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MANAGING THE TONGUE

Mayan Revelation Number 250

A Private Publishing Department

Possibilities

A Communication System

A Good Voice

Misuse

Conversation

Living Voices

Beloved Perfector:

How many times have you heard the expression, "I would have cut out my tongue rather than have said that." The people who make that statement are referring, of course, to something they have said, perhaps in the heat of anger or some thoughtless moment. But once words such as this have been spoken, they cannot be recalled. They may be softened by apologies, but the scars still remain.

This lesson, which we have called "Managing The Tongue", deals with the importance of doing just that - managing the instrument that is responsible for the things we say.

The tongue can be such a wonderful medium for good - for learning, for easing the pain of the world, for encouraging the weak and discouraged, for helping others to solve their problems, for expressing the love we have for our family and our friends, for giving praise to those who deserve it, thereby encouraging them to go even further in accomplishment. Have you ever noticed how even our pet animals respond to our words of kindness, though they may not always understand just what it is we are saying?

On the other hand, we can do just the opposite with our tongues. We can cause misery and unhappiness. Many homes are broken through a hasty word. The lives of children are ruined through parents who do not have an understanding. And, of course, the strife between nations is often caused by words spoken by people in high places or heads of nations, when oil could be poured on troubled waters with the tongue. Instead, fuel is added to the fire by what is said. Our good ministers and writers, our heads of government - all of these people are in a position to change the world and lives of people through words.

Ah, yes, there is nothing more important than the use we make of that God-given instrument - the tongue. The purpose of this lesson is to be sure that you, as a Mayan, trying to achieve perfection, understand the importance of the use of the tongue. Also, you as a Member have gained a vast knowledge and you

should carry the message of what you have learned to others, which is one of the reasons it is so necessary that you choose your words wisely in order that you might convey to others what you have learned.

We must guard our words and use them only for good. We must always think before we speak. Many of us say things thoughtlessly that cause great hurt. We say these things without stopping to think of the effect of our words on other people, whereas if we had thought for a moment, we probably would never have said the things that caused unhappiness.

Let us pray that we will never hurt anyone by what we say, and that we will strive to use our words to give help, encouragement, love, kindness, and make the tongue a constructive instrument and a blessing to all with whom we come in contact.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the means I have of expressing and communicating my thoughts and feelings. Help me to make my use of my tongue a blessing to others and a credit to myself. Amen.

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A PRIVATE PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT

The Tongue is our private publishing department. Its reporters are the senses, and its editor is the mind. They all lay on each other great responsibilities. It is hard to say which carries the greater ones; but even though the mind turns in the copy, the Tongue is responsible for what actually gets told and how well. We owe it to ourselves, to everyone else, and to the Tongue itself, to manage it well, restrict it to the truth and to telling the truth well.

Like any publishing department, the Tongue is obligated to avoid untruth, slander, coarseness, negation, and anything else that is detrimental to those with whom it communicates. A part of its work is that of announcement, giving out whatever is for the general good. What we owe it to others to express, we express through the Tongue. What we owe it to others to refrain from expressing, we should forbid the Tongue to express. The best way to do this is not to dwell upon it ourselves, for in the final analysis what the Tongue gives out is an expression of our own thought life.

Think what it means and how wonderful it is to have such an effective and adaptable outlet for such important things as thought, knowledge, and personal influence. Think, too, what a responsibility belongs to us as publishers and to our minds as editors in deciding what should be given out, and when, and in what form. Also, reflect a little on the situation of animals, like household pets who know what we mean when we speak, and would like so much to speak to us but cannot. Pet dogs, for instance, sometimes struggle with their throats trying in vain to form words to express their devotion to us.

Publishing departments must always recognize their responsibility for what they disseminate. They can send out material that helps, hurts, or too meaningless to do either. The ruler of the Tongue has the decision to make among these departures. It is well to bear in mind how important it is to say nothing that hurts or harms. A great deal that does that is allowed to slip from tongues, not so much through malice as through carelessness. The speakers do not wish to harm anyone in any way. They just do not watch what they are saying and consider its effects. Meaningless talk, we call chatter and think it unimportant, but it isn't. As in a machine, chatter indicates that something is loose.

It is wonderful how language has developed to give the Tongue its medium of expression. By this means it can warn, instruct, comfort, and encourage, as well as merely inform. It can roll off a wealth of meaning in a sentence or even a single word; and, like a mechanical press, it has the power to start and stop where the editor directs, and both of these terminals are very important to its doing its work well.

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A COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

The Tongue is not only a publishing department, but also a communication system. In its development, possibly its communication work came first, as man with his growing intelligence realized the need of understanding others and making himself understood by them. Consider what has grown from the very simple forms of communication that must have prevailed at first. Now we have developed other and even more complex methods, but the Tongue is our greatest direct person to person contact.

