SPIRITUAL GIFTS: DEFINITIONS AND KINDS

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Noncessationism has spread rapidly in recent years, being represented in three groups: Classic Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, and Third Wave Theology. Cessationism joins the three groups in representing the fourth position on spiritual gifts. An examination of several Greek words is helpful in arriving at a definition of spiritual gifts: charisma, pneumatikos, doma, dōrea, merismos, diaireseis, diakoniai, and energēmata. Two positions on spiritual gifts exist today, one holding that all gifts are for today and the other holding that some gifts were temporary and some permanent. The latter position sees apostleship, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, faith, miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation of tongues among the temporary gifts. Apostleship was a foundational gift for the NT church. Along with the temporary gifts, the latter position sees a number of permanent gifts: evangelism, pastors and teachers, and those with gifts of assistance, administration, exhortation, giving, and showing mercy. The primary goal of all the gifts is building up the body of Christ.

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The subject of spiritual gifts has aroused unprecedented interest in every religious circle. With almost universal appeal, the tide of charismatic theology has cut across all theological barriers and religious institutions.1 Synan concluded that in 1995 the aggregate number of Pentecostals/Charismatics in the world numbered 463,000,000, second only to the Roman Catholic Church.2 Such interest has resulted in the publication of an entire body of literature, both inside and outside the

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1Harvey Cox of Harvard University notes, "Pentecostalism is the fastest growing and most vital Christian movement on the globe today" (back dust jacket of Walter J. Hollenweger, Pentecostalism, Origins and Developments Worldwide [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997]).

Pentecostal tradition. Discerning Christians who embrace the biblical teaching of cessationism, must take this matter seriously, since almost every branch of evangelical Christianity has embraced some form of charismatic theology.

When John MacArthur published his book *Charismatic Chaos* in 1992, Robert W. Patterson offered a review featuring a contorted picture of MacArthur, holding a shield, and describing him as the last holdout and single defender of the dying cessationist view. The pursuit of charismatic theology today has all but drowned out clear biblical exposition on this vital issue. Robert Lightner pointed out that the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit suffers today from three extremes: abuse, neglect, and distortion. One has only to survey the claims that originate from within evangelicalism and Pentecostalism to see that this is so. In the early 1970s, as the Charismatic Movement was taking hold, it was confidently asserted that Jesus Christ “is using the outpouring of the Spirit to unite the Body for his return.” As the movement developed into the “new” Charismatics, it has increasingly understood itself as “restorationism,” or “Latter Rain restoration,” believing that “history is moving toward a spiritual climax where God’s power will be poured out on the church as never before.” These “restorationists believe that this new move could be the Lord’s final move; the Lord will empower the church to make the world Christian before Jesus returns.” Issues such as sound biblical hermeneutics, personal salvation, and doctrinal purity have frequently suffered neglect in this quest for the alleged “work of the Spirit.”

At the outset, the church was flooded with “little books” and short chapters on spiritual gifts. The vast majority of the titles engage in experience-motivated thinking without a biblical basis. Noted Pentecostal scholar, Gordon Fee, rightly observed “that in general, Pentecostals’ experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends to exegete his experience.” In more recent years, some scholarly literature has appeared, seeking a hermeneutical and theological underpinning for charismatic theology. However, those efforts seem only to add...
sophistication to their experience-motivated theology.\textsuperscript{10} As Robert Thomas has well noted, discussions of 1 Corinthians 12–14 are numerous, “but detailed studies endeavoring to present a cohesive analysis of the entire passage have not been so frequent.”\textsuperscript{11} The need for a clear biblical study of cessationism, based on sound exegesis, is evident.

\textbf{Four Groups Addressing Spiritual Gifts Today}

Today’s discussions and positions on spiritual gifts fall into one of four general positions. A brief survey of positions underlines the breadth of thought and conviction about the gifts and the need for biblical clarity.

- **Classic Pentecostalism** – The historic beginning of the modern tongues movement is traced to Bethel Bible School of Topeka, Kansas, founded in 1900 by Charles Parham (1873-1929). Parham encouraged his students to examine the apostolic age for a witness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit available today as an event subsequent to salvation. One of his students, Miss Agnes Ozman, requested that hands be laid on her to receive the Holy Spirit, and according to Parham, she responded by speaking only in the Chinese language, unable to speak her native English for the next three days. Parham considered this the restoration of the Pentecostal power of the Book of Acts.\textsuperscript{12} Nichol points out that the significance of the Topeka event was that “for the first time the concept of being baptized (or filled) with the Holy Spirit was linked to an outward sign—speaking in tongues.”\textsuperscript{13} Parham began an evangelistic effort in various cities which he identified as “Pentecostal” or the “Full Gospel,” reaching as high as 25,000 Pentecostal converts in Texas alone by 1905.\textsuperscript{14} William Seymour (1870-1922) came in contact with Parham’s preaching in Houston and then was called to Los Angeles, where he lead the renowned Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909). Based at the Azusa Street Mission (312 Azusa Street), Seymour spoke in tongues for the first time on April 9, 1906. Seymour’s activities associated with the Azusa Street Revival launched American Pentecostalism, and Azusa Street became a “veritable Pentecostal Mecca to which pilgrims from all over the world came and from which the news of supernatural signs and wonders was broad-
cast.”

