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ARTICLE IV.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

BY REV. DAVID GREENE, FORMERLY SECRETARY OF A. B. C. F. M.

To the reader of the New Testament, who desires and aims to get clear and satisfactory views of all which is there recorded respecting the early history of Christianity, few matters probably, present themselves more indistinctly before him, or occasion more perplexity, than what is denominated, in both scriptural and common language, the Gift of Tongues. What was it? On whom and for what purpose was the gift bestowed? In what manner, in what circumstances, and under what limitations, was it exercised? These and many other similar inquiries arise in the mind of the thoughtful reader; and some of them, at least, are not readily answered, so as to put the mind at rest. To all such inquiries it is easy to answer generally, that this gift was an ability miraculously imparted to the apostles, and to some extent to others in the early Christian churches, to speak and teach in languages not vernacular to them, and of which they had not acquired a knowledge in any ordinary method. Perhaps most readers, and not a few who should be students, of the New Testament, are satisfied with such an answer as this; but as the subject is presented by the inspired writers in various aspects, in connection with predictions, narratives, precepts, exhortations, and rebukes, many points are suggested on which the inquiring mind asks for something more specific and definite.

As no important principle in the economy of redemption seems to be involved in this matter, and probably nothing that bears very directly on the duties of the Christian life, at least not in these later ages of the world, we must not expect to find all that light shed upon it, by which the fundamental doctrines and precepts of our religion are rendered luminous:

Still we may, perhaps, be able, and if so, it is desirable, to obtain such views as shall be in harmony with all the facts and statements which the New Testament presents in connection with the subject. Let us, at least, seek to have views as well-defined and consistent as the case admits.

Most commentators on the New Testament have written more or less fully respecting the gift of tongues, proposing various and inconsistent theories for harmonizing the statements and phenomena presented in the several passages relating to it; but as nearly or quite all our knowledge, and the grounds for forming opinions on the subject, must be derived from what the sacred writers have themselves recorded in these passages, and as the language employed presents no special difficulties, mere learning is of little avail for arriving at correct conclusions.

Writers on this subject may be arranged in two classes—those who assert, and those who deny, the miraculous nature of the gift. Among those of the latter class is the learned Eichorn, and others, almost numberless, of the rationalistic commentators of Germany, who, while uniting in rejecting everything supernatural in the phenomena as represented in Acts ii. and 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., disagree much in the hypotheses by which they attempt to account for these phenomena.

Among the writers of the first class, maintaining the miraculous character of the gift of tongues, are Storr, Kuinoel, and Olshausen, with orthodox Germans generally, including the historians Neander and Guericke, with nearly all evangelical commentators in England and the United States.

Before noticing the various and conflicting opinions which have been advocated—and it is not proposed to spend much time upon them—it seems proper to survey, briefly the several passages in the New Testament where this wonderful gift is mentioned, and learn in what aspects and relations the sacred writers present it. It is first spoken of in Mark xvi. 17. The risen Saviour, in his farewell address and commission to his disciples, tells them that

these confirmatory signs shall be witnessed in those who believe: "In my name they shall cast out devils; they *shall speak with new tongues*; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Here the gift of tongues is predicted as one of the miraculous manifestations to be witnessed, not in the apostles only, but also in those who should believe their doctrines, and to be exhibited as proofs that those doctrines, divinely accredited, were heartily believed and submitted to. The exact purport and extent and object of this promised endowment should be borne in mind. It was simply a promise to the apostles that they who received their doctrines, and as proof that they had really received them, should be endued with these supernatural gifts. The possession of these gifts might be a sign to the apostles, as teachers, who would naturally look for evidence that their instructions had been effectual; and they might be a sign, also, to the new converts themselves, evincing that they had rightly and savingly believed the Christian doctrines; and still further, they might be a sign to the unbelieving multitudes, that those who embraced these doctrines were thereby brought into a new spiritual state; while to all, the exercise of these promised miraculous powers would evince that the doctrines were from God, and that the preaching and receiving of them were accompanied by a divine power and sanction.

At the same farewell meeting with his disciples, Christ commissioned them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; at the same time intimating that they were not prepared to enter immediately on this, their great life-work; and therefore bidding them tarry in Jerusalem till they should be "endued with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49), or as it is expressed, Acts i. 4, 5, till the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, that they should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Taking along with us the predicted miraculous endow-

ments recorded, Mark xvi. 17, Luke xxiv. 49, and Acts i. 4, 5, let us proceed to the record made by the sacred writer respecting this gift of tongues in Acts ii. 4, and onward. But before entering upon the examination of this, a preliminary remark or two may be made.

That the disciples, up to the time of Christ's ascension, had no clear view (if, indeed, they had any notion at all) of their Lord's mission, as our atoning Saviour, or of the method of salvation through faith in him, or of the nature of the kingdom which he was about to set up in the world, and in which they, as founders and pillars, were to bear so prominent a part, seems too obvious to require proof. Their worldly and ambitious hopes, often expressed, and even at their last interview with him; their dulness of apprehension, and their misunderstanding of him when he alluded to his real character and work, and their perplexity in view of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection, all show deep, if not total, darkness on these points. And they probably received no additional light previously to the day of pentecost. And the reason, undoubtedly, why they were not bidden to go at once and preach the gospel—to reap in the fields white already to the harvest—was the best of all reasons, that they had not yet learned the message which they were to carry forth—did not themselves understand the doctrines which they were to preach. To be fully qualified for their work they must first take a lesson from the enlightening, sanctifying, inspiring Spirit. This brings us to the scene on the day of pentecost.

