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THE REVIEW

The Church, Which Is His Body

By Dr. Charles L. Dear, Moderator IBFNA

It is easy to get caught up in a discussion about the identity of the church, whether it be universal or local, whether it be militant or triumphant. There are several ways to look at the church, most of which have a useful place in the study of church history. As the “body” of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:24), we are united with the believers of the New Testament churches in Scripture. In addition, we are neither more than, nor less than, believers around the world today, who have been saved through the successful efforts of gospel missionaries, which have led sinners to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

However, the New Testament appears to place a greater emphasis and responsibility upon the local church, its composition, its leadership, and its ministries, whether at home or abroad. For example, in 1 Cor. 1:2 Paul writes in his salutation: “Unto the church of God *which is at Corinth*, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with *all that in every place* call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Paul would also write similar words to the believers in the Thessalonian local church, addressing them as “the church of *the Thessalonians*, which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 1:1).

It is clearly the local church that was designated to be the organism to carry out the work of edifying believers and fulfilling the Great Commission (1 Cor. 3:5-9). It is the spiritual home of NT believers, where we build up one another in our “holy faith” (Jude 20). The local church is where we first render our service unto the Lord, as He directs and enables us to perform worthwhile service as unto Him (1 Tim. 3:15). While we may have opportunity to extend such works as edification and service beyond the local assembly, the priority of devotion to local church ministries cannot be dismissed. To use gifts that the Lord has given to us elsewhere, to the neglect of our local church, cannot be excused (Rom. 12:3-21).

While I hope that this is stating the obvious, I fear that too many are becoming distracted by the appeals of para-church organizations that are, in fact, conveniences and contrivances, which we have invented with no direct support from Scripture. It is true that together we can do more than we can do separately, which is why Baptists form associations. We may also agree that organizations outside the domain of the local church alleviate some of the burdens related to sending missionaries, caring for the handicapped, training pastors and missionaries, and other important endeavors. The question we need to ask, however, is whether local churches have abdicated their



INSIDE PAGES

3

HOME

4

TONGUES—
PART ONE

7

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RESOLUTION

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primary responsibility for and biblical authority over such tasks by delegating them to para-church organizations.

A second related question asks whether we have held accountable the para-church organizations that we have engaged to serve the interests and objectives of our local churches. This is not a question of trust, so much as it is a correct application of the biblical authority and priority of the local church.

Looking back over our history as a Fellowship, we should remember that the primacy of the local church was a cause for the formation of both Regular Baptists for Revival and its successor, the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America. Most of the first members of the IBFNA were in a national Association that was under the leadership of a Council. From that Association's earliest days, local church pastors prevailed in the leadership of that Council, overseeing the Association, until approximately the 1980's, when more agency executives and representatives were elected to the Council.

With this change in the composition of the Council, there was a corresponding change in emphasis. Specifically, this change was a movement away from the Bible doctrine of separation. The erosion of that doctrine happened most noticeably in the approved schools, but also in some of the associated churches and other approved agencies. The leadership of the Association resisted all efforts to restore the balance in favor of a majority of pastors over agency men on the Council. This perpetuated a conflict of interest in view of the duty of the Council to examine and recommend agencies for the approval of the Association.

The change in Association leadership propagated and reinforced changes in the churches that remained in the Association. Many of its churches today never would have fought the battles faced by the Association's founders. The social gospel of the Northern Baptist Convention, the dual membership of the Conservative Baptists (so that a member did not have to leave the NBC to belong to the CBA), Billy Graham, Youth for Christ, and opposition to creation that questioned the absolute authority of the Scriptures were all challenges for fundamental, separated, Baptist churches in the early twentieth century. The founders confronted

them all, many even in Convention meetings before they left to form the new Association.