Representatives of this position include The Assemblies of God, The Church of God in Christ, and Aimee Semple McPherson’s (1890-1944) International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.

- **The Charismatic Movement** – or *Neo-Pentecostalism*, began in the mid-1950s largely through the efforts of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International of Los Angeles, and the efforts of Assemblies of God minister David J. du Plessis (1905-1987), who promoted the Pentecostal experience to the non-Pentecostal denominations. On August 3, 1960, Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett (1917-) of St Marks Church in Van Nuys, California, announced in his pulpit that he had been baptized of the Holy Spirit and then went on to speak in tongues. Bennett came under immediate criticism and resigned after the third of three services the same day. The matter, however, was so widely publicized that this event is often viewed as the founding the Charismatic Movement, as it spread to every major denomination and cut across all theological boundaries. Dunn observed that this new Pentecostalism “has now become a movement of world-wide importance, reckoned as a third force in Christendom (alongside Catholicism and Protestantism) by not a few leading churchmen.” In the movement, there was less concern for the nature of the new birth and great stress was placed on Spirit baptism and tongues. In the quest for expanded research and doctrinal respectability, the Society for Pentecostal Studies was formed in 1970. Important aspects include, Trinity Broadcasting Network, begun by Paul Crouch in 1973, The International Catholic Charismatic Conference in Rome, 1975, and the rise after 1980 of prominent televangelists, including Oral Roberts and son Richard, Kenneth Hagain, Pat Robertson, Rex Humbard, Jimmy Swaggart, Kenneth Copeland, Jim Bakker, and Benny Hinn.
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- **Third Wave Theology** -- This is also known as the “Signs and Wonders” or the “Third Wave” Movement, the first wave being Pentecostalism and the second the Charismatic Renewal. This group consists of largely mainline evangelicals who did not want to be identified with the first two groups and yet believed in miraculous gifts, tongues, and healings for today. They teach that the new birth and Spirit baptism occur at the same time and give great place to the miraculous gifts, viewing them as the long-buried truth that has once again come to light, generating widespread excitement. The movement was started by C. Peter Wagner of the Fuller Theological Seminary missions department. Also part of the Third Wave are John Wimber of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, California and founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches, and former Dallas Seminary professor, Jack Deere. Leaders of the movement are concerned with healing and the Christian response to demonic activity. A subset of this group is the “open but cautious” position—an expression coined by Wayne Grudem, of noted evangelical teachers, including Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Robert Saucy, John Piper, and Wayne Grudem himself, along with Chuck Smith and his Calvary Chapel movement. Charismatics are often openly critical of “third wavers.”

“For the past 20 years the above three groups have engaged in charismatic

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22 Ray Stedman, in Foreword to *You and Your Spiritual Gifts* by Kenneth O. Gangel (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 5.


28 Note the tone of Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* 228-45.
ecumenism, which is steadily eroding any claim the Charismatic Movement ever had to biblical orthodoxy, “leaving it with a legacy of chaos and doctrinal confusion.

- **Cessationism** – This is the view that the miraculous gifts ceased with, or very soon after, the ministry of the apostles to whom—and to whom only—they were given. It understands that the miraculous and non-miraculous gifts appear in the same lists in Scripture because they all came from the same source—God’s grace and the Spirit’s power—but it recognizes that different gifts are given by God for different purposes. The view rests on a careful, non-speculativeexegetical study of the Scriptures. It minimizes the element of human experience by not allowing experience to influence decisions of biblical interpretation. It is the historic position of the Calvinist Reformation, Jonathan Edwards, and numerous Puritans. In more recent times, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) most ably argued this view in a series of lectures given at Columbia Theological Seminary that were published in 1918 as *Counterfeit Miracles*. Gaffin, Thomas,

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29 John MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* 294.
30 Ibid., 295.
36 Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*. 
Needless to say, opinion on the spiritual gifts—very little of which is based on sound biblical exegesis—varies widely. Positions are frequently motivated by experience or emotion, and fueled by logic-jumps. Scholarship often assumes its outcome by adopting hermeneutical principles consistent with a preconceived bias. Serious study of the Scriptures is necessary if one is to say only what the Scriptures say about spiritual gifts. A person needs to understand correct biblical distinctions such as the nature and purpose of the gifts, and to follow biblical emphases such as identifying one’s area of giftedness (rather than discovering his gift), seeking greater gifts that edify the body, and placing Christian character before spiritual gifts. This introductory article seeks to address the biblical teaching on two important issues: the definition of a spiritual gift in Scripture and the nature of the spiritual gifts, both miraculous and nonmiraculous.

The Definition of a Spiritual Gift

The most important issue in understanding spiritual gifts is their biblical definition. An examination of the literature on gifts makes it quite apparent that false assumptions inevitably lead to unwarranted conclusions. Several areas are vital in arriving at the definition.

Significant Greek Words

The NT uses many Greek words to speak of “gifts.” It is necessary to discuss the meaning and use of these words as they relate to the subject at hand. It seems best to understand the different words as stressing various aspects of gifts.