As the narrative is not explicit respecting the place, the order, and other particulars of the wonderful manifestations presented to us, conjecture must be resorted to, and all that can be hoped for, is to suggest what may seem probable, or at least possible. A question arises as to the place. It is hardly supposable that these followers of the recently crucified Jesus would have been permitted to occupy any large room of the temple; nor can we suppose this company of Christ's disciples to have been worshipping with the

Jews, the betrayers and murderers of their Lord, as the latter could have no sympathy or fellowship with the former in the deeply interesting matters to which their thoughts and prayers must have been mainly directed; and as spacious halls and addresses to great public assemblies were not as common in those days and in Jerusalem, as they are in our cities in this age, we must not suppose that the apostles and their company had procured a hall capacious enough to accommodate thousands of auditors. Nor would an apartment in the temple, of such a hall, have been sufficiently secluded and quiet for such humble and devout worshippers. This company of disciples were probably, on this day of the Spirit's descent, occupying the same room in which they had for days before been holding their meetings for prayer, and it probably was a room, or house, belonging to some one of their number, capable of accommodating a hundred and twenty persons. It is not necessary to suppose that all the speaking to the multitudes was done there, or that the three thousand or more whom Peter addressed were gathered into any one room. Most of the speaking was probably done in the courts or in the streets about the house, or elsewhere. This must suffice for preliminaries. Let us now look in upon this worshipping assembly.

Teachable and obedient, though sad and perplexed, the apostles and their companions, about a hundred and twenty in all, had been, agreeably to their Lord's command, waiting at Jerusalem for the fulfilment of his promise; in much darkness, no doubt, as to its purport, yet united in heart, and devoutly praying with reference to the great blessing about to be conferred, and the unknown scenes that were about to open upon them. Some presentiment they may have had that the anticipated blessing was drawing near; and perhaps they had continued all night in prayer; at least they were assembled at an early hour for a morning prayer-meeting. The first miraculous manifestations could not have been much later than the first hour of the day, or

sunrise, since we find the whole scene closed, and Peter delivering his address at the third hour, or about the usual time of the Jewish morning service.

At this point the narrative presents three phenomena, obviously all alike the result of miraculous interposition: 1. the sound as of a mighty rushing wind, *φερομένης πνοῆς βιαίας*; 2. the cloven tongues, like as of fire, *διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαι*; 3. their beginning to speak with other tongues, *λαλεῖν ἑτέραις γλώσσαις*, consequent upon their being filled with the Holy Ghost, and proving that they were so. Admitting a miraculous interposition, as we must, if we admit the truth of the narrative, the first two of these manifestations occasion no more perplexity than opening the eyes of the blind, healing a leper, or any other miracle; but to set the facts connected with the third in such a light as to be consistent with each other, and at the same time to seem natural and truth-like, is not a little difficult. As the sacred writer does not stop to harmonize apparent incongruities, or to attempt to give an aspect of verisimilitude to the scene, we can, as already remarked, only conjecture what were the circumstances and what the order and relations of the events. The scene, we are told, opened upon the company suddenly. The unusual sound and the fiery symbol resting on the head of each of them convinced the disciples that the promised Spirit was really then present with them, and the new languages in which they found themselves, almost involuntarily, uttering praises and prayers strengthened this conviction. The Comforter was now, as Christ had promised them, bringing all things to their remembrance. As sudden as thought, all that their Lord had said to them of "the Son of Man being lifted up"; of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"; of his coming, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved"; of the "good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep"; of his being "the way, the truth, and the life"; of his "kingdom being not of this world," and the like; also the meaning of the rites, ceremonies, and types, of the Old Testament

scriptures, and of the predictions relating to the Messiah, now suddenly burst upon their divinely illuminated minds with an almost bewildering effulgence. Up to this time even the teachings of their Lord on these subjects had rather perplexed and troubled, than instructed and comforted them; but now, from the Old Testament scriptures and the teaching of Christ, the whole plan of salvation by grace, through faith in his propitiatory death, flashed upon their minds with more than noonday clearness. All darkness and doubt are gone; and we may suppose them exclaiming, from the fulness of their hearts: "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" This sudden opening of the whole mystery of redemption, these thrilling views of the unspeakable mercy of God in giving his Son to die for sinners, and the compassion of their ascended Lord in yielding himself up to be slain as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, put the whole company into ecstasy. Their emotions were too strong to be controlled, or expressed in any common manner; and under the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and with this new power of language with which they were endued, they gave utterance to their wonder, thankfulness, and joy; probably in the form of prayer, hymns of praise, and of devout ejaculations, extolling "the wonderful works of God," especially the great redemptive work—salvation through the propitiatory death of their divine Master.¹ Their excitement and joy were probably all the greater because that, in their "speaking with other tongues," according to the promise, they had a demonstration that the doctrines which they had been taught were divine, and that they had

¹ This we suppose to be the first time that the gospel method of salvation, through faith in Christ's atoning death, and the wonderful mercy of God in providing such a salvation for sinful and rebellious man, was clearly apprehended by any human mind. It is no wonder, then, that when this whole matter was at once opened, clear and fresh, to the minds of the apostles and their companions, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, they were thrown into ecstasy, and out of their glowing and admiring hearts spake of the wonderful works of God!

themselves now rightly apprehended and savingly believed them. Their hearts, softened by the agency of the Spirit, swelled with the holy emotions which their new views were adapted to awaken, especially with adoring gratitude to the Saviour and compassionate love toward their fellow-men.