To further illustrate the impact of para-church organizations upon local churches, consider the well-known youth organization that many of the Association's churches had used for decades. Often, this ministry has garnered greater loyalty from believers than have their local churches. Today, this organization has changed its materials to successfully extend its market into a wide variety of non-fundamental denominations. If you were to compare a handbook from 30 years ago to one published today, you would be shocked to see how many changes have been made. Nevertheless, good churches continue to use this material.

The reason some pastors have given to me for this continued use is that their leaders in the program would leave their church if it were dropped or replaced. Now I am sure they do something to compensate for whatever is lacking or unspecific in the new material, but the issue of prevailing loyalty is disturbing. This is by no means an isolated example. There are many para-church ministries that would be glad to have the services of our well-trained members, but it becomes a form of sheep-stealing when the time and talents of our people are siphoned off from the service they owe first and foremost to the local church. The gifts of gifted people have been given to the local church for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-12).

It has become increasingly difficult as a pastor to recommend schools, to consider missionaries and their agencies, to approve any organization, without first asking for background information about them. Doctrinal statements are a good place to begin, but realize that doctrinal statements can better describe a historical position than present conviction. Pulpit committees are familiar with the potential for this problem. Mission boards should provide you their latest policies and procedures, including missionary retirement programs. I have even asked some for their latest audited financial statement. Schools need to list the credentials of their faculty, including the school from which their degrees were earned and the date. Social agencies need to be approved for the services they provide.

Perhaps we might consider what we can do in these areas right out of our own local church,

where we have direct oversight over every aspect of materials used, personnel, criteria for service, and doctrine taught. We have placed so much value and dependence upon academic achievement and the approval of external authorities that we may have underestimated what can be done within our local churches. Furthermore, we know too well the experience of sending our young people to a school as Baptist and having them come home as Presbyterian and useless to our local church.

Consider what is a well-worn statistic. We are only replacing one out of four retiring missionar-

ies. Is God only calling people into full-time service when they are under camp ministries or in Bible colleges or seminaries? Or is He able to call them out of our local church ministries? Of course, this requires us to challenge our young people with full-time Christian service. Nevertheless, if God has graciously called them into His service out of our church's ministries, can He not help us to equip them for that service through our local church's training? After all, this responsibility ultimately rests upon us (2 Tim. 2:2).

Home with the Lord

A Tribute to Brother Clay Nuttall by Duane Brown



Clay went home a few days ago. None of us should be surprised nor shocked because he had prepared us for his exodus to glory. What he did not do was warn us how much we would miss him. His warm manner and gracious spirit always filled our hearts with encouragement, and his preaching was special! It was in a unique category of Bible messages that only a few speakers obtain. I put him in a class of pulpiteers who draw instant attention and appreciation.

What made him so distinctive was his obvious confidence and his humble sense of holy authority, as well as his natural ability and verbal skill. (Dave Nettleton had it as well as my brother Ken.) These servants knew their subjects and relished in their sacred tasks! I am certain the saints in heaven are enjoying Clay this very moment!

Editor's Note: Our brother, Clayton Lee Nuttall, became absent from the body and present with His Lord on September 5th at the age of 81. Our Fellowship remembers

Brother Clay as an inspiring leader, gifted educator, fervent missionary, and faithful pastor. We are truly thankful for his enthusiastic service for Christ and that of his loving wife, Ruth, who is in our prayers. His emphasis on the normal hermeneutic of biblical interpretation and His devoted concern for the primacy of the local church are legacies he has left us, who had the honor of calling him our co-laborer and brother in Christ. His last address to our Fellowship is available on our website (<http://www.ibfna.com/v1/index.php/annual-conferences/2016-family-conference>).

Dr. Nuttall authored two books on the local church that are still in print: The Weeping Church: Confronting the Crisis of Church Polity (1985) and The Coming Conflict: The Separation of Church & State (revised edition, 2011). In my autographed copy of the latter volume, Brother Clay noted Gal. 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The IBFNA is thankful for the example of our dear brother's sowing and the reaping that is his in the coming kingdom of our Lord (Rev. 11:15-18).