The Use of χαρίσμα (charisma, “gift”)

The terms most often associated with spiritual gifts today is charisma or charismatic. The common meaning given this word in English translation is important. “Since the days of Tertullian, western theological language has used charisma and its vernacular derivatives in a sense that the Biblical and early post-

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Biblical usage . . . does not support. That is . . . as the generic term for the extraordinary and at times miraculous." The idea of the miraculous is also inherent in the modern day title Charismatic Movement. It is significant, however, that the Greek word translated here does not have this meaning.

Charisma comes from the verb χαρίζω (charizomai, “I show favor”), which is derived from the noun χάρις (charis, “grace”). This common word is often found in the Septuagint and elsewhere in the sense of “favor” or “beauty.” In the NT it is used in the subjective sense of “favor toward men” and in the objective sense as the result of a gracious action, best understood as “grace.” The verb charizomai means simply “to say or do something agreeable” and, more specifically in the NT, “to give graciously or cheerfully.” χαρίζω, therefore, means ‘to give,’ with special reference to the grace, favor and kindness which inspire and accompany the gift. Charisma, having the -ma ending, looks to the result of the action. Charisma is the result of the action of charizomai—a gift freely and graciously given or a “gift of grace.”

In the NT charisma is used exclusively by Paul except for Peter’s reference to gifts in 1 Pet 4:10. As used in Rom 5:15, 16 and 6:23, it is translated “gift,” referring to the gift of eternal life. Charisma also occurs in 1 Cor 7:7, referring to the state of celibacy as a special grace from God. All other uses clearly refer to grace-gifts in a more technical sense. Those include 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6, Rom 12:6ff., and those occurrences in 1 Cor 12:4. Though it is not certain that Paul was the first to give the term this meaning, it is from Paul that charisma first takes on the sense of God’s gifts of grace in Scripture. Post-biblical usage of the word in the Apostolic Fathers reflects similar understanding.

To summarize, the word charisma means a free and undeserved gift, an

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46 See the development of Piepikorn, “Charisma” 373-74.
unmerited gift from God’s grace. It has been called a “particular actualization of this grace of God”\(^47\) and thus can be referred to any grace or endowment from God. To insist that the word implies miraculous grace-gifts is unwarranted. In the words of one able scholar, “It includes all spiritual graces and endowments.”\(^48\)

**The Use of πνευματικός (pneumatikos, “spiritual”)**

The term occurs often in the NT and almost always refers to the divine πνεῦμα (pneuma, “Spirit”), “caused by or filled with the Spirit, pertaining or corresponding to the Spirit.” It could best be translated “spiritual.”\(^49\)

Important to this discussion is Paul’s use of pneumatikos in Romans 1:11 where it is linked with charisma. Also significant are the occurrences in 1 Cor 12:1 and 14:1. In these last two instances the genitive plural pneumatikôn, may be either masculine or neuter. In arguing for the masculine (spiritual persons), Bruce sees these as persons endowed with spiritual gifts, as those in 2:15 and 3:1.\(^50\) Parry suggests that the Corinthians were using this word to mean the gift of tongues in particular and that Paul used it to speak of spiritual things in general in 12:1 and 14:1.\(^51\) This understanding avoids a host of proposed explanations and additions.\(^52\) Thus Paul has in mind spiritual gifts; which would include the men who exercised the gifts. The term is a parallel to charisma, yet it contributes to the description of a gift.

Scripture always emphasized the contrast between the spiritual (pneumatikos) and the natural.\(^53\) This is evident in the contrast of the spiritual man and the natural man (1 Cor 2:14-15), the spiritual body with the natural body (1 Cor 15:46), and spiritual food and drink with that which is ordinary (1 Cor 10:3). Gifts are said

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\(^{42}\)BDAG, 837, note Eph 6:12 as the only exception. Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of the NT Greek* (Princeton, N.J.: Theological Book Agency, 1972) 43, notes the suffix -τικός expresses the idea of belonging to, pertaining to, with the characteristics of, in this case, πνεύμα.


to be spiritual or divine abilities. Many writers have concluded, that this means “that the whole idea of spiritual gifts necessitates a supernatural work of God quite distinct from the natural powers of man, or even from any spiritual qualities which are universal among the saved.” In doing so, the term supernatural is used to designate the miraculous in contrast to normal divine activity in which God makes use of natural means. Such a connotation differs from referring the term to the realm of the spiritual or divine that goes beyond the realm of sense experience and human reason. Though no one would deny that gifts are supernatural in that they are received from God, to insist that because gifts are termed pneumatikos, they are inherently supernatural, meaning miraculous is reading too much into the word. The meaning of τῶν πνευματικῶν (δόν pneumatikōn) is simply “that which pertains to the Spirit,” indicating the source or realm of these gifts. This does not imply that the gift must be supernatural, non-miraculous, or miraculous. It only denotes the source and the realm.