The rumor of what was going on in that retired room was soon spread through the city, and multitudes of the pilgrims from abroad, and others who might then have been on their way to their morning worship, were drawn by curiosity to the scene of these strange occurrences. Some entered the house, others gathered around it, while the disciples, full of enthusiasm and boldness, and uncontrollably eager to tell their friends and all whom they could reach the new truths and views and emotions with which their own souls were almost overwhelmed, hastened into the streets, addressing companies as they met them, proclaiming to each, in their own dialect,¹ the new views of scripture history, and prophecy, and rites, and of the marvellous grace of the gospel with which they had just now been inspired. Well might those dead formalists — those mercenary, ceremonial worshippers — be amazed at such religious fervor, such novel and startling truths! To the disciples so near and gracious did God seem to be, and so glorious his redeeming, saving love, that they could not refrain from singing praises, ejaculating their adoration and joy, and speaking of his wonderful works, even in the open street, and to all whom they met. Such strange things, coming

¹ As we cannot understand literally, in its full extent, the phrase "out of every nation under heaven," so we need not suppose that each one of the sixteen or seventeen different nationalities enumerated spake or heard in a language different from all the others. Probably in all the countries mentioned not more than five or six different languages were in common use. Nor need we suppose that each speaker gave utterance to his thoughts, emotions, and views in all these languages at the same time, nor that all the one hundred and twenty, or even all the apostles, one speaking in one language and another in another, spake in all these languages at the same time and in the same place. It would have occasioned a scene of disorder and confusion, which we cannot imagine could have occurred under the direction and agency of the Spirit of God.

from such unlearned and common men, yet spoken to each company in its own language, filled all Jerusalem with amazement. "What do these things mean?" asked the sober-minded. The scornful said: "These men are full of new wine!"

The feelings of the company in the prayer room and wherever the disciples went about the city were, without doubt, most excited and ecstatic, their mental state being too novel and abnormal to permit them so carefully to conform to the conventional proprieties of public assemblies as they might have done when more calm and self-possessed.

We now come to Peter's address to the wondering multitudes. Respecting the place where it was delivered we have no information. That it was in any hall or room capable of admitting the thousands of hearers who appear to have listened to him, is, as before remarked, altogether improbable. He may have spoken from the door or the low roof of the house where the prayer-meeting had been held, while the hearers stood around in the street or the court of the house; or it may have been at some other favorable place in the street or courts of the city, whither the multitudes had resorted. In this connection the only point important to be noticed is, that in vindicating himself and his company from the charge of drunkenness, Peter, for aught that appears in the narrative, used only the common language of Palestine; and yet seems to have been perfectly understood by all his hearers. This would seem to imply that the "devout men out of every nation under heaven then dwelling at Jerusalem," or from the numerous countries enumerated Acts ii. 9-11, were all of Jewish parentage, and had retained their own national tongue; while, at the same time, they understood the languages of the countries where they had severally been born or had sojourned. This supposition, not at all improbable, would reconcile the apparent discrepancy between their recognizing the several languages miraculously spoken at first, and their all intelligently listening to Peter's address afterwards. Nothing would indi-

cate that any wondered at the language and manner of his address, while they were cut to the heart by the pungency with which he pressed home upon their conscience their guilt in crucifying the Messiah, and opened to their minds the new doctrine of pardon and salvation through faith in his atoning death. We have, therefore, reason to believe that there was nothing unusual in this address, except the new, strange, and moving truths which he uttered, and the unwonted fervor, solemnity, and personal application with which they were urged home upon the hearers. As Peter proceeds he assures his hearers, alluding to the miraculous speaking with tongues to which they had been listening, that what they had witnessed was only the fulfilment of Joel's prediction (Joel ii. 28-30), which, to the mind of the speaker, was nearly synonymous with what Christ had foretold (Mark xvi. 17) should happen in the experience of those believing the Christian doctrines. But it is unnecessary to dwell longer on this instance of the gift of tongues, though more peculiar and more encompassed with difficulties than any other.

Let us now pass on to the next recorded manifestation of this gift (Acts x. 44). The scene is at the house of Cornelius, and in the presence of his assembled family and friends, to whom this same Peter had been divinely directed to go and tell them words whereby they might be saved. The company were probably mostly Gentiles. When they had heard from Peter the doctrine of remission of sins through faith in Christ, and their hearts had been opened to receive it, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them, they were heard to "speak with tongues and magnify God." Here was the sign predicted (Mark xvi. 17). This proved to Peter and the believing Jews who were with him that to these Gentiles the Holy Ghost was given, as well as to the Jews. When Peter, afterwards, before the fault-finding Jews, defended himself for consorting with and preaching to the Gentiles on this occasion, he states that, when, after having been so commanded by a special message

from God, he addressed them (the Gentiles of Cornelius's household), "the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us (Jews) at the beginning; doubtless referring their minds back to the day of pentecost, and the wonderful descent of the Spirit, and the consequent speaking with tongues on that memorable occasion.

The next instance mentioned of the gift of tongues is in Acts xix. 6, where we find Paul at Ephesus, in company with certain of John's disciples who had received only John's baptism, and had not so much as heard that there was any Holy Ghost. Paul unfolded to them the plan of salvation through the atonement, and also the promise of Christ that his followers should be baptized with the Holy Ghost; and upon their being baptized in the name of Jesus, by Paul's direction, "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." The gift of tongues and prophesying, in this instance, as in those preceding, seems to have been simply a miraculous gift bestowed upon those hearers who, by divine grace, had just been brought into a new and higher religious state, and bestowed simply as a proof to themselves and others that they had undergone this spiritual change.

Probably those converts on whom the apostles laid their hands and they received the Holy Ghost, mentioned Acts viii. 17, received this gift of tongues, though it is not expressly stated that such was the fact; and probably, too, the ability which Simon Magus coveted, and which he proposed to buy of the apostles with money, was the ability to produce similar wonderful manifestations in those on whom he should lay his hands.

