of Pentecost was Divinely dated*, being 50 days after Passover (Calvary. Lev. 23:15,16).

What Scriptural backing has the Pentecostal view that the baptism of the Spirit should *follow* salvation? Some turn to Ephesians 1:13:-

"... Christ, in Whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise".

On the surface, this looks as though there is some ground for such teaching, but the A.V. is not accurate. Here we have an aorist participle, *pisteusantes*, preceding an aorist finite verb, *esphragisthete*. Professor F. F. Bruce writes:

"The words 'having also believed' mean when you Gentiles believed in your turn, as we Jewish Christians had already done. The participle 'having believed' is identical with that occurring in Paul's question to the disciples at Ephesus in Acts 19:2 'Did ye receive the Holy Ghost *when ye believed?*' It is called by grammarians the coincident aorist participle because it denotes an action coincident in time with that of the main verb".

(*The Epistle to the Ephesians* p. 36)

In other words the believing and the sealing *occurred at the same time*, not at some future date. This is made clear by the R.V. and many modern versions. If Pentecostalists would carefully read Acts 10:46 they would see that the bestowal of the Spirit's gift of tongues was *simultaneous* with the coming to faith both of Cornelius

and his group. It was an extension of Pentecost, as was the experience of the disciples at Ephesus in chapter 19, who had only heard of John the Baptist's ministry.

There is no clear Scriptural teaching for the idea that the Spirit's baptism, evidenced by tongues, is something to be sought for *after* salvation. Nor in the Scriptural record do we find *glossalia* always following the work or filling of the Holy Spirit. If the reader will consult the following passages in the Acts which refer to the filling of the Holy Spirit, *he will not find one occurrence that is accompanied by tongues* - Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52, and he certainly will not find any occurrence in Scripture of tongue speaking *after* the Acts period.

It should be quite clear for every unbiassed student of the Word that the Holy Spirit, far from aiming to give the gift of tongues to all believers as a special experience after salvation, *did not intend all the saved to have this gift*. The seven questions of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:29, 30 demand, in the Greek, a *negative answer*. "Do all speak with tongues?" The answer is 'no', and God never intended that all should do so, but distributed tongues with other gifts, some more important, like prophecy, "severally as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:11).

Nor was the ability to speak in tongues a necessary requirement for leaders and teachers in the N. T., *nor do we find one instance of any believer specially seeking this gift*. In 1 Timothy 3, there is a list of "musts" for the office of a bishop or overseer, *but tongues are not mentioned*. Many Pentecostalists link their conception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with sinless perfection, which they call "entire sanctification", and so one error leads to another.

We are amazed that any true believer who loves the Word of God and bases his all upon it, could ever accept what is so patently unscriptural and also false to experience. If what these people say is really true then they have advanced far beyond the great characters of the Bible and the great saints that followed.

A fine upright character as the prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord in glory, and we take it that his character was up to the standard of any modern believer. The result was to make him confess "Woe is me for *I am undone*; because *I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*" (Is. 6:1-5).

The Apostle Paul declared that "in me, (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth (present tense) no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). The Apostle John wrote "if we say that we have no sin, *we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). Pentecostalists who believe in sinless perfection have obviously advanced beyond the experience of these outstanding children of God.

The trouble with these so-called sinless Pentecostalists is that, unlike Isaiah, they have never really seen the Lord Jesus in the blaze of His glory and holiness (see 1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Had they



done so, they would have nothing but shame for what that searching light would inevitably reveal. *Sinlessness and incorruption are put on at resurrection (1 Cor. 15 : 53, 54) and not before*, and it is self-deception to think otherwise. If tongues and holiness go together, then the Corinthian church should have been the holiest, but in reality they were the most carnal, which gives the lie to such Pentecostal pretensions.

One danger that results from the teaching that tongue speaking is an outward evidence of a special baptism of the Spirit, subsequent to salvation, and that believers are sadly lacking without this, is the psychological and spiritual tensions which this teaching creates. When a believer does not receive this "baptism", he tries a little harder to get it. When, after several attempts he still does not receive it, he begins to feel frustrated and depressed and many have become physically and mentally ill because they failed to "receive".

One hears too of such people being accused of some hidden sin or failure which accounts for this, all of which is deplorable and unnecessary and is in itself the sin of judgment against which we are warned. Another danger is the emphasis this kind of teaching gives to *feeling and emotional experiences* at the expense of *faith*. "We walk *by faith* and not by sight" said the Apostle, but this doctrine leads to the opposite. One can see very little difference in principle between the unsaved doing things for "thrills", and the believer who hankers after the special spiritual thrill of the separate 'baptism of the Spirit'. When one grows spiritually, feelings give way to absolute trust in *what the Lord is in Himself* and this is changeless.