Has the Gift of Tongues Ceased? - Part 1

Pastor Kevin Hobi

We must inquire today whether the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased in large measure because on January 1, 1901, in a class on the Holy Spirit in Acts at the newly opened Bethel Bible College of Topeka, Kansas, Agnes Ozman, with the support of her teacher Charles Parham, asked that her classmates lay hands upon her that she might receive the Holy Spirit. They did so, and Agnes spoke in tongues.

William Seymour, a later graduate of another Parham school, led the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906, where the presence of speaking in tongues sparked a revival that gave notoriety to the practice and impetus to the beginnings of the Pentecostal denominations.¹

The 1960's brought a new tongues practice to the mainline denominations in conjunction with the growing ecumenical movement. Beginning with Californian Episcopalian churches and eventually including Roman Catholics, this new use of the "gift" met resistance among some with the old convictions.²

In the 1990's, the "Third Wave" movement of Peter Wagner and John Wimber made signs and wonders such as tongues-speaking integral components of institutions that have been influential in evangelical circles, including Fuller Theological Seminary, the Toronto Blessing, the Vineyard Movement, and Sovereign Grace Ministries. Today's Neo-Pentecostalism advocates a prosperity gospel, which is primarily the legacy of the influence of Oral Roberts University.

In contrast to the conclusions drawn by the proponents of these movements, evidence from the examination of Scripture shows that the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased. First, tongues have ceased because their purpose was transitory; second, tongues have ceased because the New Testament gift is not the phenomenon of today; and finally, tongues have ceased because the scriptural canon is complete. Part One of this series will present evidence for the truth that God's purpose in the gift of tongues was transitory, not normative for the church age.

The Purpose of Tongues Was Transitory

In the course of the progressive plan of God's revelation, the gift of tongues appears for the first time at Pentecost in Acts 2. Not one of the heroes from the great hall of faith of Hebrews 11, whose lives are normative for the New Testament believer, ever spoke in tongues. No passage of Scripture indicates that the greatest prophet ever born to a woman, John the Baptist, ever spoke in tongues. None knew the impact of the baptism of the Spirit of God on His life more thoroughly than did the Lord Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), yet no Gospel account tells us that Christ ever spoke in tongues. Clearly, the gift of tongues had no role in the lives of many of the normative examples of the Christian's life.

This is true because the purpose of tongues was transitory and exceptional, not normative. Pentecost marked a monumental transition in the work of God from Israel to the church. Tongues of fire accompanied the gift of tongues as the Holy Spirit baptized believers into the body of Christ with new revelation. The tongues of fire inaugurating the church in the plan of God never appear again, just as the fire of Sinai which inaugurated the nation of Israel occurred only once.³ Israel's inaugural baptism was under the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2), and the church's inaugural baptism was the outpouring of revelation beginning with Pentecost (1 Cor. 12:13).

The gift of tongues does occur after Pentecost, but in passages that make the gift's transitory purpose clear. In Acts 2, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 to show that this purpose is validation. That passage speaks of wonders and signs that would occur when the promised Holy Spirit was poured forth. The validation of Peter's message depended upon the sign of the tongues gift (Acts 2:15-16). It was a message that accused his Jerusalem listeners of executing their Messiah, and so it was a message that needed the validation of the miracles predicted by Joel (Acts 2:36). Asking his Jewish audience to call on the name of Yahweh by repenting in the name of Jesus of Nazareth required the validation

of this miraculous sign's fulfilment of Joel for credibility.

The gift of tongues recurs only twice in the book of Acts, and the validation purpose of each occurrence is equally apparent. In Acts 10 the first Gentile convert is baptized into the body of Christ. The need for the validation of that occasion becomes apparent in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem Council. Peter settles the issue at hand by claiming that God gave the Gentiles the Holy Spirit "just as He also did to us" (Acts 15:8, see also 10:46-47). In Acts 19, the need of the disciples of John in Ephesus parallels the Acts 10 context.⁴

In addition to the three Acts passages, we see the gift of tongues recurring in the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12-14. The description of the worship practices of this uniquely problem-riddled congregation provides for us our only epistolary instruction regarding the gift of tongues in the New Testament.

