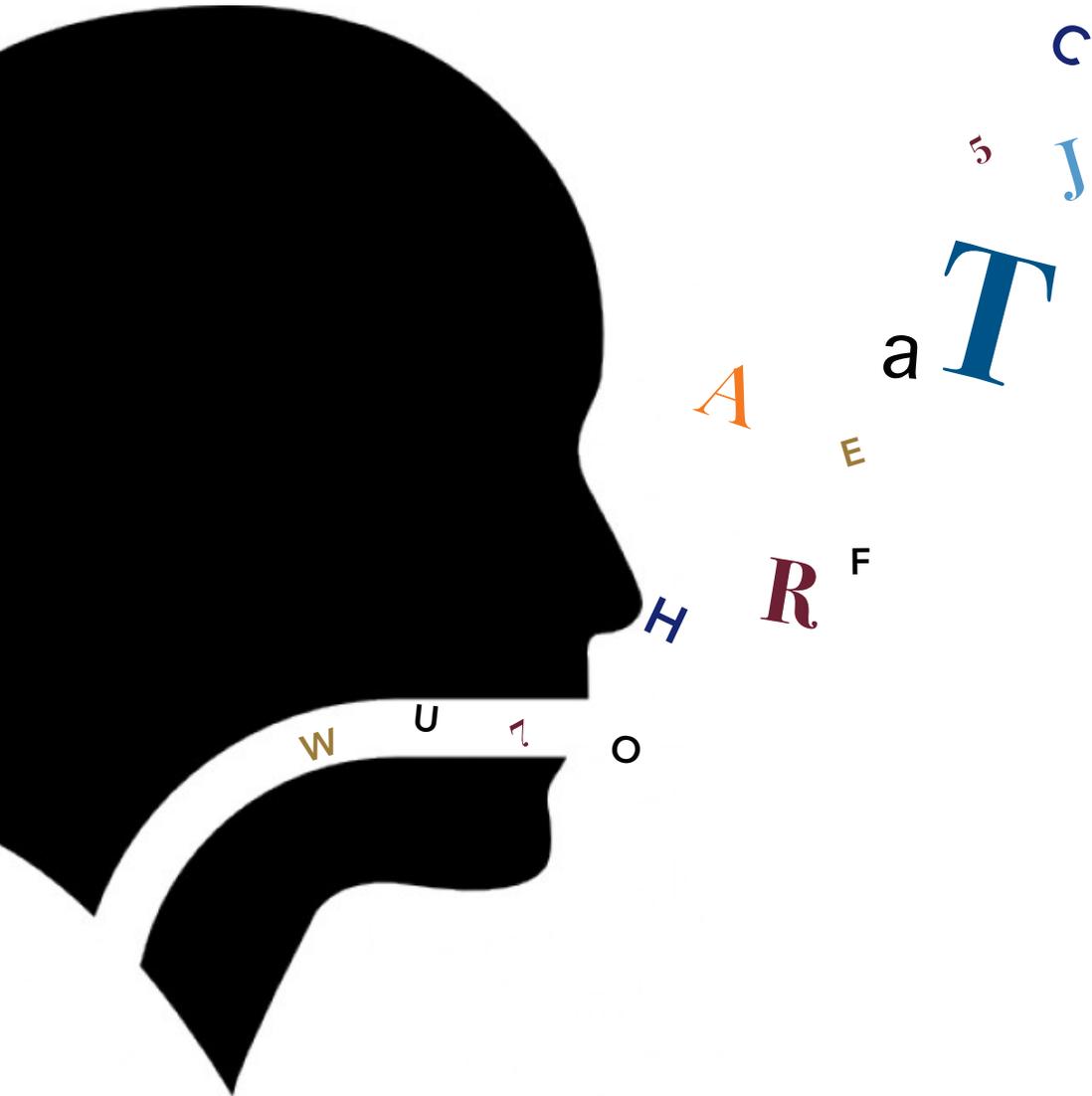


PURPOSE OF TONGUES- SPEAKING

CHARISMATISM'S ERRORS REFUTED!



graphic above taken from @flaticon.com

This article will continue from where the previous article has left off, in the attempt to warn against wrong Charismatic teachings (and their erroneous practice) regarding tongues-speaking.

MODERN TONGUES-SPEAKING DETRACTS FROM COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE OF SPEECH

As has been clearly highlighted from the previous article, the natural inference from a straightforward reading of Paul's writings leads Bible-readers to understand that the kind of tongues which existed then was not some meaningless ecstatic utterances, but truly languages spoken by people. A close examination of the Greek words used with reference to tongues-speaking in Acts and 1 Corinthians shows that the same words were used in both. In Acts 2, Luke used the Greek verb *laleo* (meaning "speak") and the Greek noun *glossa* (which means "tongue") to depict the Pentecost occurrence of tongues-speaking. These two Greek words convey the idea of usage of spoken language for communication purposes. The exact words are similarly used in the record of post-Pentecost occurrences of the gift of tongues mentioned in both Acts (cf. 10:46, 19:6) and 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:30; 13:1; 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 18, 19, 21, 27, 39 – altogether 13 times). Further proof that the post-Pentecostal tongues-speaking manifested in different places was not any different from the event at Pentecost was supplied by Peter's testimony about what occurred in Cornelius' house in Caesarea (cf. Acts 10:46) – "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning (i.e. as on the day of Pentecost).

... Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:15, 17). In other words, Peter clearly stated that the gift which Cornelius' household experienced was the same as what God did unto the apostles at Pentecost – all for the purpose of communicating God's truths.

Further consider carefully what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:10-11, "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." Now, the phrase "many kinds of voices in the world" is very instructive; it is used in the context of human speech conveying "signification" so that the intended meaning can be derived from the speech. Paul was clearly referring to the different languages spoken in the world as the "voices in the world". For communication between two individuals to take place, the hearer must understand the meaning of the speaker's voice (or language), otherwise they would be as a "barbarian" (or foreigner) to one another. Since all kinds of human speech are meant to help the hearers to understand what is being uttered, Paul was insisting that the Corinthians should not speak in the church in a language that cannot be understood or known to the hearer. The crux of the matter is, if human voices do not communicate, they are just worthless sounds and of no significance!

Further evidence that the Corinthian tongues-speaking referred to real human

languages is found in Paul's citation of Isaiah 28:11-12, "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:21). Isaiah's prophecy was against Israel who had refused to listen to God's message in understandable language proclaimed by His prophets, whereby he predicted that God would consequently address them by means of the foreign language of the imminent conquering Assyrians (cf. 2 Kings 17:23). Hearing a message in an unintelligible foreign language is a sign of judgment for unbelievers. Biblically speaking, the foreign tongue denoted God's disciplinary response (cf. Deuteronomy 28:49; Isaiah 33:19) to Israel's rebellion against Him (cf. 2 Kings 17:14; Acts 7:51), and served as a punitive sign concerning

not believers, constitute the primary arena of such "punitive exercise" involving foreign tongues. Hence, Paul's argument is that it is pointless and unbiblical to speak in foreign tongues in the church, since no true communication can take place.

MODERN TONGUES-SPEAKING DISREGARDS INTERPRETATION FOR HEARERS' BENEFIT

This leads us to the next point, i.e. the apostolic injunction that non-interpreted tongues should not be practised in the church – "If any man speak in an unknown tongue... let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). The apostle Paul's insistence on the need for interpretation of tongues in Corinth firmly pointed to the fact

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their unbelief. That is why Paul said in the next verse, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (1 Corinthians 14:22a). In other words, the company of unbelievers,

that the Corinthian Christians were not producing some meaningless sounds, but proper language with meaningful messages, unlike the modern tongues-speaking. The Greek word that Paul used

which is translated as “interpret”, comes from the root verb (*hermeneuo*) meaning “to translate” or “to explain clearly and exactly”. This logically indicates that the tongues spoken in Corinth must have been translatable into their own native language and were therefore proper human languages, though unknown to them. Otherwise, it makes no sense for Paul to mention the need for interpretation. An “interpretation” is the translation (into a known language) of a message originally spoken in an unfamiliar language to the hearers; it is not the creation of a new message. In the modern tongues-speaking case, it is obviously impossible to translate their irrational utterances and repetitions of random syllables into meaningful messages. Thus, the gift of “interpretation” mentioned in

When all of the facts concerning the gift of tongues discussed in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are carefully considered, it is abundantly clear that there was no difference between the tongues mentioned in Acts and in 1 Corinthians. Tongues-speaking was the Spirit-given ability to communicate in a foreign language (unknown to the speaker) for the purpose of declaring the truth to foreigners. It was never granted to all Christians in the early church, but only to some who were enabled by the Holy Spirit as He willed. Furthermore, in the Corinthian church, an interpreter was essential because the tongues were foreign languages unknown to the congregation. On the day of Pentecost, there was no need for an interpreter because among those who gathered, there were many who could understand the respective foreign languages spoken by the apostles (Acts 2:5-11).

Interpretation of tongues in
 Corinthian Christians were not
 a language with meaningful
 tongues-speaking.

CONCLUSION

To put it in a nutshell, it must be categorically stated that nowhere in the New Testament was tongues-speaking (or for that matter, any of the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit) associated with ecstatic, irrational speech of any kind. Indeed, if any tongue is to be spoken in a congregation where it is not understood, interpretation of the message is required. It goes without saying that the practice of the modern tongues-speaking advocates is in stark contrast to this biblical requirement. Christians ought to be cautioned against the deception and errors of this unbiblical Charismatic practice.

1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 27 implicitly supports the biblical fact that tongues were proper languages that could be translated for the benefit of the hearers.



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