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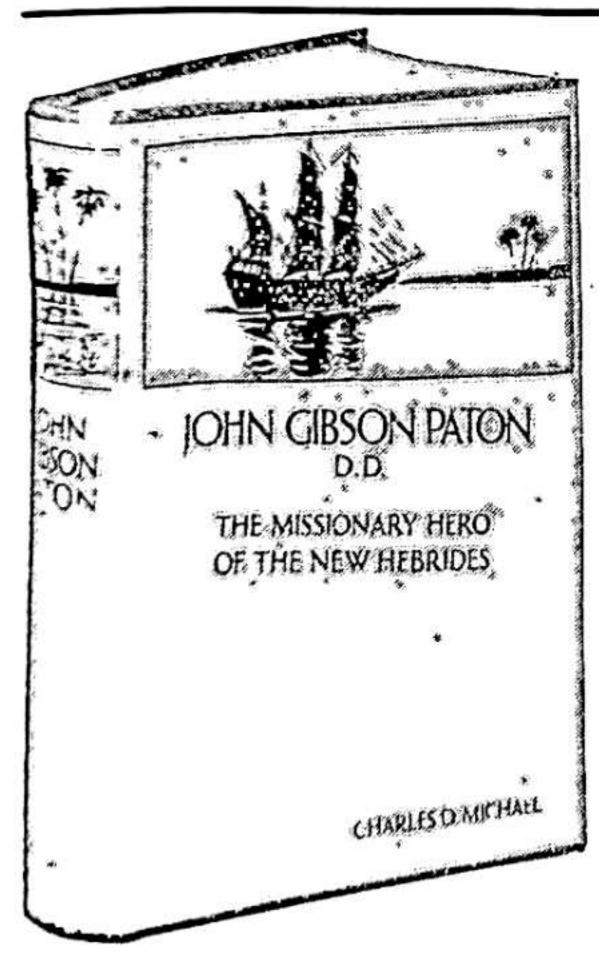
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The "Tongues" Movement and The Movement of the Tongue.

BY
ERNEST BARKER.

PART I.

THE "TONGUES" MOVEMENT.

THE consideration of this subject is of the utmost importance, particularly in these "latter days."

Many present day theories, with their insecure foundations, have a substratum of truth, and herein lies their insidiousness. We should hold no theory which cannot bear the test of the whole of Scripture, and when we turn the search-light of the Word of God upon the "Tongues movement," as it is commonly understood to-day, we find that it is in no wise consistent with the plain teaching of Scripture.

It is perfectly clear that the "gift of tongues" was granted by God to many of His servants in the very early days of Christianity, and that it was a miraculous gift is equally clear. One reason why these miraculous gifts were granted was for the stabilising and advancement of the truth during the Church's infancy. People at that time had not the Word of God in its completeness and, therefore, God gave them "signs and wonders" that they might recognise His power, acknowledge His claims, and turn to Him.

Seeing that we now have the complete revelation of God in the Scriptures, there is not the same need for these gifts of a miraculous nature. To prove this it is only necessary to recognise the fact that there is at least one miracle which is never seen today, viz.:—the raising of the dead. The Apostles were able to accomplish this miracle, but since their

day it has ceased. Let us, therefore, ever remember that in these last days God speaks through His written Word.

But the real test of the genuineness of the "gift of tongues" is, after all, exceedingly simple. On the day of Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, "and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The significance of this lies in the fact that there were dwelling in Jerusalem at that time representative Jews from every nation under heaven. Now carefully observe what follows:—" Every man heard them speak in his own language." This is mentioned no less than three times within the compass of a few verses (Acts 2. 6-11), and the statement implies that God's servants were enabled to discourse in other languages without previous acquaintance with them. This is the Scriptural import of the "gift of tongues."

Is this seen to-day?

Do our friends who boast of having this "gift' speak in a foreign language—so clearly that the people in that particular part of the world can understand them—without previously studying that language? For instance, could any of them without a knowledge of the Chinese language, preach or pray in Chinese in such a way that the preaching or praying would be intelligible to a Chinaman?