On the other end of the spectrum of Christian maturity stands the church at Rome. They also received a letter from the apostle Paul, which lists gifts (Rom. 12:3-8). The contrast between the 1 Corinthians list (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and the Romans list is instructive.

In the first place, although the Romans list contains seven gifts and the 1 Corinthians list contains nine gifts, the lists have only the gift of prophecy in common [see Table 1].⁵

Second, the Romans list is simply called "gracious gifts" (Rom. 12:6), whereas the 1 Corinthians list has a more specific revelatory designation, "manifestations of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:1, 7).

Third, the Romans list does not include ranking, but the ranking of the 1 Corinthians list is the major theme of the next three chapters. This theme dictates that tongues should be ranked dead last. Finally, the Romans list was to be practiced in an unmitigated fashion, whereas the 1 Corinthians list required limiting parameters.

This remarkable dissimilarity is best accounted for as the difference between normative/gracious gifts and temporary/revelatory gifts. We may also discern that the normative/gracious gifts offered little opportunity for entertaining pagan counterfeits, whereas entertaining pagan counterfeits of

Table 1: Two Lists of Gifts

Romans 12:3-8	1 Corinthians 12:7-11
χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν "gifts according to the grace having been given to us"	ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος "manifestation (revelation) of the Spirit" [note that the genitive of <i>the Spirit</i> may be a subjective genitive, i.e., <i>revelation given by the Spirit</i>]
<u>prophecy</u>	the word of wisdom
service	the word of knowledge
teaching	faith
exhortation	gifts of healing
giving	effecting of miracles
leadership	<u>prophecy</u>
mercy	distinguishing spirits
	tongues (languages)
	interpretation (translation) of tongues

the revelatory gifts proliferated throughout the Hellenistic world.

Because the Roman context is clearly the normative ideal for the exercise of the gifts of grace in a local church (Rom. 1:8), and because the Corinthian context, which includes the gift of tongues, has very little in common with the Roman context, in terms of both the nature of the gifts and the need of the church for correction, it therefore follows that the Corinthian context is not normative, but exceptional.

Paul describes the exceptional purpose of tongues when he says, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe" (1 Cor. 14:22).

The gift of tongues has ceased because its purpose as a validating sign-miracle to a skeptical world has ceased. No longer must the apostolic message be validated in an inaugural fashion. That was accomplished by Pentecost's miraculous fulfillment of Joel, which gave birth to the church.

Through their inscripturation the miracles of the apostolic age continue to provide validation for the church's message today. The purpose of tongues and other sign-miracles in the church was passing away even in the first century (Heb. 2:3-4).⁶ Founded on the revelation received by the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 2:19-3:5), the church has thrived without further special revelation for centuries.⁷

Endnotes:

¹ Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*, rev. 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 457-458.

² See for example, O. Talmadge Spence, *Charismatism: Awakening or Apostasy?* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1978).

³ William Arthur notes, "Among the permanent benefits resulting from Pentecost, we cannot include the visible flame. Of it we never again find any mention in the course of the apostolical history; it appears to stand related to the Christian dispensation as the fires of Sinai did to the Mosaic, — the solemn token of supernatural power upon its inaugural day." *The Tongue of Fire: The True Power of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1859), 153.

⁴ Note that the Spirit's falling upon the Samaritans in Acts 8:14-17 may be considered a third recurrence in this list, although tongues is not expressly mentioned there. The inclusion of the Samaritans in the body of Christ would have been an issue similar to that of the God-fearing Gentiles and the Ephesian Gentiles. For a thorough treatment of this topic, see the "Strange Fire" presentation of R. C. Sproul, "Undervaluing Pentecost" (<https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>). Sinclair Ferguson notes how Peter ties

the Cornelius event to the Pentecost event as two similar events (Acts 11:15-17). *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 81.