We find no further mention of the gift of tongues by the New Testament writers till we come to 1 Cor. xii.; and as the phraseology used by Paul in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of this Epistle is not uniformly the same in all passages when treating on this gift, it may be well to remark that *λαλεῖν γλώσση*, *λαλεῖν γλώσσαις*, *λαλεῖν καιναῖς γλώσσαις* and *λαλεῖν ἑτέρας γλώσσαις* seem to be, without doubt,

interchangeable forms of expression, having all a common meaning. But as this gift, as brought before the readers of these chapters, is presented in some aspects that are new and widely different from those in which we have before seen it, the connected facts and circumstances should be looked at.

The whole drift of this first Epistle to the Corinthians shows that shameful disorders and immoral practices, with an ambitious, uncharitable, contentious spirit, prevailed in the Corinthian church. Jewish formalism, Grecian philosophy, and pagan sensuality, connected with errors and unchristian doctrines, seem to have become rampant there during Paul's absence from the city; and to instruct, reprove, and reform the church was obviously his object in writing the epistle. Among the evils which marred the purity, peace, and order of the church was the coveting of such spiritual gifts as attracted admiration, and exalted the possessor above his brethren in the public estimation, and especially this gift of tongues. These ambitious members desired rather to excite wonder, than to instruct; to draw admiration to themselves, than to edify the church; and to show that God had peculiarly honored them, rather than to honor God by a proper use of his gifts. In the course of the apostle's rebukes and exhortations, contained in these chapters, we find such remarks as these: "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not to men, but to God," "edifieth himself," while he who prophesieth, that is, being divinely inspired, instructs and exhorts, "speaketh to men," "edifieth the church." "Better," i.e. more honorable and useful, "is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may be edified." "If I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you?" "And ye," if ye speak not in a language intelligible to your hearers, ye "shall speak into the air," i.e. to no purpose.¹ What, then, is the conclusion?

¹ This very plainly evinces that the gift of tongues, here treated of, was not designed or employed for teaching.

“I will pray in the Spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι), i.e. in such a foreign language as the Spirit may enable me, “and I will pray with my understanding” (τῷ νοῷ), i.e. intelligently and intelligibly, as a wise man, using appropriate means for accomplishing my object. “I will sing with the Spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι), i.e. in such an unknown tongue as the Spirit may enable me, and “I will sing with the understanding” (τῷ νοῷ), i.e. so as to be understood.

In a similar strain the apostle proceeds through the first twenty-one verses of the fourteenth chapter, and then brings out his conclusion: So then “tongues are for a sign” (using the very words of the Lord’s prediction, Mark xvi. 17); not for the benefit of believers, but of them that believe not; or, as Robinson paraphrases it, are a miracle by which the presence and power of God were manifested, directly, or through the agency of those whom he sends, not intended for churches of believers, but for unbelieving heathen.

Interpreters have given various renderings to the formula τῷ νοῷ in the fifteenth verse: προσεύχομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύχομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῷ ψαλλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, κ.τ.λ. These interpreters all educe substantially the same meaning from the formula, and that is the one which the apostle’s course of thought and reasoning in the passage and context seem obviously to demand and sanction. The only difficulty is found in making τῷ νοῷ give the meaning which the argument requires. Some arrive at it by giving the adverbial clause τῷ νοῷ a passive, rather than an active, signification, translating it intelligibly, rather than intelligently; making the passage read, I will pray with the spirit, i.e. as influenced by the Spirit, or in a foreign language; and I will pray with my understanding, i.e. so as to be understood, or intelligibly. This interpretation is adopted by Bloomfield; but no passages in the New Testament, or in classic Greek, are referred to, which fully sustain this passive rendering of τῷ νοῷ. In the Septuagint some are found that seem to favor it. Storr, however, judges it to be too clearly con-

trary to the *usus loquendi*, to be admitted. He therefore prefers to meet the difficulty by interpreting *νοός* by *sapientia*, and *τῷ νοί* by *cum sapientiâ*, or *sapienter*. "A wise man," he remarks, "has regard to the results of what he is doing, and aims at that which is most profitable. The aim of speaking is to be understood, so that the hearers may be benefitted. But to speak to auditors in an unknown tongue is unwise and puerile, and might be esteemed folly or madness." Storr's translation of the passage would therefore be nearly as follows: I will, as miraculously enabled by the Spirit, pray in an unknown tongue; and I will also pray as a wise man, desirous and aiming to profit those who hear me, i.e. so as to be understood. I will also sing under the inspiration of the Spirit, and I will sing to the edification of my hearers.¹

So in the nineteenth verse Paul writes, "Though I speak with tongues more than you all, yet in the church, I had rather speak five words, *διὰ τοῦ νοός μου*," (obviously of the same purport as *τῷ νοί* in the fifteenth) "than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue"; meaning that five words

¹ On the *πνεῦμα* and *νοός*, Cor. xiv. 14, Meyer remarks: "*πνεῦματι* is not to be understood of the objective Holy Ghost (against which see ver. 14), but of the higher spiritual nature of man, which is granted to the inspired by the Holy Ghost, such as, according to the different degrees of inspiration, can leave the intellectual activity (*νοός*, ver. 14) to its own agency, or can support it for the continuance of this degree of inspiration. The last is here meant; and *πνεῦμα λαλ.* means, therefore, speaking through the activity of the higher supra-mundane consciousness, without the aid of the reflection of the understanding.

Practically it seems to be of little importance, in relation to the subject before us, whether *πνεῦμα* is to be understood objectively—the Holy Ghost, or subjectively—that higher condition of the human mind produced by the Holy Ghost acting in man.