Any communication system should be required by its owner to represent him well. There may be times when its entire success may depend on it alone. It plays a very important part, and the image of its operator in the minds of others - a very determining factor in his life - depends very largely on his use of his Tongue, on what he does and does not let it say.

When we listen, and we should listen, to what our Tongues are giving out of our thoughts and intentions, we may see whether and how they may be improved. Looking in the mirror is to see how others see us, and we all recognize the need to know that. Listening to our own speech is hearing how others hear us; and, though we tend to neglect it, this is no less important. We may dress up our visual importance with considerable success, but our Tongues will tell on us in spite of ourselves.

One reason some of us fail at this point is the fact we may not really know ourselves very well, and others may know us better than we know ourselves because they listen to what we say more carefully than we do. An irresponsible Tongue is a betraying Tongue, not because it speaks falsely but because unconsciously it speaks the truth - about us more than about the person we are discussing. It is amazingly effective at bringing our supposedly hidden selves into the open.

What wonderful things the Tongue can do when we require them of it and

train it and give it experience in doing them! Love, friendship, helpful counsel, good influence, needed encouragement, wise discussion, even the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood the fruit of which is international peace - these and a thousand other good and valuable things can flow from the human Tongue. Even wholesome fun and good humor are among its helpful contributions to life, provided it does not confuse them with the foolish and trivial.

All the other forms of communication known, even the silent ones, are substitutes for the function of the human Tongue. When magic mechanisms speak through the air, across the sea, or around the world, they are only reproducing what the human Tongue has spoken.

One should recognize the possession of such an instrument by listening to himself and insisting on constant improvement in the thoughts, words, and manner in which it does its amazing work. It is a little of his soul that it imparts to a listener. Let that bit of his soul do him credit.

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MISUSE

It is a great pity to misuse a fine and valuable mechanism of any kind, but it is a supreme pity to misuse an instrument as important and determining as the Tongue. The Bible and all books of wisdom keep repeating warnings about the raging fires the Tongue can kindle, though it is but a little member. Like any great helper, the Tongue can be a very great problem, and unless it is bridled it is almost sure to be.

The Tongue can scatter, enlarge, and create falsehoods, even ruinous ones. It can spread gossip and set whole neighborhoods seething with ill feeling and strife, no matter how untrue it is. Anyone who has seen a forest fire in one of the great wooded areas has a good idea of how fires set by the Tongue can rage, spread, and destroy. In diplomacy, the Tongue can even endanger nations and menace peace. It can be responsible for the shameful loss of life and treasure incident to war. In short, the Tongue can do all kinds of troublesome things when impelled by wrong motives or none at all.

It becomes, then, one of our most important problems to forbid the Tongue from doing harm and see that it obeys. Anyone from the responsible person to the merest chatterbox can work ruin with it; and the responsible person has to be as careful of what he says as must the chatterbox, although he is more likely to realize the fact and try to correct any mistake. But who can correct what is already flying in the wind?

One of the dangerous things about it is the fact that the transgressions of the Tongue are not so often deliberate as they are automatic. It was a man who took great care not to sin with his Tongue who prayed that he might have help not to do so. The Tongue is loosely anchored. It wags very readily. It has a way of saying what it should not before one realizes it. It will run away with itself like a wild locomotive, and it can make its owner the most regretful of all. It does not always ask the mind what to say, but goes ahead on its own.

It follows that the way to keep the Tongue in line is to make it hold back and let the mind keep a little ahead of it, with all the balance and good judgment the mind can summon. Let its utterances be deliberate and considered, and really represent care instead of impulse. This is not as easy as it may sound. You may have kept the Tongue in check all day, and when the day is almost over have it make a bad slip before you know it. One can think before he speaks, but he has to be on his guard every time he opens his mouth. Life will hold him responsible, so he will be wise to hold himself responsible first.

You know the old story of Pandora and her box. We all have them, and at times we all have Pandora impulses to open them. Then who can gather up the mischief and lock it up again?

It is a fortunate day when we discover these three things:

- (1) We do not have to say everything we think.
- (2) We do not have to set right everyone with whom we do not agree.
- (3) We do not have to settle all the problems of the world, but only those for which we are responsible.

That day sets us free from a great deal of liability and enables us to do better with our own affairs, meanwhile using our Tongues for better purposes than getting us into trouble we can only make worse.

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POSSIBILITIES

Now let us turn to the brighter side of the subject, and for a while consider the very rich and happy subject of the possibilities of the Tongue for good. Everything has its opposite, and for every hurtful use of a natural gift there is a happy one that is just as easy to make and far more satisfying in its results. This is especially true of the Tongue and its use.