⁵ The one gift the lists have in common, prophecy, is a broad category of spiritual giftedness that may have included some elements best characterized as normative gracious gifts (in Romans 12) and some best characterized as temporary manifestations of the Spirit (in 1 Corinthians 12). Note that in his contrast of prophecy as superior to tongues in the Corinthian context, Paul seems to expand on these two categories in 1 Cor. 14:26, where his prophecy category includes "has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation" and his tongues category includes "has a tongue, has an interpretation." This expansion of the category of prophecy into three separate elements (revelation, music, teaching) could explain why it appears in both the normative list of Romans (its music aspect) and in the temporary list of 1 Corinthians (its revelation aspect). Prophecy as revelation is transitory (1 Corinthians 13); prophecy as music and/or teaching is normative (Romans 12).

⁶ Note that the author of Hebrews (perhaps Luke) speaks of himself here as belonging to a second generation of first century believers who had heard the gospel of Christ from those that had heard Christ directly and whose message had been confirmed with miraculous sign-gifts of the Holy Spirit. Even at this early date, the author of this book of the Bible spoke of sign-gifts as a historical, them-not-us phenomenon.

⁷ Jesus prays, "Sanctify them in thy truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Paul exhorted Timothy, "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Charles Spurgeon commented on the scourge of continuing revelations in his message titled, "The Paraclete": "I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonored by persons (I hope they were insane) who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not, for some years, passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations of hypocrites or maniacs! Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me, and it may save them some trouble if I tell them once and for all that I will have none of their stupid messages! When my Lord and Master has any message to me, He knows where I am, and He will send it to me direct— not by mad-caps! Never dream that events are revealed to you by heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies

to the Holy Spirit; if you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God! Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the Word of God already; He adds nothing to the Bible, and never will! Let persons who have

revelations of this, that, and the other, go to bed and wake up in their senses. I only wish they would follow the advice and no longer insult the Holy Spirit by laying their nonsense at His door!"

The Greatness of the Great Commission

2017 Conference Resolution

Whereas Jesus Christ gave His disciples His command of the Great Commission at the conclusion of His 40-day post-resurrection ministry with them, just before His ascension back to Heaven; and

Whereas He gave it upon His declaration of all authority in heaven and in earth to issue such a command to all His disciples (Matt. 28:18); and

Whereas Jesus promised the sending of the Holy Spirit to help His disciples to fulfill His Great Commission, to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8); and

Whereas the task of the Great Commission is first the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of salvation by God's grace through faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, apart from our works, for the forgiveness of our sins through his blood, thereby granting us the hope of eternal life and, as His witnesses, to take the Gospel to "every creature" (Mark 16:15), as far and as wide across all creation as all believers are able until the Rapture, with the further task of the Great Commission being the edifying of believers, teaching them to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20a); and

Whereas the fulfillment of the Great Commission is the responsibility of every believer and the primary mission of the Church; and all believers since the birth of the Church are to be witnesses for Jesus Christ until the Church is taken home in the Rapture;

Be it therefore resolved that we, the members of the IBFNA, meeting in Kittery, ME, June 20-22, 2017, do hereby declare our dedication to the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission as the essential task of every believer and the church. Furthermore, we find no scriptural support for the cessation of the Great Commission or its commands being limited to the Apostolic Age. The Apostle John affirms that missionary efforts, like those of the Apostles, will bear the fruit predicted in Rev. 5:9, where in Heaven there will be those redeemed by the blood of Christ "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Be it further resolved that we will teach and preach the Great Commission throughout the ministries of our local churches, encouraging our people to engage in personal witnessing to the lost and that we will undertake the support of missionaries, both foreign and domestic, to accomplish its objective, beyond our own local ministries and outreaches.

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