The Use of δόμα (doma, “gift”)

Doma comes from δίδωμι (didōmi, “I give”) and simply means “gift.” The -μα suffix, with its stress on result, leads Vine to observe that doma lends greater stress to the concrete character of the gift than to its beneficent nature (Matt 7:11, Phil 4:17). It is important to note this descriptive emphasis with doma in several passages. In Luke 11:13, earthly δόματα (domata, “gifts”) are contrasted with the gift of the Father, namely Πνεῦμα Ἁγίου (pneuma hagion, “the Holy Spirit”). Several other passages in John mention this gift of the Spirit as well. John 7:39 speaks of τού pneumatos, “whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Spirit is mentioned in John 14:26, 15:26-27, and 16:7-13.

Luke uses the same expression, pneuma hagion, in his description of the

154 John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1958) 164. So also Howard M. Ervin, These Are Not Drunken As Ye Suppose (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1968) 122-28, 227-33, translates πνευματικός as “supernatural” in every NT occurrence. This is not convincing as he confuses the issue by lowering the meaning to “spiritual” in most contexts. On few occasions πνευματικός does mean “supernatural” in contrast to “spiritual” (1 Cor 15:44a), but Scripture does not indicate that this is inherent as Ervin would insist (233).


156 Readily admitted by Walvoord, The Holy Spirit 164.

157 Blass and Debrunner, Greek Grammar 59.

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The gift given at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:5, 2:4, 2:33, 2:38) in fulfillment of Luke 24:49 (cf. Acts 1:8). It seems probable that the doma mentioned by Jesus in Luke 11:13 refers at least to the activity of Acts 2 where the giving of the coming of pneuma hagion results in divine manifestations and the giving of gifts. It is the first gift of the Spirit that makes possible the giving of other gifts. It should be observed that the gift of the Spirit is connected with the gift giving activity of Christ to the church.

The Use of δόρεα (dōrea, “gift”)

The word dōrea is derived from didomi, as is doma above. Its use seems to be a more legal term than δῶρον (dorōn, “gift”) and denotes formal endowment, while the latter is used of men’s gifts to one another.59 A careful study of dōrea in the NT reveals two important matters. First, dōrea in Acts and the epistles is used chiefly of gifts given by God to authenticate the apostles and their witness.60 The idea of legal endowment is clearly seen. Secondly, the use of dōrea to denote a “free gift” of God is seen in its association with charis (“grace”) in such passages as Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17, and 2 Cor 9:15. These verses use dōrea as the “free gift” of God coming from His grace.61 Owen terms this giving as “a participation of a gracious favor with respect to an especial end.”62 (See Eph 3:8; also Rom 15:10, 15; Gal. 2:9; especially Rom 12:6). Thus dōrea adds the aspect of formal endowment and gracious giving to the spiritual gifts.

The Use of μερισμός (merismos, “division, distribution”)

This word is seldom found in the NT and takes its derivation from μερίζω (merizō, “I divide”). It can mean “division” or “distribution.”63 In Heb 2:4 merismos is used to speak of the distributions of pneumatos hagion. This passage makes clear that God used distributions of the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit to authenticate His message to men in Apostolic times.


60Ardel B. Caneday, “A Study of New Testament Gifts, Their Nature and Continuance,” (unpublished seminar paper, Winona Lake, Ind.: Grace Theological Seminary, 1975) 10-11. Note Acts 2:38; 8:20-10:45; 11:17; and 2 Cor 9:15. These verses use dōrea as the “free gift” of God coming from His grace.61 Owen terms this giving as “a participation of a gracious favor with respect to an especial end.”62 (See Eph 3:8; also Rom 15:10, 15; Gal. 2:9; especially Rom 12:6). Thus dōrea adds the aspect of formal endowment and gracious giving to the spiritual gifts.


62BDAG, 633.
Summary

From this survey of significant Greek words, various aspects of spiritual gifts are evident. *Charisma* means a free and undeserved gift, an unmerited grace-gift from God’s grace. *Charisma* means a free and undeserved gift, an unmerited grace-gift from God’s grace. From *pneumatikos* one sees that the realm and source of the gifts is the Spirit. *Doma* stresses concrete character and *dûrea* stresses gracious giving while adding the aspect of formal endowment. The word *merismos* denotes the aspect of distribution of the Spirit. One should include the significance of all these words in coming to a definition of a gift, because a gift possesses all these aspects.

Threefold Diversity

First Cor 12:4-6 speaks of the *diârêseis* (*diaireseis*, “distributions, differences”) of gifts, ministries, and activities or effects, and provides important characteristics of spiritual gifts.

Distributions

In his description in vv. 4-6, Paul uses the word *diaireseis*, which occurs nowhere else in the NT. *Diaireseis* can mean either “distributions” (apportionings) or “differences” (distinctions). The context supports both “distribution” (see v. 11, and also *merismos* in Heb. 2:4) and “distinction” (note the antithesis between *diaireseis* and τὸ αὐτό [*to auto*, “the same”] or οὗ αὐτός [*ho autos*, “the same”]).

The question that arises is whether Paul has in mind distributions of gifts among individuals or distinctions in the kinds of gifts. Edwards suggests both meanings are likely and concludes, “It signifies ‘a distribution of gifts involving diversity of gifts.’”