Meyer, in vindication of his view just quoted, remarks: "It is entirely a mistaken opinion that the genitive relation in *τῷ πνεύμα μου* is to be rendered other than in *δ νοός μου*, and that is to be explained by the Spirit of God, so far as it has possessed the man and spoken through him. . . . The Holy Ghost, though he is in men, is never called the spirit of man, and cannot be so called, because he is different from the spirit of man. *Τὸ πνεῦμά μου* is my own spirit—my individual higher life-principle. If I pray with tongues, then this higher life-principle in me is in activity, because it is replenished and excited by the Holy Ghost, as its receptive organ; but my understanding-reflection accomplishes nothing."

spoken wisely, intelligently, and so as to be understood, so as to benefit the hearers, are better than ten thousand words spoken in an unknown tongue, and not understood. Or, as Storr might translate the verse: In the church I had rather speak five words as a wise man, using appropriate means to accomplish my object, than ten thousand words in a language which my hearers would not understand.

One fact brought out by Paul in these chapters, while treating on this gift of tongues, deserves notice, as bearing upon and illustrating the nature and object of the gift. It is fully implied that the ability to *speak* in an unknown tongue, and the ability to *interpret* what was spoken, were separate gifts; and were not always, at least, imparted to the same person, leading us to infer that he who spake in an unknown tongue did not himself always know the meaning of the language which he uttered. We can hardly suppose that such an ability or gift as this would be a qualification for a teacher, or was employed by the apostles or others for such a purpose.

It may be asked if it is not probable that, while believers at home, in the bosom of the church, surrounded only by those who spake the same language as themselves, and therefore having little need for this gift, were thus ignorant of the meaning of what they uttered, others who travelled as evangelists into nations speaking other languages, were favored with the gift of tongues in a more perfect and more available form? But where in the New Testament, or elsewhere, is there any evidence that such a gift was possessed or used by the apostles, or other early propagators of Christianity? It is obvious that Paul and Barnabas did not understand the language of Lycaonia (Acts xiv. 1-18); or they would have known earlier, and would have protested against and prevented, the preparations which the priests of Jupiter were making to pay them divine honors.

Speaking of various spiritual gifts, in the twelfth chapter, as divinely bestowed on different individuals, and to be exercised by all for the general edification of the whole church,

Paul makes this distinction between the gift of *speaking* and the gift of *interpreting* those unknown languages miraculously spoken by believers; and in the fourteenth chapter, where he gives instructions respecting the use of these gifts, and imposes restrictions, he brings out this distinction still more fully. He bids him speaking in an unknown tongue to pray that he may interpret; and if there is no one in the assembly who can interpret, he bids him possessed of the gift of speaking to keep silence, rather than waste the time of the congregation by unintelligible talk. And again, while directing how an orderly meeting should be conducted, he bids those possessing this gift to speak, not more than two or three, and that in orderly succession, taking care that as they proceed, some one interpret, so that the assembly may be edified. Similar instructions Paul gives respecting their teachings and the revelations which may be made to any of them.

Having taken this survey of what the New Testament writers say respecting the gift of tongues, very brief notice will now be taken of some of the opinions entertained by commentators. These opinions are gleaned principally from Storr's dissertations on the subject, written in confutation of Eichorn and other anti-supernaturalists, and found in his *Opuscula Academica*; and from Kuinoel's commentary on the second chapter of the Acts.

1. Most of the early interpreters of the New Testament, and many in later times, entertained the opinion that the apostles, and others associated with them in preaching the gospel, were, on the day of pentecost, or whenever called into their work, by a special miraculous power enabled to understand and speak and write any language, though before unknown to them, which they might need to use in propagating the Christian doctrines. This was a part of their inspiration, and a special endowment for their work. This divinely imparted ability, these writers maintain, was permanently possessed by these early evangelists, enabling them to preach among the nations whither they went, to each in its own vernacular tongue, and thus superseding

the need of delay and labor required for learning unknown languages. Perhaps this is the prevailing opinion of the church at the present day. The arguments for and against this opinion, and others which may be noticed, it would require too much time and space to present, even in the briefest possible manner. It must suffice now to say that the writers of the New Testament nowhere assert or imply that such a gift was bestowed upon, or exercised by, the apostles or other early preachers of the gospel; neither can we find any early Christian father or historian referred to as asserting or implying any such thing; and to assume that such a miraculous power was bestowed, in the absence of all supporting evidence, inspired or uninspired, is surely unreasonable.

2. Other expositors, to avoid difficulties apparently involved in other theories, have supposed that the apostles and their companions on the day of pentecost, spake only their own vernacular language — the one prevalent in Judea, and that the miracle consisted, not in *their speaking* the many languages enumerated in the narrative, but in a work divinely performed on the hearers who were gathered from the several nations mentioned, causing them to hear, each one in his own native language, what was actually spoken in one language only, and that the language of Palestine — a miracle wrought not in the speaker, but in the hearer; not lingual, but auricular, in its nature.

3. Others, again, have supposed that the gift of tongues was bestowed only for a limited time, and occasionally, simply as a proof of the presence and power of God, and of the possessor's being under divine influence and guidance, and a proof, therefore, that the Christian religion, which they preached, was from God.

