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"Claim A Strange 'Gift of Tongues'" Kansas City World (1901)

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CLAIM A STRANGE "GIFT OF TONGUES"

People Who Say They Are Able
to Speak Foreign Languages
by the Lord's Inspiration. X

REMARKABLE RELIGIOUS SECT. X

The gift of tongues or the power to speak all languages, is claimed to have been received by a number of students of Bethel college at Topeka, Kan., and a great religious excitement, such as has not been heard of in Kansas for years, prevails. Rev. Charles Parham of the Shiloh-Mer-terolity, is the founder of the college. It was opened some months ago and is filled with students of the Bible. No one connected with this school ever works except to do a little household turn occasionally. No one connected with it has an income. Subscriptions are never taken. But everything is provided, it must be, for the school grows continually, and the members seem to be living well and eating three hearty meals each day. Faith is the main principle. On this and prayer the members of this strange religious sect depend for sustenance, and from this source it is received, so they claim.

But the latest claim they make as a result of faith and much prayer is the power to speak foreign languages without ever having studied them. It is a remarkable and wonderful thing in this sceptical age to lay claim to such a power as a result of prayer, and the people



AGNES N. OZMAN,
The First Person to Receive "The Gift of Languages."

who make it must be in earnest, right, or seekers after just such advertising as they are sure to get.

It is claimed that the "gift" was first bestowed upon Miss Agnes Ozman, a young woman who did evangelistic work in Kansas City only a few months ago. Two weeks ago she received the "gift."

In the college there are forty scholars. Their only text book is the Bible. They were found by a reporter the other day sitting around the building reading their lessons. The only time they do not spend studying the Bible is when they do a little housework, such as repairing the building, attending to the grounds and the house and the barn and preparing the meals.

Reverend Parham conducts the classes. When the class is called the recitation is made by each scholar reading aloud a verse of the Bible, and the verse is studied for its meaning, and lengthy discussions ensue, the creed of the school fixing the meaning, of course. Right now the attention of the various classes is being given to the Acts of the Apostles, and the twelfth chapter is being especially studied. The twelfth chapter of the First Corinthians names the gifts of the apostles, among them being the gift of tongues, the gift of discernment, the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy and other gifts, and these people think faith will bring them all these gifts. In fact, they believe themselves to be just like the apostles, in that they believe they are designated especially for this work and no other. Their school is to prepare apostles. The school in Kansas is patterned after the school in Shiloh, Mo., where two former Kansas City young women are now living.

The students have been praying long for the "gift of tongues," feeling that they could then go as missionaries better fitted to teach the heathen. It is cheaper, too, they think, and a quicker way to get several languages by inspiration or gift than to work at school for several years.

One afternoon about two weeks ago Miss Ozman was reading in the study with the other scholars, when suddenly she went into a seeming trance, and not exactly either, for she began to speak strange words—all foreign words! There was an exclamation of joy over all the room, and the whole school was exceedingly excited.

"Inspired" by the Lord.

Afterward she was asked about her experience, and she said:

"I believe the Lord inspired me with the words I spoke at the time. I did not know then when I was talking what the next word would be. I don't know what language I was talking nor what I was saying, only as the Lord would inspire me."

Speaking of the power given, Miss Ozman, Rev. Parham said:

"It was nearly a week before the gift was bestowed upon others. All the while the students prayed to their utmost for the gift. Finally several others received the gift and now there are 15 or 20 that have it. Occasionally they burst out talking a lot of unintelligible verses to those sitting around and not understood by those giving utterance to them until the Lord inspires the meaning."

While sitting at a table writing letters the other day Miss Ozman's hands refused to write the characters of the English language. She tried and tried but it was of no avail. Then unconsciously her hands formed the characters of some language, it is said, though she could not interpret the writing. While writing under this power the muscles of her hand contracted and worked spasmodically, and the writing made was a scrawl.

Rev. Parham, who has the gift of tongues, says he is inspired to talk the German language, and even while talking to persons in the college the other day he suddenly began talking German, and again, later, he even spoke something which sounded like the Swedish language or something else like that.

He Can Talk "Zulu."

Another man, Samuel Riggins, who lived for some time on East Eleventh street in Kansas City, is at the school, and he claims he can speak the Zulu language, so he is perhaps intended as a missionary for the Zulus.

But the strangest language spoken by any student yet is that by Miss Thistlethrate. Asked to speak in a foreign language, she said she felt no inspiration right then, but in a few minutes she began something which sounded like this:

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*Inaccurate
Report*

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"Euossa, Euossa, use, rela sema, catah mala kanah leulia sage nalan. Ligie logie lazle logie. Ene mine mo, sah rah el me sah rah me," meaning it was translated this: "Jesus is ready to hear." "God is love."

The male members are called "brothers." "Brother" Howard gave an example of his inspiration along the line of the gift of tongues, and his tongue ran rapidly from both ends, the words coming so swiftly he could hardly utter them. In fact, they were like a mighty oratorical flood, and he waived his arms and hands and gesticulated as though he were reaching to the Gentiles and the Jews alike. He was speaking Hindoo, it was explained.