Designations

The three terms used here are considering the same gifts from three points of view. They are seen as “proceeding from the Spirit, as advancing the cause of Christ, and as giving effect to the will of God.” Three designations then develop what is involved in *pneumatikos*. *Charismata* are specific capacities or abilities granted to believers, *diakoníα* (*diakonias*, “ministries”) are spheres in which the gifts are exercised (places and times in the church when gifts become visible in actual use and practice), and ἐνεργηματα (*energêmatata*, “effects”) are happenings

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or effects that occur when gifts are employed.66

As to the nature of these three designations, charismata was seen earlier to mean a grace-gift from the Lord. Diakoniai is best rendered, “the activities of service” or “ministries,” and does not imply a technical sense of “office.” Beyer notes that “a decisive point for understanding the concept is that early Christianity learned to regard and describe as diakonia all significant activity for the edification of the community (Eph 4:11ff.), a distinction being made according to the mode of operation.”67 The third term, energêmata, relates to the verbs ἐνεργεῖον (energeô) in vv. 6 and 11 and to energeia in verse 10. The basic meaning of the verb is to be “active” or “energetic.” Energêmata are thus “activities,” “workings,” “effects,” or “energizings.” In this passage and almost exclusively in the NT, it is used of divine work.68 As Morris terms it, this is “God’s power in action.”69 Similar activity may be seen in Gal 2:8, 3:15, Eph 3:7, and Col 1:29. God is the one who energizes all things (1 Cor 12:7, see also the energizings or effects of the Spirit in 12:10, 11). It is also significant that prophecy and knowledge are said to “de-energize” (καταργεῖον, katargeô, 1 Cor 13:8), the direct opposite of earlier energizing. Thus, such “activity” or “energy” is an important aspect of spiritual gifts.

The three words describe spiritual gifts from different points of view. The analogy of the Godhead in this context shows that the three terms go together to make up a whole, as is also the case with the Trinity. A spiritual gift includes a grace-gift, a ministry, and effects. Sometimes the names given to the biblically mentioned gifts view only one of these aspects, and imply the other two aspects. In 1 Cor 12:8-10, 1 Pet 4:10, and Rom 12:6-8, effects or activities are in view. In 1 Cor 12:28-30 and Eph 4:11 ministries are in view.

Further Considerations

Several important biblical considerations should be noted that cannot be fully developed in this article. Each adds to a proper definition of a spiritual gift.

Parallels Outside the Church Age

It is important to note the close parallels between the Spirit’s work through spiritual gifts in the church and His enabling or empowering ministry in the OT, the Gospels, and the end times. Among the various ministries of the Spirit in the OT are His enabling and empowering of individuals for service. Some have sought to

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correlate such incidents directly with NT charisma. Others note the common activity of God, through the Holy Spirit’s enabling, equipping and often authenticating men for service, yet they see slight differences. Oehler writes,

In the Old Testament, the Spirit’s work in the divine Kingdom is rather that of endowing the organs of the theocracy with the gifts required for their calling, and those gifts of office in the Old Testament are similar to the gifts of grace in the New Testament, I Corinthians XII II.

Hill also notes a close correlation when he writes concerning Paul’s conception of special gifts (e.g., prophecy, knowledge). He states that there is essential “harmony with OT and Jewish ideas of Charismatic endowment from God.”

In a helpful survey of Holy Spirit empowering in the OT, Leon Wood notes four classes. The Spirit came upon judges (e.g., Gideon, Judg 6:34); craftsmen (e.g., Bezaleel, Exod 31:3, 35:31); prophets (temporary, e.g., Zechariah of the reign of Joash, 2 Chr 24:20; continuously, e.g., Elijah, 2 Kgs 2:9, 15, 16, and Micah, Mic 3:8); and civil administrators (e.g., Moses, in Num 11:17, and Joshua, Num 27:18).

With respect to the above, Wood writes, “All four classifications of people . . . were thus equipped to do their work in the best proper manner.” Thus it is clear that the Spirit empowered the individual with the ability to accomplish the given task.

Parallels to the Spirit’s gift-giving activity are also found in the Gospels. These accounts reveal the Holy Spirit as empowering and enabling men for service. Christ Himself is said to cast out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28). Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies in Luke 1:67ff. The Spirit gives direct revelation to Simeon in Luke 2:26. It is also the power of the Spirit that is manifested in Luke 9:1 as it came from Christ. Again in these passages, the Spirit gives empowerment or enablement to individuals before the church age. The theme is also strongly seen in Christ’s parables of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the pounds (Luke 19:11-27). Admittedly, the parables communicated truth concerning

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74 Wood, Holy Spirit 63.

75 That these are not the same parable is forcefully argued by Henry Alford, New Testament for English Readers, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1868) 1:415.
the kingdom, yet their timeless truths speak precisely about the gifts men receive from above.

Strong examples of divine empowerment and enablement will also exist in the end times. During the tribulation period the two witnesses will prophesy (Rev 11:3). They will engage in the very same activity that took place in the first century. A careful study of Revelation and other prophetic portions reveals other miraculous activity given by the Spirit. As with similar activity in OT times, these are very close to the idea of spiritual gifts in NT epistles and Acts. Conclusions about spiritual gifts should recognize the Spirit’s similar activity in other ages.