They who propose and defend the foregoing and similar theories, agree in recognizing the supernatural, miraculous, character of the gift. But other expositors, as already mentioned, maintain that no supernatural endowment of this nature was conferred, on the day of pentecost, or at any

other time; and that all the phenomena can be accounted for without resorting to miraculous interposition. Of these some maintain:

4. That the apostles and others at the feast of pentecost, used no other than the common language of Palestine; and that the wonder of the people was caused, not by their being addressed in languages diverse and before unknown to the speakers, but by their hearing the apostles and others pray, sing, praise, and exhort in the common language of Judea, the Syro-Chaldaic, or Aramaean, and not in the sacred Hebrew, in which, as these commentators assert, the temple and synagogue service, and the public worship of God on all occasions, was, according to pharisaical law and usage, uniformly conducted. They who take this view of the subject suppose that the multitudes assembled at Jerusalem at the feast, coming from the many nations enumerated by the sacred writer, consisted mainly of Jews sojourning in those nations for trade or other purposes, and were either born in Judea, or descended from Jewish parents who had longer resided abroad, but who had retained their native language, and trained their children in it; and thus the language of Judea was their vernacular, "the language in which they were born." When, therefore, these Jewish residents in foreign lands heard the apostles and their companions, borne away by a divinely inspired ardor and enthusiasm, break over the formalities and conventionalisms of the synagogue, and perform their devotions and address their hearers in a language in which the truths which they uttered would be most intelligible and most impressive, that is, in the common language of the people, they were astonished, and indignantly exclaimed: How is it that we hear sacred things thus profaned, and the worship of Jehovah celebrated, not in the venerable Hebrew, but in the vulgar language in which we were born! Thus the apostles were regarded as speaking with other tongues than was appropriate for religious worship and instruction. This hypothesis, while it by no means satisfactorily accounts

for the phenomena presented in the pentecostal scene, affords no help in explaining other passages found in the Acts and in 1 Corinthians.

5. Other commentators maintain that all that was wonderful in the speaking of the apostles and their companions on the day of pentecost, consisted in their mental state and in their manner of speaking, and not at all in the language employed. They spake with a fervor, boldness, authoritativeness, and eloquence, which, in ignorant, obscure, unpractised men, like the apostles and their Galilean associates, were marvellous. Hence they were said to speak with *new* tongues, with *other* tongues, that is, in a manner unlike what had before been witnessed in them. This may, perhaps, have passed into a sort of proverbial saying, which has come down even to our day; and when one spake with fervor, eloquence, and power above what had been before known in him, it is said of him, that he speaks with a *new*, or with *another* tongue. This hypothesis, like the preceding one, while it utterly fails to explain some of the phenomena presented both in the pentecostal scene and in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv., furnishes but very inadequate help in explaining others. If the apostles were only speaking with remarkable eloquence and impressiveness, why did the multitudes exclaim with amazement: "How hear we, every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?" or, how could Paul tell the Corinthian Christians that their speaking with tongues was not to edification; or, that they should not speak in an unknown tongue unless some were present who could interpret?

6. Other writers have supposed that the speaking with tongues brought to view in Acts ii. and that treated of in 1 Cor. xiv., were essentially different; and that, while the former was the result of a truly divine inspiration or gift, designed and used to facilitate the work of the first propagators of Christianity, the latter was a fanatical, pretentious imitation of the truly divine gift bestowed upon and used by the apostles; and that it consisted of a frantic uttering of

unmeaning sounds—in truth no language at all—resembling, perhaps, what was exhibited thirty years ago in the Caledonian Chapel, London, among the followers of the late Edward Irving. But the serious manner in which Paul treats the subject precludes such a supposition.

Among more recent writers Meyer and also Bleek have each started the question whether *γλώσσαις λαλεῖν* means to speak in some language not vernacular, or to utter sounds which, strictly speaking, could not be called language, and could be rendered intelligible and instructive only by one who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, possessed the *χάρισμα* of interpretation; and they both seem to have decided in favor of the latter view. That the speakers on the day of pentecost really spake in languages not vernacular to themselves, is evinced by the fact that the hearers, of various nationalities, heard them speak the wonderful works of God, each in his own language in which he was born. The narrative in Acts x. 44 would seem to imply that to Peter the speaking with tongues at the house of Cornelius appeared in this respect, as well as in others, like that on the day of pentecost.

On this point Olshausen very justly remarks: "According to my view the speech in higher poetic language is not the only characteristic of the *γλώσσαις λαλεῖν*; but, under certain restrictions, has the inner climax of the power produced through the Spirit from above risen so high in persons that they could speak foreign languages. Particularly was this the case in the first pentecost, and from prominent appearances of the charisma then, it retains the name also in less cultivated appearances." In other instances mentioned in the New Testament, we have not the same direct and positive evidence on this point. But the supposition that the speaking with tongues in the Corinthian church was a merely fanatical, unmeaning jargon—a merely ambitious, hypocritical pretension to an ability which was not possessed, is, if Paul is admitted to have been an honest man, divinely inspired to instruct and guide the

converts there, utterly incompatible with the language and manner in which he addresses them on the subject. If this *γλώσσαις λαλεῖν* was not the speaking in a real language, such as men employ to convey their thoughts and feelings, what could it have been?

Let us examine somewhat particularly what Paul says on the subject:

1. He asserts that this ability was the gift of God (1 Cor. xii. 28), including *γένη γλωσσῶν* among the special endowments which God had bestowed upon individual Christians for the edification of the whole body. Could he, as an honest man, speak of any fanatical jabber as a gift of God?

2. Paul places himself on the same level, so far as the reality and miraculous nature of the endowment are concerned, with the Corinthian converts, only claiming to have a larger measure of it, so that he spake with tongues more than they all. We cannot suppose that he uttered nonsense, and thanked God that he was able to do so, more than they all.

3. He bids them covet, or earnestly desire, spiritual gifts (1 Cor. xiv. 1), obviously alluding to those gifts enumerated, xii. 28, and singles out only one—that of inspiration to teach—as being superior to the ability to speak with tongues. He wishes that they all spake with tongues, and implies that when he who speaks with tongues interprets what he utters, so that the church may understand and be edified, he is equal to him who is divinely inspired to teach (1 Cor. xiv. 5). Could the apostle have so addressed a church in respect to any phrenzied, unmeaning use of the vocal organs?