We should know too, that *glossalia* can be psychologically induced and therefore is no proof whatsoever of the Holy Spirit's work. A Christian psychiatrist writes:

"The product of our analysis is the demonstration of the very natural mechanisms which produced glossalia. As a psychological phenomenon, glossalia is easy to produce and readily understandable".

*(Speaking in Tongues and about Tongues*

*by E. Mansell Pattison).*

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* has this to say:

"The gift of tongues and their interpretation was not peculiar to the Christian Church, but was a repetition in it of a phase common in ancient religions. The very phrase *glossais lalein*, 'to speak with tongues', was not invented by the New Testament writers, but borrowed from ordinary speech. Virgil (Aen. vi. 46, 98) draws a life-like picture of the ancient prophetess 'speaking with tongues' . . . the same morbid and abnormal trance utterances occur in Christian revivals of every age e.g. among the mendicant friars of the 13th century, among the Jansenites, the early Quakers, the converts of Wesley



and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants of the Cevennes, the Irvingites and the revivalists of Wales and America. Oracular possession of the kind above described is also common among savages and people of lower culture . . ."

(pp. 288, 9. 1963 edition).

No wonder then Satan can use tongue speaking in order to deceive! With regard to the Irvingite movement which was the beginning of modern Pentecostalism, Sir Robert Anderson gives a detailed account in his *Spirit Manifestations and the Gift of Tongues*.

Edward Irving (1792-1834), a pastor of a London church, founded the Catholic Apostolic Church and began to introduce tongue speaking into his ministry. Sir Robert Anderson shows the excesses to which this finally led. Richard Baxter, a lawyer, first took an active part in the movement, but when prophecies which were made failed to be fulfilled, his eyes were opened and he broke away after telling Irving "we had all been speaking by a lying spirit and not by the Spirit of the Lord". Scores of people were deceived by this "angel of light" teaching.

Irving relates that the power of the Holy Spirit came upon him irresistibly, so much so that he was compelled to put his handkerchief into his mouth to stop the sound so that he should not alarm others. This in itself should have been a warning to him for "the spirits of the prophets *are subject to the prophets*" (1 Cor. 14:32); in other words the power is *controllable* by the prophet. The Holy Spirit does not force people or lead to such excesses that have occurred from time to time in Pentecostal meetings.

One of the great dangers of such Pentecostal teaching is that it exalts the Holy Spirit *at the expense of Christ* so that the Lord Jesus is in effect subordinated to the Holy Spirit. The Saviour said:

"He shall *not* speak of Himself . . . . *He shall glorify Me*, for He shall *receive of Mine* and shall show it unto you"

(John 16:13, 14).

The main object of the Holy Spirit then is *to glorify and exalt the Lord Jesus*, so that in *all things He might have the preeminence* (Col. 1 : 18), and whenever He is put in His rightful place as ALL (Col. 3:11) and "First and Last", the Holy Spirit is certainly there. Where the Spirit is unduly stressed and the Lordship of Christ unknown, we have not truth, but error which comes from the father of lies.

If modern tongue speaking is really of God, where are those who undeniably have the gift of interpretation (without which tongues are useless) and also *the discerning of spirits*, that is the divine ability to sift the true from the false? (1 Cor. 12:10). This was God's check against the work of Satan during the Acts of the Apostles when tongues were valid. Without this, the whole thing can be highly dangerous, for, as we know so well, Satan as an angel of light can travesty and copy the work of God. Not even miracles, by themselves, are a proof of divine origin:

"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me . . ."

(Matt. 7:22, 23).

The Apostles Paul and John warn us of the deceptive miracles of Satan at the end time of this age so that, even in the Acts period, tongue speaking was not without its dangers (2 Thess. 2:8-10; Rev. 13:11-14) and the Lord Jesus Himself likewise forewarned of the terrible deception of this most dangerous time (Matt. 24: 4, 5, 11, 24), and many believers feel, as they look around on world conditions, that we are fast approaching such a period.

But some will say, many Pentecostalists testify to the blessing they have received from speaking in tongues. The answer to this is simple and clear. If we want nothing but Truth and to avoid such deception, we must base our beliefs solely on the Word of God which is Truth, *and not on human experience*. We may not begin with a certain type of religious experience and then proceed to build a doctrine on it. We dare not build on *any experience* primarily, but on the *teaching of Holy Scripture which is true and changeless*.