**Parallels with Human Natural Abilities**

Many insist that the gifts are distinct from natural abilities. McRae states, “[T]alents may and ought to be dedicated to the Lord to be used for His glory and in His service, but they must always be considered consecrated talents, not spiritual gifts.” In an accompanying chart McRae notes that spiritual gifts are different from natural talents in that they are independent of hereditary considerations, are probably possessed from conversion, and are given for the purpose of benefiting mankind on the spiritual rather than the natural level. Other writers seek to contrast the general ability of teaching, which most all are said to possess, with the spiritual gift of teaching. Some will even call all gifts miraculous. A typical emphasis is that the Spirit often sovereignly picks out the most unlikely child of God and gives him a gift so that he is lifted above all the natural ability he ever had. This position basically understands spiritual gifts as special abilities that are in addition to and beyond natural abilities.

The above description and distinction between natural abilities and spiritual gifts fits well in the context of the miraculous empowering gifts such as those in 1 Cor 12:8-10. Difficulties come, however, when the above criteria is applied to non-miraculous enabling gifts such as “helps” or “administrations” (1 Cor 12:28). It appears that a “theology” of the gifts has been developed from an inspection of the

78Ibid., 21.
miraculous gifts and made to apply to all the gifts. As noted in earlier discussion on pneumatikos, the term simply relegates gifts to what “pertains to the spiritual”—context must determine whether a gift is “supernatural” or “extraordinary.”

The important aspect of Paul’s argument, often overlooked, is the connection between the miraculous (the extraordinary) and the non-miraculous gifts. The point in 1 Cor 12:4-11 and in the illustration of the body (vv. 12-30) is that the gifts have a common source. There are various distributions and effects, but one God works in all (v. 6). Charismata and pneumatikos unite the giving activity, source, and realm of spiritual gifts, but they do not give them a common level of empowerment or purpose. Non-miraculous gifts are not defined by the character of miraculous gifts, so non-miraculous gifts are not separate from dedicated talents.

Schewizer offers a more convincing explanation:

[To Paul] . . . the manifestations of the Spirit do not have to be extraordinary. Thus, in distinction from the Corinthians, he reckons among such manifestations ἀντιλήψεις ["helps"] and κυβερνήσεις ["administrations"], ὀρθοτομίες ["services"] and ἔλεείν ["acts of mercy"], μεταδόσεις ["contributions"] and προφητείαι ["championing"], R. 12:7f. An even more vital point is that Paul obviously plays down speaking with tongues, which was for the Corinthians the most striking and hence the most important of the gifts of the Spirit. This shows that the criterion of the extraordinary was fundamentally irrelevant. . . . The criterion by which the worth or worthlessness of the gifts of the Spirit is to be measured is confession of the κύριος Ἰησοῦς ["Lord Jesus"], and therewith the οἰκοδομή ["edification"], the συμφέρον ["profit"] of the community.  

This view understands that activity does not have to be supernatural or miraculous to be a gift. The Spirit can also work through the believer’s natural talents. When used by the Holy Spirit these become spiritual gifts. They are just as much spiritual gifts as miraculous activity. Kuyper suggests the sequence by which non-miraculous activities become spiritual gifts. He notes, God’s institution of the areas of service, His giving of gifts and talents to fill these areas that are fitted for each personality by the Son, and the kindling of these in each by the Holy Spirit.

To summarize, a proper distinction between spiritual gifts and natural talents should be observed. Three classifications of activities exist: (1) the abilities and talents of the unbeliever or disobedient Christian; (2) the Spirit working through the dedicated life and talents of the believer in divine enablement, and (3) special, supernatural, extraordinary gifts bestowed upon a believer (first-century activity only). No valid distinction exists between dedicated abilities and spiritual gifts. As

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82Schweizer, “πνεύμα, πνευματικός,” TDNT, 6:424. [translations added]
one dedicates his abilities to the Lord, the Spirit is able to work through him. These abilities become spiritual gifts. Carter describes the process when he writes:

The gift of the person of the Spirit may illumine, quicken, and nurture these potentialities in an individual to the development of greater usefulness, whereas without the presence of the Spirit in the life of an individual such potentialities may remain dormant throughout life.  

The Source of Gifts

A final consideration is the relationship of the Godhead to the gifts. Writers frequently emphasize the Spirit as the giver of the gifts without saying much about the role of other members of the Godhead. More accurately, the giving of spiritual gifts is similar to other works of God in which all Persons of the Godhead collaborate.

The Work of Christ

Christ was the baptizer at Pentecost; pneuma hagion is the instrument or means of baptism. As Boyer notes with regard to 1 Cor 12:13,

The construction (Greek, ἐν) is never used for the personal agent with a passive voice. The consistent representation of this doctrine of Spirit baptism in the New Testament is that Christ is the one who does the baptizing (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5), that He does this in, or with the instrumentality of, or by means of, the Holy Spirit. The historic occasion of that baptism on Pentecost was the receiving of the Spirit (Acts 2:38).