If this were done, I should indeed be compelled to believe in the "gift of tongues" movement, but unless and until I have incontrovertible evidence of such a miracle taking place, I certainly may be excused from accepting a religious counterfeit.

Perhaps the most exhaustive chapter in the Bible on the subject of "Tongues" is 1-Cor. 14, and a critical examination of this chapter ought to shew us exactly what our attitude should be in respect to this matter.

In the light of this important chapter, the genuineness or otherwise of the so-called "gift of tongues," in those gatherings where the "gift" is supposed to be exercised, should be patent to any observant mind. The following are some of the tests:-If the church of God is not edified; if there be no interpreter; if the language used is not easy to be understood; if instead of godly order there is confusion—then the "movement" in question is NOT OF GOD and should be condemned rather than commended.

Perhaps we could better visualise the situation if the aforesaid chapter were analysed, thus:—

PROPHECY.

He that prophesieth is preferred to him that

speaketh with tongues

(v.v. 1 and 5).

He speaketh to men to edification, exhortation, and comfort (v.v. 2 and 3).

He edifieth the church

(v. 4).

He is greater than he that speaketh with tongues (v. 5).

He is God's trumpet which gives no uncertain

sound (v. 8).

He is God's voice with a distinct articulation (v.10).

It is two thousand times better to speak with the understanding than in an unknown tongue (v. 19)...

TONGUES.

He that speaketh with tongues speaketh to God, but no man understand= eth (v. 2).

He edifieth himself (v.

4).

He needeth to interpret (v.v. 5, 13 and 17).

*He speaketh into the air (v. 19).

*He is a barbarian unto his hearers, and vice versa (v. 11).

His understanding is

unfruitful (v. 14).

*The uninstructed remains ignorant, and is not edified (v.v. 16 and 17).

PROPHECY.

Originally given as a sign for believers (v. 20).

Tends to orderliness and conviction of the unlearned (v. 24).

exhorted (v. 31).

ORDER (v. 40).

TONGUES.

Originally given as a sign for unbelievers (v. 20).

*Tends to confusion, and the speaker makes himself liable to be designated a madman (v.v. 23 and 33).

He should speak that If there be no interall may learn and be preter, he is to remain

quiet (v. 28). Let all things be done UNTO EDIFYING (v. 26). Let all things be done DECENTLY AND IN

Thus we see how, in every way, prophecy† is preferred to speaking with "tongues." How any clear-minded (not to say spiritually-minded) person can place any reliance upon the present-day tongues movement, after a thoughtful investigation of such a chapter as we have examined, surpasses comprehension. It only remains to be said of such a person —to use the words of the Apostle—" If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant '' (v. 38).

"Whether there be tongues, THEY SHALL CEASE '' (1 Cor. 13. 8).

PART II.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE TONGUE.

"THE TONGUE IS A LITTLE MEMBER, AND BOASTETH GREAT THINGS "-James 3. 5.

James is, perhaps, the severest writer in the New Testament, and the reason, or at least one reason, for this is that he is so intensely practical. He does not elaborate on doctrinal truths, but he handles

^{*} That is, if what is spoken is not easily understood.

[†] The term "prophesy" can be used in two ways:—(1) to foretell the future; (2) to speak as God's oracle. It is obviously the latter sense in which the term is used in 1 Cor. 14.

those things which have to do with our daily experience. And, moreover, he never wastes words: he never chooses a circuitous route to arrive at what he has to say. He always makes straight for the mark, and, what is more, he hits it every time.

It is quite true that the pen is mightier than the sword, but the tongue is mightier than both of them put together. The wise man says in Prov. 18. 21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." That is to say that this little member is capable of as much evil on the one hand, as it is capable of good on the other.

We are blessed with two eyes, two ears, two hands, and two feet, but we have only one tongue. Thank God for this. One dare not contemplate what would happen if we had more than one. Though it is shut in by two lips, and two rows of teeth, yet again and again it breaks through its barriers, and, if allowed to roam at will, incalculable mischief ensues.

I am bold to suggest that more havor has been wrought in the church of God through the indiscreet use of the tongue than anything else. It is painful to contemplate the cruel backbiting, bitterness, slander, and acrimony, of which even believers have been guilty.