Those believers who go on to know and enjoy the exceeding riches of grace and glory revealed in the prison epistles of Paul will certainly not be attracted by speaking in tongues. When one has tasted the best, one does not want the second-best! In the high and holy calling revealed therein Christ is ALL and each believer *FILLED TO THE FULL* in Him (Col. 2:10; 3:10, 11) to which nothing can be added, for there is nothing higher or possible beyond this revealed in the whole length and breadth of God's Word. In our long Christian experience *we have never known anyone grounded in this glorious truth and in conscious enjoyment of it, ever to desire or turn to tongue speaking*.

While we are forced to be critical of the Pentecostal doctrine of Spirit baptism and glossalia, we readily acknowledge that many Pentecostalists are keen to proclaim the gospel and bring others to a saving knowledge of the Lord. If only they would put more emphasis on the *fruit* of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) rather than isolated *gifts* of the Spirit which belonged to the Acts period!

The gift of tongues was temporal and was to cease. It was put at the bottom of the list in importance by the Apostle Paul. Prophecy was certainly of more value (1 Cor. 14:4). Taken out of its Divine setting, tongues can be highly dangerous and those attracted to it should ponder over the words of the Apostle:

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . *than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue*."

(1 Cor. 14:19).

Having considered the N.T. teaching concerning the gift of tongues and seen the false importance the Corinthian church were placing on this gift, we next note that the Apostle Paul makes perfectly clear that *prophecy was preferable* if only for the fact that it edified *others* as well as the speaker. Tongue speaking by itself at the best only brought benefit to the one who uttered it:

"For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; *for no man understandeth*; but in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men edification, and comfort, and consolation. He that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church". (1 Cor. 14:2-4 R.V.).

From this it is perfectly clear that the gift of tongues without interpretation was of no benefit to the church as a whole, whereas prophecy gave a message of comfort and edification to all who heard it. When explained by the Divine gift of interpretation so that all could benefit, tongue speaking was acceptable; otherwise it remained true that *he who prophesied was greater than any who spoke in tongues* (5). As this was so, why is it that Pentecostalists do not put more value on prophets rather than tongue speakers? The Apostle reinforces this point by saying that even if he himself gave them a message in another tongue, what good would it do them unless it was accompanied by revelation, knowledge or prophecy? (6). This is stressed still further by the illustration of a musical instrument, which can either produce distinguishable notes or just a noise. Furthermore each instrument has its own 'tone colour'. If this was not so, it would be impossible to distinguish between them (verses 6-12). Tongue speaking, unless understood by others, was merely "speaking into the air" (9), and made the one who uttered it as a foreigner (Barbarian), someone who could not be understood by others. The real value of all the evidential gifts of the Acts period was their *witness to other people and the building up of the church as a whole*.

"So also ye, since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound *unto the edifying of the church*" (14:12 R.V.).

This was the crucial test, not what each individual got out of the experience for himself.

#### Tongue Speaking in connexion with prayer.

The Apostle now deals with tongue speaking as it affected prayer. He wrote:

"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding (or mind) is unfruitful" (14:14).

Paul seems to be using here the word "spirit" for the new nature. In this case the mind was unfruitful or inactive, that is, it

contributed nothing to the process. Now the mind is extremely important to the believer as a study of the word *nous* as used by Paul will make clear. When writing to the Roman church, he insisted that the believer should be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" (Rom. 12:2) and it is only by this mind that one can prove what is "that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God"; and thus render service and witness that is well-pleasing to Him.

Intercession for others is one of the highest expressions of the prayer life of the believer, and how can one engage in this effectively without the renewed mind being consciously employed? The Apostle puts his finger on a danger point when a tongue was employed in prayer without the conscious use of the Spirit-renewed mind. This would mean that a most important part of the believer remained out of action, which would be neither good for him or for his fellow-believers and others with whom he came into contact.

"What is to be done then? I will pray with the spirit, *but I will pray with the mind too*. I will sing praise with the spirit, *but I will sing praise with the mind too*". (verse 15 C. K. Barrett).

We ask again, how can the ministry of intercession be engaged in, when, knowing the needs of others, something unintelligible goes on in the believer concerned and his mind is completely inactive?

When Paul asks for prayer for himself, he tells the assemblies of his needs in plain words, showing them what to pray for on his behalf. (Rom. 15:30-32; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:2-4). There is not the slightest idea in these contexts that such prayer could be rendered automatically in an unknown tongue, with the believers concerned being unconscious of what they uttered. Furthermore, such a condition would be one of real danger. There cannot be a hiatus or blank in the human mind and its activities. It must be controlled by *somebody* or *something*. If the believer's thinking is not consciously controlled by the renewed mind produced by the Holy Spirit, then Satan and the powers of darkness have an opportunity which they will not be slow to use.