F. F. Bruce summarizes this point: “[T]he Holy Spirit Himself is given by the exalted Christ to His church (Acts 2:33), and so the gifts of the Spirit may also be thought of as gifts of the exalted Christ.” When this activity of Christ is viewed alongside

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88Ibid.

the activity of God, who works all things in all (1 Cor 12:7), who places the members in the body (12:18), and who gives to everyone the measure of faith (Rom 12:3), it is best to conclude that God gave, through Christ, the gift of pneuma hagion. This indwelling Holy Spirit distributes power to the believer as gifts.

The Work of the Spirit

The Spirit’s work with respect to gifts closely relates to the other members of the Godhead (1 Cor 12:4-6) in two respects.

Energizing

First Cor 12:11 directly states that the Spirit energizes (energeō) all the gifts.\textsuperscript{90} If the genitive in v. 7 is objective, Paul here speaks of the gifts as the operations which manifest the Spirit.\textsuperscript{91} In both cases the Spirit is not the author of the gifts but the energizer.

Distributing

The various distributions of gifts are indicated in 1 Cor 12:4 as related to the entire Godhead. Verse 11 speaks of the diairown (verb form of diairesis), the distributing activity, of the Spirit. Paul elsewhere speaks of the elders who were made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). In Acts 6:8-10 Stephen is filled with wisdom and the Spirit, demonstrating the close relationship between the gifts and the Spirit. Since the gifts are termed pneumatikos, they pertain to the Spirit who is God. The persons of the Trinity work together in perfect unity.

A Working Definition

The above careful study of various aspects concerning spiritual gifts yields the following definition of a gift. From word study it was observed that grace-gifts are distributions of the Spirit’s power. Spiritual gifts are diverse and distinct among individuals, yet they all contain gracious provision, a spiritual ministry, and most important, an effect or activity. In the study of biblical parallels it was noted that God has always engaged in enabling and empowering through His Spirit. Gifts included supernatural empowering in the first century as well as divine enablement in which the Spirit works through a dedicated life by awakening, nurturing, and developing. Lastly, spiritual gifts are given by God through Christ, and are produced

\textsuperscript{90}One cannot conclude, however, that the activity of energizing belongs only to the Spirit. First Corinthians 12:6 attributes the energizing to God (ὁ ἑαυτὸν). The activity is shared by the Godhead. See Parry, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians 178.

in the person whom the Holy Spirit indwells and controls.

A spiritual gift, then, is any ability and accompanying spiritual ministry and effect that God, through Christ, enables a believer to use, or motivates him to use, for His glory, in the body of Christ, through the energizing work of the Spirit.

God may grace the believer with a gift or gifts, or bring them to light, at salvation or later, but these abilities are only gifts when used for edification in the church. Today, as in biblical times, these enablings differ among churches according to the needs of the church and vary greatly as the needs vary.92

The Kinds of Spiritual Gifts

The miraculous and non-miraculous gifts in Scripture are easily distinguished from each other. A miraculous gift empowers an individual to perform an act in which God’s power is directly applied into natural order (i.e., into this time-space-mass continuum).93 Such an event involves "a suspension, a bypassing, or even an outright contravention of the natural order."94 Commenting on the miracles of Christ and His apostles, Whitcomb notes that they were “fantastically abundant, utterly spectacular, and totally undeniable.”95

This is in sharp contrast to the usual way God works through indirect and secondary causes. Such gifts as helps, administrations, pastor-teacher and several of those listed in Romans 12 fall into the non-miraculous category. These gifts or abilities operate within the natural realm of order even though God’s hand of providence is involved.

As Paul lists different gifts, he makes no apparent attempt to separate the miraculous and the non-miraculous. Earlier discussion has noted that Paul did not confine spiritual gifts to the extraordinary but included all spiritual graces and endowments. Warfield comments on this close association by noting that “charismata . . . is broad enough to embrace that [which] may be called both the ordinary and the specifically extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; both those, that is, which were distinctively gracious, and those which were distinctly miraculous.”96 Complicating this is the difficulty of determining where the miraculous aspect ceases.

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93Ibid.
95Warfield, Miracles 3-4.
and the non-miraculous begins in the apostolic gift of prophecy or teaching. The point made here is not that Paul knew no difference between the miraculous and the non-miraculous but that he makes no distinction in the gift passages.

Two Proposed Solutions

Two views exist for explaining the purpose, recipients, and duration of spiritual gifts.

All gifts for today

Many proponents of this view elevate experience as their defense. Frederick Bruner, points to the heart of the issue when he says, “It is important to notice that it is not the doctrine, it is the experience of the Holy Spirit which Pentecostals repeatedly assert that they wish to stress.” In giving an account of his “conversion,” one writer tells of his former belief in the temporary nature of some gifts, “But the almost wholesale re-entry of the gifts in the church has caused me to take a second look.” Ervin, a leading Pentecostal writer, enthusiastically quotes Henry Krause who says, “Truth divorced from experience must always dwell in the realm of a doubt.” This type of thinking is also evident in a comment by Quebedeaux when in speaking about Neo-Pentecostals: they “believe that the person with an experience need never feel himself to be at the mercy of the person with an argument.” Note further the words from Edward Murphy:

Nowhere in the New Testament are we told from four to nine of the gifts listed by Paul would cease with the Apostolic Age, with the rest continuing in the church. Such a division is completely arbitrary. . . . Just because St. Augustine, B. B. Warfield, or C. I. Scofield, puzzled by the decline of spiritual gifts in the churches of their day, reasoned some of the gifts must have been only temporary doesn’t make it so.