How sad it is when husband and wife (both of whom are Christians) wrangle and quarrel, each one endeavouring to have the "last word." Equally sad is it when brother and sister in the same house have bitter words, notwithstanding the fact that they both belong to Christ. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

It is very striking to notice that the greatest men in history have failed at this very point. We look into the Old Testament and survey the history of God's heroes, only to find that there were occasions when they allowed their tongues to obtain the mastery over them.

ABRAHAM is the outstanding character of faith.
He is especially designated "the friend of God";

he knew Jehovah so intimately that before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, God actually unfolded His intentions to him. And yet, when Abram went down into Egypt because of the famine in Canaan, he allowed his tongue to overpower him when he put a lie on Sarah's lips and said, "Tell the Egyptians that you are not my wife but my sister."

MOSES was also a remarkable character. It is generally admitted that he was one of the greatest leaders of men that ever lived. He was also the great law-giver. "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," so close was the fellowship between God and His servant. He was not only a devoted servant of the Lord, but—what was far more important—he was a man of God. Moreover, Moses was the meekest of all men, and yet this remarkable man failed in this very matter of speech when he practically lost his temper and said, "Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

DAVID was a man after God's own heart—the sweet singer of Israel—respected and even beloved by his people. God so highly honoured him as to promise that Christ should ultimately sit on his throne (Luke 1. 32). And yet even David spake unadvisedly with his lips on more than one occasion.

We pass from the Old Dispensation to the New, only to find the same failing. One of the most prominent characters in the New Testament is PETER, whose lamp of testimony shone so brightly when he made the grand confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was Peter, who, at Pentecost, preached with such extraordinary power that about 3,000 souls were brought to the Lord. It was Peter who raised Æneas from a bed of sickness (upon which he had lain for eight years), and subsequently raised Dorcas from death to life. And yet Peter failed in the same way as did the great men of the Old Testament, particularly when, before a servant maid in the court of the

high priest's palace, he denied, with oaths and curses, two things:--

(1) That he ever knew the Lord, and

(2) That he was ever identified with Him.

JOHN THE APOSTLE was characterised by love and tenderness. Five times he is referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He wrote more about love than any other writer in the sacred Scriptures. He gave us, under the directing hand of God, the fourth Gospel (in which so many of us revel); also those three sublime letters which he wrote to the "royal family of heaven;" also the remarkable book of the Revelation. Yes, John was a beautiful character, and yet he failed in this very matter of vocal discretion, and that was when, in company with his prother James, he asked divine permission to call fire down from heaven in order to consume the inhabitants of a certain village of the Samaritans, because they refused to receive his Master.

We study the life of the APOSTLE PAUL—or, rather, we endeavour so to do—and we are amazed at the life he lived. What an influence he exercised: what a giant he was—a giant in intellect; a giant in grace; a giant in the battle for the truth; head and shoulders taller than any of his contemporaries in the things of God; a man absolutely devoted to the service of Christ, and filled to overflowing with a passion for the welfare of those around him. And yet the great Apostle failed in exactly the same way as the others. When he was before the Sanhedrin and the high priest commanded those that stood by to smite him on the mouth, Paul said warmly, "God shall smite thee thou whited wall." But let me hasten to say the Apostle did what some of us find very difficult to do—he apologised when he discovered his indiscretion. It needs a great supply of grace to own that one is in the wrong, and to say so.

Having seen that the greatest men in history failed by "offending in word," are we able to cast

stones at them? Nay, let us frankly acknowledge that we too have failed, only with this difference—we have failed more lamentably than they.

We should do well to examine the book of Proverbs and notice carefully what Solomon has to say concerning this "movement of the tongue."

Thus in chapter 6. 17 is mentioned

The LYING Tongue.

This is one of the seven things which the Lord abominates, and it comes second in the God-dishonouring category. It seems scarcely creditable that this could be a characteristic of any of God's redeemed people, yet the very fact that the Apostle said to the Ephesian believers, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" is sufficient evidence of the sad possibility.

