



SPEAKING OF TONGUES

In an article published in *The Seminary* last year, I expressed a desire to see some good exegetical studies done in Nazarene circles relating to the issue of glossolalia. In keeping with this challenge, I have undertaken an exegetical study of all New Testament passages relating to glossolalia, particularly I Corinthians. In the process of this study I came across some detail work done by Nazarene scholars such as Charles Isbell and Sherill Munn, as well as a systematic study of I Corinthians by Timothy Smith.

In my work with I Corinthians, and in my reading of Timothy Smith, I found myself unable to support his contention that the phenomenon at Corinth was known languages. Fortunately, after his recent message in chapel I was able to dialogue with him on his interpretation.

In our discussion we agreed that the choice between the interpretation of the phenomenon as known languages or ecstatic utterances hinged on the phrase in 14:14, "my mind is unfruitful." He sees this as meaning that in the context of the community the person has not edified others. Thus he has no fruit of his labors. This is the same idea expressed in the statement "a witness is unfruitful if he has no converts." I had been taking the phrase to mean, the speaker's mind was unfruitful because it was not affected by the activity of praying in a tongue. Our conclusion was that work needed to be done in this area before the difference could be settled.

I have not yet done enough investigation to take a dogmatic stand, but in my preliminary studies I have found that Arndt and Gingrich clearly support my interpretation. So does Abbott-Smith and apparently both Kittel and Moulton-Milligan. Thus, I feel it is best to see the phenomenon in I Corinthians as ecstatic utterance. This, however, is not the

main point of this article but its introduction. In light of this interpretation I want to summarize Paul's argument in I Corinthians.

It is obvious throughout the entire book of I Corinthians that Paul is not writing a leisurely systematic theology. Rather he is responding to problems in the church, one of which was the phenomenon of glossolalia. Paul's response can only be construed as one of correction. To administer this correction he first develops the positive goals toward which the church, both corporately and individually, should be pressing. These are the preservation of the unity of the fellowship and the primacy of love. In individual terms this is translated into the need to participate only in activities that are edifying to the entire Body.

Turning to the expression of glossolalia at Corinth, Paul's first critique is that it is not edifying. Indeed, we get the impression it has been divisive. Perhaps it was considered a sign of exceptional spirituality, as it appears to have been in some of the Greek mystery religions. Perhaps these were the arrogant "disciples of Jesus" mentioned in chapter one. At any rate, Paul finds glossolalia guilty.

Going on, however, he finds another fault. As he puts it in 14:14, glossolalia ministers to the spirit but not the mind. While a Greek might accept this, a Hebrew never could in light of his emphasis on the unity of the human personality. Glossolalia was apparently a form of expressing religious emotions. While this in and of itself was not bad, it was inadequate if not supplemented with the rational expression of religion as well. Paul's response is to both pray in spirit and with the mind. In our terms, this will result

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TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

Into a class walked a freshman one day,
To learn some constructive theology per se.

At the front stood a man, Kenneth Grider by name,
With a mike in his hand, and some views of great fame.

The first of these views, original for sure,
Is theology wears overalls, and its not always pure.

The student accepted the attire of theology,
And learned that sin is not found in biology.

But if theology wears overalls, yet sin is not in the jeans,
We've come to a predicament, to know what he means.

The student went out, shaking his head,
Wondering if Plato would ever be dead.

For J. Kenneth Grider will not be found cheering,
While Neoplatonic thoughts keep appearing.

So if you are really concerned for your marks,
Don't get caught deprecating the sarx.

For an "A plus plus" can rarely be found,
But a "C triple minus" like grace doth abound.

Grider's views will be taught ten score years and eleven,
Though by then you may think that we'll all be in heaven.

But not so, my good friend, though the thought may be nice,
We'll be dwelling with Grider in Paradise.

There'll be Augustine, Origin, Tertullian and Ignatius,
Wesley, Wynkoop, Wiley, and Arminius.

Grider will tell them what he thought they taught,
And of course tell John Calvin his views weren't so hot.

Then they'll all laugh together and gladly embrace,
Each commending the other, for running the good race.

There will the truth be clearly revealed,
There'll be no more secrets, and old wounds will be healed.

We'll no longer fuss, or argue or fight,
But likely confess that Grider was right. --Roy Austin

More on Tongues

in emotional and rational expression of faith.

The final point to be noticed is in 14:39, where Paul says not to forbid speaking in tongues. Already in chapter nine he had expressed his willingness to accommodate to all men as long as it did not go against the essentials of Christianity. Apparently, in reference to glossolalia he felt accommodation or co-existence was not contrary if expressed within the guidelines he had just set down. If so, then to attempt to eradicate all glos-

solalia would cause more divisions than it would heal. As he has already said, his primary goals are the preservation of the Body's unity and the expression of love to all men.

Perhaps, in our day of denominations, we can withhold membership in a particular denomination without "dividing the Body." I am not sure. However, we cannot take any less seriously the need to accept every member of the total Body in his place, and to express love to all. Whatever the problems we might encounter, above all "pursue love!"

--Randy Maddox