That a believer's mind and words can be activated by the evil one is clear from what the Lord said to Peter in Matthew 16:22, 23. One moment Peter's words expressed the revelation of the Father (17); a moment later *Satan was directing his thoughts and his words* (23). This is solemn indeed. So many keen Pentecostals seem to be very ignorant of Satan and his wiles (Eph. 6:11, 12) and the warning that Scripture gives the believer of this great enemy and his deception which, as we have seen, is going to be world-wide at the time of the end, inasmuch that, if possible, the very elect will be deceived (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 24). Hence, the importance of the Divine gift of *discernment* in the Acts which separated the true from the false (1 Cor. 12:10). Where is this

gift today, without controversy or argument?

The Apostle Paul insists, therefore, that the believer's *mind* must be actively engaged either in prayer or praise (1 Cor. 14: 15). He goes on to argue that if a Corinthian believer utters a blessing and someone who is a simple listener (unlearned A.V. and R.V.) hears it, how can he respond intelligently with an Amen? For he does not *understand* what is being said. It is therefore perfectly clear that Paul expected the Corinthian assembly as a whole, to hear, understand, test and control all that took place in their gatherings and this would be impossible without words being spoken that could be understood by all. He continues:

"For thou verily givest thanks (in a tongue), but the other (man) is not edified (built up)" (verse 17).

The whole value of the gift was not what it did for the one who uttered it, *but what benefit it conferred upon others*. Even with himself, Paul, who could speak in tongues more than any of them, states most definitely:

"Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak *five words with my mind*, in order to instruct others, than *ten thousand words in a tongue*". (19 R.S.V.).

In other words, *the employment of the mind was essential for fruitful witness and was infinitely of more importance than the act of speaking in a tongue*.

We cannot help but note the insistence of this context that *the renewed mind* must be employed with the spirit, ("I will pray with the spirit, but *I will pray with the mind too*. I will sing praise with the spirit, but *I will sing praise with the mind too*" (1 Cor. 14:15 C.K. Barrett), and also verse 19 "I had rather *speak five words with my mind* than ten thousand words in a tongue". With this in the forefront we were amazed to read in a booklet *Speaking in Tongues* by Larry Christenson, a pastor of a Californian Lutheran church:

"... what possible value can speaking in tongues have, if a person has no idea what he is saying? According to the Bible even though one does not understand what he is saying, his spirit is in a state of prayer (1 Cor. 14:14). In other words, for the person himself, *speaking in tongues is praying not with the mind, but with the spirit*" (page 4 italics ours).

"One speaks with tongues, for the most part in his private devotions. *This is by far its most important use and value* ... Although one does not know what he is saying as he prays in tongues, he does have a clear sense that he is praying to God" (page 8).

Much of this is obviously a direct negation of the teaching of Scripture above. Yet it is "according to the Bible" we are told! Moreover how the mind can be completely inactive and words

used which are not understood by the speaker, yet "he has a clear sense he is praying to God", is past comprehending.

On page 9 the writer continues:

"In order to speak in tongues, you have to quit praying in English ... you simply lapse into silence and resolve to speak not a syllable of any language you have ever learned. *Your thoughts are focussed on Christ* ... you take no thought of what you are saying. As far as you are concerned it is just a series of sounds ..." (italics ours).

Again we ask, how can the *thoughts* be focussed on Christ, and yet the mind be by-passed or remain inactive? There is surely confusion here, and we can say with certainty that *the N.T. knows nothing of such methods of prayer*. There is not a single command to the believer in the N.T. to connect Tongue Speaking with the ministry of prayer. Did the disciples on the day of Pentecost have to prepare themselves and practise in this way in order to receive the gift of tongues? Was not this rather the sovereign act of the Holy Spirit, distributing this gift "as He willed" (1 Cor. 12:11), this being the N.T. way this gift was always received? There is not the slightest indication that there had to be practice and effort in order to obtain this gift as the booklet suggests.

We do not believe that anywhere in the Bible can God's truth and blessing be received apart from faith and *understanding*. "*With all thy getting, get understanding*" (Prov. 4:7), and note carefully the following passages:

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye *understood* all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord" (Matt. 13:51).

"Then opened He their *understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures*" (Luke 24:45).

"... the eyes of your *understanding* being enlightened, that ye may know ..." (Eph. 1:18).