Then in chapter 17. 20, Solomon mentions

The PERVERSE Tongue.

This is the rudder which is constantly turned the wrong way, and, as we can easily imagine, it is always the forerunner of mischief. How sad it is that certain Christians seem to be so extraordinarily antagonistic! However graciously and considerately one may seek to act toward them, they persist in adopting an attitude of contrariness. One reason for this is pride of heart: another is the tendency with such people to over-estimate their own importance and ability.

Then again in Chapter 25. 23, we see mentioned

The BACKBITING Tongue.

This is one of the most deadly weapons in existence, and it is accountable for some of the most heart-rending experiences in the history of God's people. Some have fallen into this snare so completely that "backbiting" has become well night habitual with them. When one Christian slanders another behind his or her back, the information passes from one to another with extraordinary rapidity and, as a rule, the scandal increases to such an

alarming extent that what was perhaps originally a slight misunderstanding becomes an almost unspeakable crime. The words, "a whisperer separateth chief friends" are sadly true when a child of God wickedly whispers something of a derogatory nature about a fellow believer to a third party, thus causing endless unpleasantness and friction. The Scriptural method is set forth clearly in Matt. 18. 15, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him ALONE."

In chapter 28. 23, reference is made to

The FLATTERING Tongue.

If possible, this weapon is even more deadly than the one just mentioned. The owner of this poisonous arrow will speak prettily in your presence, but when your face is turned will stab you a deadly blow in the back, Far better rebuke a man, when rebuke is necessary, than flatter him. A word of encouragement, when deserved, goes a long way (especially when it is discreetly given by our elder brethren to the younger), but "flattery" is akin to "jealousy"—CRUEL AS THE GRAVE.

All this constitutes so ugly a picture, that perhaps we had better look on the other side and notice what Solomon has to say concerning the better and more profitable use of this "boastful little member."

Thus in chapter 10. 20 he mentions

The RIGHTEOUS Tongue.

This, in contrast to the perverse tongue, is the rudder which is always turned the right way. The words "we came with a straight course to Samothracia" were true of Paul and those who were sailing with him, and the righteous tongue always steers this "straight course," and necessarily so when we remember that "righteousness" means a perfectly straight line which God Himself has drawn.

Then in chapter 12. 18 we read of

The WISE Tongue.

How happy when righteousness and wisdom go hand in hand, and the person who possesses the righteous tongue also speaks wisely! How unwise we are on occasions! What a muddle we make of things when we speak without thinking! We need the "wise" tongue when we deal with anxious souls. We need it when the tradesman comes to our door and does not happen to have the exact article we require. We need it in the office, in the home, in the assembly,—we need it at all times.

Again, in chapter 15. 4, is mentioned

The WHOLESOME Tongue.

This particular member is needful inasmuch as it possesses valuable medicinal properties. It is "a tree of life." It heals rather than wounds; it encourages rather than hinders; it establishes rather than demolishes; it glorifies Christ rather than its owner. Some words are as sharp and as dangerous as razors; some are as cold as icicles; some are so void of grace that they wither the soul. Hence the essential importance of cultivating this "healthful" member.

Once more, in chapter 31. 26 we read of

The IDEAL Tongue.

This priceless jewel is the possession of the ideal woman who is so beautifully portrayed in this last chapter of Proverbs. Many are her virtues, not the least of which is "the law of kindness" which is on her tongue. Such a sister with such a treasure is worth her weight in rubies. There are numerous "laws," mentioned in Scripture, and this "law of kindness" is one of the most beautiful of them all. Kindness does not mean weakness. There are occasions when firmness and even rebuke are necessary, but if behind the law of correction there lies the law of kindness, some real work will be accomplished with which God will be well pleased.

Now, in these four characteristics of the "move-

ment of the tongue?' we have a perfect picture of the Master. Look at it briefly.

He possessed the Righteous tongue. After delivering that most remarkable discourse known as the sermon on the Mount (which discourse is based entirely on the principle of righteousness), the people "were astonished at His doctrine, for He spake with authority and not as the scribes." In fact all His utterances were undeviatingly righteous.