4. Paul further writes that he who speaketh with a tongue, speaketh not to men, but to God (xiv. 2); and again, of one who, in the exercise of this gift of tongues, rendered thanks to God, he says: "Thou givest thanks well" (xiv. 17). What more arrant trifling; what more offensive mockery, could there be, than in addressing to God such fanatical gibberish, pretending it to be prayer or thanksgiving, and that it

was uttered, too, under the impulse of the Spirit of God (xiv. 2)!

Again, Paul writes that "he who speaketh with tongues edifieth himself" (xiv. 4). How could thō venting of his fanaticism by the uttering of nonsense be to his edification?

Once more, Paul says, in closing up his instructions on this subject (xiv. 39): "Earnestly desire to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." Would the apostle thus have given his sanction to the existence and continuance of such fanatical, not to say profane and blasphemous, pretensions? Would he not rather have rebuked the ambitious triflers as sharply as he did the incestuous persons, and commanded the church to rid itself of those who so grossly marred the peace and order and fair fame of their Christian assemblies? By so doing only could his closing injunction be complied with: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

Having taken this brief and very imperfect survey of what the writers of the New Testament have said respecting the gift of tongues, and of some of the more noteworthy theories and opinions which have been advanced by theological writers, we close by stating some of the conclusions to which the survey leads us.

Before mentioning them, we would premise that the key to the whole subject seems to us to be found in the promissory prediction of Christ (Mark xvi. 17) already quoted. "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues," etc. This predicted, promised sign was witnessed on the day of pentecost, when the apostles and their companions, filled with the Holy Ghost, for the first time fully understood and heartily received that fundamental doctrine of Christianity, salvation by grace, through faith in Christ and his atonement. The same predicted sign was witnessed when Peter unfolded the gospel plan of salvation to the household of Cornelius, and they heartily believed it (Acts x. 44); and again when, as Paul preached at Ephesus, and the

gospel was received by his hearers (Acts xix. 6). We learn more of this promised sign as it was witnessed in the church at Corinth. It was probably witnessed there when the first converts, under the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost, heartily believed the gospel of Christ as taught by Paul, and probably continued to be witnessed there for years, as the gospel continued to be preached, and new converts were gathered from that large population. Amidst the corruptions as to doctrine and morals, the rivalries and disorderly practices prevailing among that brilliant and luxurious people, the purity of this sign-gift was often marred, so much so that the apostle felt constrained to rebuke the church for their abuse of that which was, in a special manner, an endowment conferred by the Holy Ghost. It is very probable, though we have no direct testimony to that effect, that this gift followed the hearty belief and reception of the gospel in most, if not all, of the places where the apostles preached, as a sign to believers and others that the gospel was from God, and that his presence and power attended the preaching and reception of it.

The conclusions, then, to which we are led are :

1. That the gift of tongues was a supernatural endowment conferred by the special influence of the Holy Ghost, agreeably to Christ's promise, upon the apostles, and to some extent upon the other early Christian converts, as a sign or proof, to themselves and others, of the power and presence of God and of the truth of the Christian doctrines; and more especially a sign or proof that those possessing this gift had, in truth, received those doctrines and experienced the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose the gift was promised, and for this purpose the sacred writers inform us that it was actually bestowed. And it does not seem to have been promised for any other purpose; and, so far as we have any scripture statements or history, or any just grounds for inference, the gift does not seem to have been bestowed or possessed or used for any other purpose.

To what extent the gift was bestowed; whether its exercise was witnessed in all the early churches, or only in some of them, when specially needed; how long it was continued; whether through the whole ministry of the apostles and even beyond, or limited to the church, as first planted, we have no means of determining. Like inspiration and the power to work miracles, this gift was doubtless as widely bestowed and as long continued among believers, as Infinite Wisdom saw that the exigences of the Christian cause demanded.

2. Another conclusion to which we are brought is, that the gift of tongues predicted and promised to believers (Mark xvi. 17), and that stated to have been actually conferred (Acts ii. 4; x. 44; and xix. 6), was the same as to origin, character, design, and use as that treated of 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. It is to be noted that Paul repeatedly speaks of this latter as a *sign*; the very term which Christ employed when he made the prediction and promise in Mark.

3. A further conclusion, though it may seem hardly more than repeating what has already been said, is, that the object of this gift was, as predicted by Christ in his farewell address, and earlier by the prophet Joel (ii. 28), a miraculous *sign* to the apostles themselves and their converts, and to unbelievers also, evincing that they who exercised this gift were under supernatural divine influence, and that consequently the Christian religion was true and from God. It was actually a *sign* of all this to the apostles and their companions at the pentecost; it was a *sign* to Peter and all with him in the family congregation at the house of Cornelius; and was so received by the believing Jews when Peter vindicated his conduct on that occasion. It was a *sign* to Paul that the Ephesian converts had cordially believed the gospel; and so he says it was a *sign* in the Corinthian church, "that God was in them of a truth." This gift, therefore, as a testimony to the truth of the Christian doctrines and a means of facilitating their propagation, held a place similar to that of any other miraculous power. So

it is by Christ in his promise, classed with the power to exorcise devils, to heal the sick, and to take up serpents and drink of deadly things without harm. This is all that was promised with regard to it.

4. The gift of tongues was not a permanent gift or endowment, to be brought into habitual or long-continued use; but was a *sign* confirmative of the divine authority of the Christian doctrines, especially designed for and adapted to the first proclamation of the gospel, and the initiation of Christian institutions in a community. And when it was coveted or exercised beyond this, as it seems to have been in the Corinthian church, the gift was, as Paul very plainly intimated, abused.