How much of the comfort of the world comes to those who need it by way of the Tongues of kindly and understanding people! How many rise from their sackcloth and ashes and go away cheered, because they met someone who had a Tongue dedicated to stopping tears by checking them in the heart! This is the kind of people who turn the valleys of weeping into places of springs.

How much of the despair of the world is turned into courage by the helpful use of someone's Tongue, someone who realizes how devastating despair can be, sometimes resulting in the extreme of tragedy! The Tongue of one who knows how, can renew hope and put a song back in a heart that has about given up.

How much needed and even vital counsel is given by the Tongues of people who are capable and willing to take the time and make the effort, and how many more failures and wandering lives there would be without it. Many of the world's

wanderers were among those who were surest that they would not get lost, and especially needed someone to add wisdom to their confidence.

How much growth and development in mental and spiritual stature is given by the inspiring instruction of capable teachers whose Tongues are dedicated to the task. Many people explain how well they have done in life by the simple statement that they had a friend. Probably, quite as many do or could explain the same thing by simply saying, "I had a teacher." But could the most brilliant mind do so in teaching if it did not have an equally capable Tongue to express itself to other minds that are hungry and those that need to be taught to be so?

How many lonely hours are made cheerful, and how many more could be, by the Tongues of friends, neighbors, and even strangers, who saw the need and opportunity, and made the effort to brighten a lone world with a little helpful companionship. Many people in sorrow, when asked what could be done for them, reply, "Just talk to me." The most unfortunate person feels better by discovering that someone thinks he is important enough to talk to. The person who cannot feel so is not far from the edge of complete despair.

Think of the statesmen, prophets, writers, and inspired leaders, whose Tongues have made history, saved situations, and sent saving messages up the years to successive generations - some of them making and others helping to preserve nations. These are but a few hints of what the Tongue can do, and when it blesses others it also blesses its user.

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A GOOD VOICE

While we are considering the important subject of the management of the Tongue, we must not fail to notice the thing that puts that management at its best. Besides being well managed, the Tongue should be honored by the sounds it makes. That calls for a peculiar treasure of a good voice. The Tongue's first great asset is a good mind, well furnished and disciplined to do well in choosing what the Tongue shall say; the second is a good voice with which to say it.

An unfortunate feature about our present age is the great number of people who are careless with their Tongues and yet insist on using them a great deal. It seems that anywhere we go we can hear any number of loud, coarse, cracked, rough, unmusical voices doing violence to our sacred language. These habits often develop in the wild shoutings of childhood, even wilder rooting at games, talking at too great a distance, and the habit of not listening to the raucous noises one makes with his voice. People of importance and influence, even power, are usually soft-spoken. They do not waste, in making noise, the strength they need for action.

The voice is a fine, delicate, responsive, instrument. No costly organ or other maker of sweet and harmonious sounds can compare with it in performance. It could not be built or replaced by any artisan at any price. It should be deeply appreciated by each possessor as it would be by those who have lost it or never had it, yet many who are blessed with it misuse it to the point of endangering it.

The voice should be cared for as one would care for a delicate instrument built by a great master and costing many thousands of dollars. It should be protected from colds, hoarseness, and any of the diseases that attack it. But this is not all. Even one who never had a sore throat in his life can damage his voice by misuse by shouting and making coarse sounds, a favorite place for doing which is on the bleachers, at rallies, and in applauding popular leaders, including some whose leadership is not in very important fields or of very great value, so-called beauty contests for instance. These thrilling moments will pass, but one's need for a musical, pleasing, expressive voice will continue.

Let us be mindful what we let our voices say. A certain great man of yesterday had a favorite remark he often used after considering something in his master mind. It was, "I am going to let myself say this." That saying of his represented the motivation of his great habit of always saying something worthy of being heard, and saying it well. His conversation on any subject consisted of the "words fitly spoken" which are "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Any one of us does well to cultivate the habit of saying nothing that will lower the sound of our voices in anyone's estimation.

Your voice introduces you wherever you go. It announces you to those who know it, and it classifies you with anyone who does not. How important it is to let that introduction be a welcomed and appreciated one.

Your voice is one of your most obedient servants as long as you keep it in condition to make the sounds you want it to. The hand or foot may sometimes disobey, and the other senses may sometimes err; but your voice will do its best to do your will. Keep it in such condition of health and cultivation that its efforts to be helpful will be successful.