He likewise manifested the wise tongue throughout His earthly life and ministry. When the people said in amazement "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" they little knew in whose presence they were. The Lord Jesus was the source, secret, and spring of all true wisdom, and just as all His utterances were based on the principle of eternal righteousness, so those very same utterances manifested eternal wisdom.

And how delightful it is to observe that He possessed the wholesome (healthful) tongue in all its. perfection. How healing were His words to the woman which was a sinner"—"Thy sins be for= given thee." How frequently He repeated the encouraging words "Be of good cheer" to those who were disconsolate. When He was in the Nazarene Synagogue and read the extraordinary prophetic Scripture of Isaiah 61, and informed the people that that very prophecy was being fulfilled in their midst, "They all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth "; and these "words of grace" characterised Him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. It surely behoves us to remember that He is our perfect Example in this as in all other virtues.

Yet again, His was the Ideal tongue. The "law of kindness" was ever on His lips. How kind He was to those who came to Him in all their entire helplessness,—how lovingly and gently He spoke to them! In every respect He was THE HEAVENLY IDEAL. Never a wrong word escaped His lips.

No truer statement was ever uttered than that of the soldiers who were commissioned to take Him and came back without Him, and who gave as their reason—NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN. Time and again His enemies endeavoured to entangle Him in His speech. They put to Him the most cunning and difficult questions that their wicked hearts could conceive. But they were utterly incompetent to ask Him a question which He was not able to answer perfectly, though, on the other hand, He could easily put questions to them which so completely baffled their ingenuity that "no man was able to answer Him a word," and so, rather than expose their ignorance, they preferred to remain silent.

To return to ourselves with all our imperfections: shall we face this matter of "the movement of the tongue" fairly and squarely as in God's holy presence? James says "the tongue can no man tame." Man can tame insects, fishes, birds, and even wild beasts, but he cannot tame his own tongue. This is something which is altogether beyond our power. Again and again it becomes our master, notwithstanding our efforts to keep it within bounds. Beloved reader, neither you nor I can tame this little member, BUT GOD CAN, and He will if we but give Him the opportunity. Moreover, James continues his unsparing denunciation by saying; "It is an unruly evil." It absolutely refuses to be controlled. We have endeavoured to control it times without number, and, although there have been occasions when, thank God, we have been enabled by His grace to utilise it for His glory, yet how frequently has it issued "deadly poison" rather than lifegiving utterances? You and I cannot control this "boastful little member," BUT GOD CAN, and He will if we but let Him. Then—and not till then -shall our speech be always unto edification, min-ERNEST BARKER, istering grace unto our hearers.

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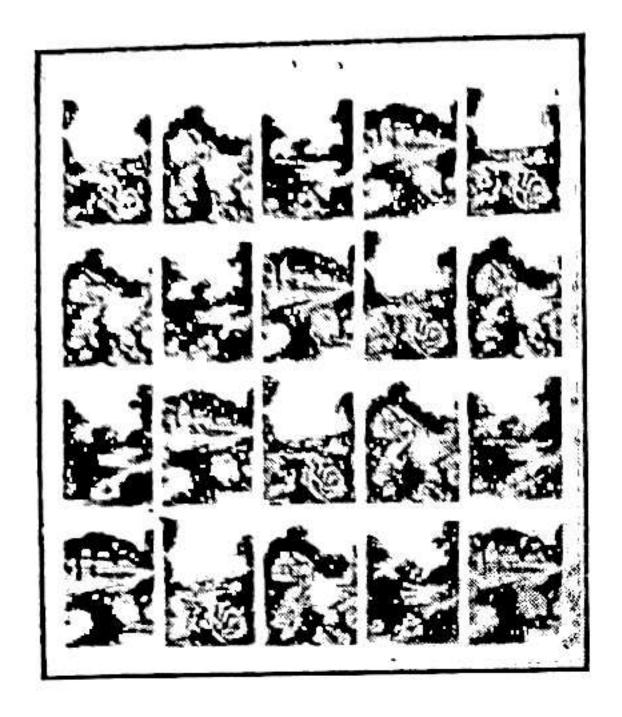
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