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may *understand* my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

"that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual *understanding*" (Col. 1:9).

"Being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*" (Col. 2:2).

"... the Lord give thee *understanding in all things*" (2 Tim. 2:7).

These verses and contexts make it quite clear that a measure of understanding is absolutely vital both to the reception of truth and its practice. This being so, if the Lord wills to teach anyone, He will do so in the language that person uses and can

understand and receive His truth, otherwise it would be meaningless. This was surely the object of the original gift of tongues at Pentecost, for the hearers said, "how hear we every man *in our own tongue wherein we were born?*" (Acts 2:8) not "what are all these unintelligible sounds we hear?"

Moreover those at Corinth who placed so much value on tongues were still in the infant stage spiritually. In 3:1-3 he had severely reprimanded them for their immaturity and carnality, and the over emphasis they were placing on a showy gift, like tongue speaking, was only another evidence of this.

"Brothers, do not be children in intelligence. In wickedness be mere infants, but in intelligence be mature" (verse 20 C. K. Barrett).

*Teleios*, mature ('men', A.V. and R.V.) is one of an important group of words, signifying adulthood or maturity as opposed to babyhood. The N.T. has some very stringent things to say about believers who do not grow up spiritually (see Heb. 5:12-14). The things of the nursery can be very delightful for infants, but for grown-ups they are entirely out of place and unbecoming. Moreover, what can babies achieve in Christian witness? The need for constant growth in grace and knowledge of the truth should be a continual challenge to us all.

Paul does not hesitate to back up his argument by an appeal to the O.T. :

"In the law it is written, By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even thus will they hear Me, saith the Lord" (21 R.V.).

Here the 'law' is a term for the whole Old Testament rather than the Pentateuch, as it also is in John 10:34, where a citation from the Psalms is termed the 'law' (see also 12:34; 15:25 and Rom. 3:19). The Apostle quotes freely from the LXX of Isaiah 28:11. Possibly he was using another version known also to the later O.T. translator Aquila. In Isaiah's day, God is saying that Israel would not listen to Him in obedience, even though He spoke in a tongue that was familiar to them. He will therefore speak to them in an unfamiliar tongue, that of their enemies, the Assyrians, but even then they would not hear. It is very important to notice that God is speaking to *Israel* in warning and judgment, not to Gentiles, and *so it was in the Acts period*. The gift of tongues was primarily for *unbelievers among Israel*.

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, *not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving*" (verse 22 R.V.).



To the Jew, who had the counter-sign, the O.T., tongues should have spoken as a *sign* and a warning to unbelief. It is clear that known languages, such as were used at Pentecost, would be the only forceful sign to hard-hearted Israelites. Ecstatic language admits of too many natural explanations, as we have seen, not the least being the historical fact that the pagans were acquainted with such speech in their temples. The divine reason for the gift of tongues is clearly given in the chapter we are studying, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, *not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving*" (22).

Tongue-speaking in the N.T. takes its place among the signs of Mark 16 that confirmed the earthly kingdom purpose throughout the Acts. Modern Pentecostalism takes it out of its Divine setting and message to the *unbeliever*, and to a large extent reverses the teaching of Scripture, making it an evidence of spirituality, and "entire sanctification", *of the believer*. This is dangerous indeed, and will be avoided by all who seek to base their doctrine and practice on a rightly-divided Word alone. The gift of tongues, by itself, would have been highly inadequate, for even the striking exhibition of tongues on the day of Pentecost, was put down to drunkenness on the part of some (Acts 2:12,13).

As a warning to the unbelieving Jew and a means of the rapid spread of the gospel and the Kingdom message (Acts 3:19-26), this gift had its place, but taken out of its Divine context, it can be dangerous. When Satan, at the end time of this age, produces his *deceiving miracles and signs* (2 Thess. 2:7-12), who can say that he will not use tongue-speaking to seek to deceive the very elect? *He has already used tongue speaking in the past in the worship of the pagan temples of old.* And if he does so in the future, what can the Pentecostalist offer in the way of Scriptural refutation and protection of those who are exposed to such terrible deception?

To sum up - not all the miraculous evidential gifts of the Acts period were of equal importance: prophecy was greater than speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:5). Some of them were "to cease" (13:8); others were "to abide", the three principal ones being "faith, hope and love", with love as the crown of them all (13:13).

This gift, said the Apostle Paul, must be sought after with the eagerness of pursuit (14:1). What a difference we might see today in the Christian world if this was put into practice! It is surely a question of getting our priorities right.