5. The gift of tongues was not designed as a means by which the apostles or others might preach the gospel to communities whose vernacular tongue was different from their own. It was not promised, nor does it ever seem to have been used, for such a purpose. Neither the New Testament nor history seems to furnish evidence to this effect. Although the first reapers in the great harvest-field of the world were few and feeble—a little band against the powers of earth and hell—while the work assigned them was so vast and urgent, and the opposition from both Jew and Gentile was so fierce and determined, yet their Master and Head left them no labor-saving machinery, no devices for facilitating their task. So far as this was concerned, all was to be accomplished in the ordinary way of hard work; and with the single exception, that the divine authority of the Christian doctrines was in the beginning testified to by miracles or other supernatural agency, these doctrines must during the first century of gospel propagation, have won their way to the minds and hearts of idolators and opposing unbelievers in precisely the same manner that they do now in the nineteenth.

As to how far it is necessary to presuppose the possession of this ability to address any people in their own native language in order to account for the rapidity and extent which were witnessed in the work of gospel propagation during

the age of the apostles, it may be observed that Paul, by his early studies and subsequent intercourse with men, doubtless became familiarly acquainted with and could readily use the Hebrew, the Syro-Chaldaic or Aramaean, the Greek, and the Latin languages, and adding to these the Arabic, a knowledge of which he may probably have acquired while in Arabia (Gal. i. 17), immediately after his conversion; and thus furnished, he could, from Italy to Persia, and in short in all the countries which he traversed as an evangelist, intelligibly preach the gospel of Christ to the mass of the people. If he ever went to Gaul or Spain, as we learn (Rom. xv. 24) that he intended to go to Spain, though it is very doubtful if he accomplished that purpose, he might have spent much time in preaching to the Latin and Greek-speaking portions of the people, while he was learning the vernacular of the countries. More probably he was providentially hindered from going thither, because he could otherwise spend the closing years of his ministry more profitably than in learning the languages which would qualify him to preach the word effectively to those barbarous tribes.

Where, or in what languages, the other apostles preached Christianity, we know very little with certainty. They could probably all use the Syro-Chaldaic and Hebrew; and as multitudes of Greeks and Romans, or Jews from Greece and Italy, were then residing at, or visiting Jerusalem and Judea, it is not improbable that most of the apostles could use the Greek and Latin languages more or less perfectly. If they went into other lands where these languages were not available as mediums of communication, they probably learned the vernacular as other missionaries have since done, the process being, perhaps, somewhat shortened by their peculiar zeal and laboriousness. However this may have been in fact, or whatever difficulties may seem to be involved in this view of the subject, it is, we think, contrary to the canons of scripture interpretation, and to sound reason to find a miracle where one is not expressly asserted, or forced upon us by unavoidable inference.

A practical remark or two, in closing, may not be improper. If the view here given of the nature and purpose of the gift of tongues is correct, neither the Christian missionary of modern times, nor the churches which send him forth, can, when they compare their movements with the apostolic missions, excuse their dilatoriness and want of success, by alleging that the apostles and their coadjutors possessed, in the gift of tongues, facilities for immediately and powerfully influencing the minds of men which are not granted to their successors in these later ages. The fact that they were called to preach to people with whose respective languages they were more or less fully acquainted, did, indeed, place them on high vantage ground; and perhaps the miracles which they wrought might sometimes have opened the way for the readier reception of the truths preached; though it is a noticeable fact, that often the very miracles wrought, so far from silencing opposition and operating as a favorable introduction for the truth, actually called forth the bitterest hate and the most unrelenting persecution (Acts iv. 1-7; v. 17, 18; vii; xiv. 3-5; xvi. 19-26). Whatever advantages the apostles possessed in laboring among people with whose languages they were previously acquainted, and in their power to work miracles in confirmation of the doctrines preached, there can be little doubt that these advantages are more than outweighed by the printing press and other kindred facilities for the rapid and wide promulgation of the truth, which are possessed by missionaries of our times.

While no excuse for our tardy manner of prosecuting the missionary work is to be found in any advantages which the apostles possessed superior to those enjoyed by the preachers of these times, just as little reason, it may be again remarked, is there for deferring to enter more energetically and hopefully on the work of giving the gospel to the whole world till some anticipated more favorable period; when, owing to more extended and powerful outpourings of spiritual influences, the conversion of the world to Christ will be rapidly and successfully carried forward. almost

without human agency, and the church will have little more to do than to stand by, wondering, rejoicing, and praising; or, when, in so far as the instrumentality of the church shall in any measure be required, it will be in some easy, convenient manner, without those self-denying, prolonged, exhausting labors which now seem indispensable to any degree of success. Such seems to be the common notion—not very fully spoken out—of millennial progress and triumph in the work of evangelizing the world. But if we read the Bible aright, no such time of simultaneous church inaction and church enlargement and triumph is promised. Both the Bible and history seem to say that the discipline of self-denying toil and conflict is essential to the spiritual life and purity, and consequently to the enlargement, of the church; and her Lord, out of loving care for his people, will, in his wise providence, doubtless see that they have what of these their spiritual thrift requires.

That more rapid and powerful progress of the gospel than what the world has ever yet seen is promised and held in reserve for this or a future age, may be firmly and thankfully believed; not, however, to be effected in such a manner as to supersede the necessity for labor and prayer on the part of God's people; but rather to be accomplished by their intenser struggles, to be rewarded by larger measures of divine influence shed down to insure more glorious success. If a nation is to be born in a day, it is because the prayer, the labor, the self-sacrifice of ages are, so to speak, to be condensed into one day. It is because the hour of Zion's real travail has come. If the windows of heaven are to be opened, and blessings poured out which there shall not be room to receive, it will be because all the tithes shall have been brought into the Lord's storehouse; not the tithes consisting of our agricultural and manufacturing and commercial gains and products; but of such agonizing prayer, such self-denial and sacrifice, such devotion of self and property, and such holy living as correspond to the great interests at stake.