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CONVERSATION

We have been considering the voice. Let us now consider one of the chief things in which the voice is used and the quality and value of which it helps to determine - conversation. Archaeologists believe that conversation was somewhat slow in developing as a habit of primitive man, that he used his voice for summoning, shouting, giving commands, and in hunting, for some time before he caught the idea of communication with other human beings on chosen subjects.

But conversation is one of the most valuable and charming uses to which the Tongue can be devoted, potentially at least. It is the great promoter and encourager of social contacts. It is as useful in treating for peace as it can be for plotting war. It is an encourager of commerce, the maker of mutual understandings, the sealer of friendships, and the messenger of love. What part of the hallowed memories of family life do not consist of the sound of beloved voices?

Consider the wonder of two Tongues representing as many minds transferring thoughts, feelings, sentiments, hopes, back and forth between those minds. How far the Tongue has come in the history of its usefulness, and what a flowering of the use of vocal sounds conversation is. What an opportunity two people who speak

with each other have to do something well.

Through the centuries, oratory grew up among men and became an art. Demosthenes, one of the world's greatest masters in the use of the Tongue, had a poor voice to start with, and cultivated it by very difficult means to the point of mastery. Oratory is a special kind of conversation where the orator speaks and the minds and hearts of his hearers answer. What masterpieces the inspiration of such occasions has given us!

It is a great thing to be a good conversationalist. Those who are known to be such are sought out and welcome everywhere. But most, if not all, of those who are not good conversationalists could be if they would try. If you stop and ask a workman about his work and he explains it lucidly and entertainingly, he is a good conversationalist. Everyone knows enough about something to tell it well, and everyone could extend that knowledge if he would try. The influence exerted by good conversation is tremendous.

The effective conveyance of thought and feeling from one person to another is likely to be as much a matter of tone and facial expression as one of spoken words. How often we say that the effect of some statement was not in what the person said, but in how he said it. We sometimes know what someone means when we do not hear his voice at all.

Two things are especially important in conversation. One is to make it an exchange of thought and not a one-sided address. The other is to be a good listener, which is quite as important as being a good speaker.

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LIVING VOICES

Twenty-five hundred years ago, an old man with no claim to a handsome face, but with a bright eye and a beautiful soul, walked the streets of Athens. He was a stone carver and sculptor, but he spent so much of his time talking on the streets that his wife complained. Yet what he said, and still more what he helped others to know how to say, affects the world of thought even to this day, and the name of Socrates is a great name because of what his mind did with his Tongue.

Between nineteen hundred and two thousand years ago, a hundred and twenty people who had been waiting prayerfully in an upper room at Jerusalem began to see flaming tongues over each others' heads, and long-silent voices began speaking words of wonder. One of them, a man who had been careless with his speech, went out onto the porch and spoke to the throng, with the result that three thousand of them embraced the Christian faith that day - an immortal demonstration of what people can do with their Tongues.

More than seven hundred years ago, Roger Bacon was waiting to die in an English jail for being ahead of his time in science. He had said that if he could have one year with any person, he could set him on the way to all known learning and understanding. An old man known as Poor John asked the authorities to allow

him to spend one year in jail with Bacon. His request was granted, and he came out at the end of the year a transformed man from the new intellectual outlook he had gained. That is what one man did with an instructed and consecrated Tongue.

In a certain little town lived an old lady in a clean, neat, humble cottage. She had seen much happen, read much, pondered much, and prayed much. Thus she had built up an inner life that people stopped by every day to share, as she sat smilingly in her rocking chair by the window. Her reputation was known all around, and her door was sought by people with problems, griefs, and just hunger for a profitable conversation. She had probably never thought about it or realized it, but she, too, was a demonstration of what can be the mission of a Tongue.

In a certain small town with a small university, a plain, humble man had a cobbler's shop. In odd times he had read much, and while he worked at his last he had thought much. Intelligent people, including members of the faculty, found that he was worth listening to, and lingered at his shop to hear him talk as he worked. In later years, older and eminent educators proudly said that they had studied abroad, but had been originally brought up in the cobbler's school of philosophy. Even the new generation has heard of him and the service he rendered with his Tongue.

People in a certain community discovered that one of their neighbors could be so helpful a counsellor with their problems that sooner or later almost everyone in the community spent one of those helpful hours with him and went away saying, with the rest, that he always helped them find a better way. He came to be known as "the good word" by the service he rendered with his Tongue.

Probably, in a neighborhood that must here remain nameless, someone will appear one of these days with a Tongue that has taken on a glow from the torches of wisdom, interest, and good will; and therefore to whose door others will again make a beaten track, seeking and receiving illumination on their paths of life. Who may that person be? For the answer look in your mirror.



AFFIRMATION

I dedicate my Tongue to smoothing the way of life for all who come within hearing of the voice it makes intelligible.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR,