Recent attempts for a scholarly defense of this view continue this posture in more sophisticated ways. Barnett and McGregor subtitle their work, A Scholarly Defense,

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97This point is discussed by Lightfoot, Notes 148-49.
100Ervin, These Are Not Drunken 1-3.
102Murphy, Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission 101-2; see also 104-6.
Many in the historical churches are no longer satisfied with the claim that speaking in tongues was restricted to the apostolic era, now that some of their own ministers are practicing and cherishing this gift of God. It is even harder for the laity to accept the explanation that ‘tongue-talkers’ are overemotional, uneducated fanatics on the fringes of Christianity (or worse yet, demon-possessed) when they see scholars with theological doctorates espousing this New Testament gift! “Thinking Christians” are demanding more satisfactory answers, and it turns out these answers are coming from people who have embraced this Charismatic experience that played a vital part in the first-century church.103

They go on to develop a defense of charismatic gifts today based on the “threelfold cord” of the “Bible, logic, and history.”104 Max Turner, in his academic tome, addresses the views of Warfield, Edgar, Farnell, Gaffin, and Masters out of courtesy since “Nearly all NT scholars would dismiss such a view as a curiosity,” with a view “entirely unacceptable to serious NT scholarship.”105 Noted charismatic scholar, Gordon Fee, when addressing the question of duration of the charismata confidently writes, “[Paul’s] answer is plain, ‘Of course they will continue as long as we await the final consummation.’”106 It is clear that experience still plays a significant role in theological determination. But as Gaffin warns, “[F]aith is not an assertion of my ever tentative subjectivity in need of ‘objective’ props and confirmation.”107 Mayhue offers a similar concern in his analysis of Jack Deere by asking, “Could it be that [Deere and others] have used a combination of experience and a redetermined theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?”108 Walvoord earlier warned of the dilemma of those who have had an experience and encounter “two fatal grounds of error: (1) a misapprehension of the experience itself in its content and divine origin; (2) a faulty conclusion as to the doctrinal meaning of the experience.”109 While manifesting itself in different ways, this is an ongoing error

104Ibid., 7.
108Mayhue, “Who Surprised Whom?” 124. Mayhue “purposely used ‘redetermined’ in contrast to ‘predetermined’” to describe Deere’s new “less than objective approach” (Surprised, 124 n.)
of noncessationist theology.

The “all gifts continuing” position is argued from each of the noncessationist groups identified above. Classic Pentecostals, such as Gee, Horton, Schep, and Freeman, teach that Spirit baptism of Acts 2 is to be repeated along with accompanying gifts in all generations as a post-salvation experience. In the words of Freeman, “God in this present hour is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh as foretold by the prophet Joel (2:28f).” Countless thousands in all denominations are experiencing the reality of the promise in Acts 2:38-9." The overwhelming emphasis is on tongues; other gifts are often excluded. Charismatic writers including Ervin, Rea, Turner, Ruthven, and Lederle teach the book of Acts as completely normative and a type of Spirit baptism followed by manifestation of all the gifts, but especially tongues, prophetic utterance, and healing. With some variation among themselves, all writers insist on a “Spirit baptism,” which is understood in various ways, and some have little interest in the new birth. Logan summarized the movement:

Having experienced a compelling encounter with the Holy Spirit, they come to Scripture and interpret it in the light of that experience, instead of interpreting the experience in the light of Scripture. This, no doubt, explains why the Acts of the Apostles is lifted above

110Donald Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.).
114Ibid. 7, 25.
116Ervin, These are not Drunken.
117Rea, Laymen’s Commentary.
122George T. Montague, The Spirit and his Gifts (New York: Paulist, 1974) 14-17, appears to equate the baptism with infant baptism. Others view it as a separate event.
Third Wave theologians also believe all of the gifts are intended for today but differ from non-Pentecostals. Writers such as Wagner, McGee, Wimber, Fee, and Grudem reject the concept of subsequence and teach that each person is Spirit baptized at their salvation and at the same time each is given one or more gifts. Stress is placed upon all the gifts, including tongues. Usually the gifts are carefully listed and loosely defined. The position is supported by an ever widening number of evangelicals. Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wavers all, relying heavily on experience, arrive at the conclusion that miraculous gifts exist today.

Temporary and permanent gifts

This position asks, What is the purpose of the gifts? Some are seen as having a temporary purpose and others a lasting one. Many have held this view in one fashion or another, including Lactantius, Calvin, Owen, Warfield, and Thomas. Despite the fact that the view is widely held, proponents disagree about what is temporary and what is permanent. Tension surrounds a lack of biblical criteria for separating the two kinds of gifts. Many

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124 C. Peter Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 68.
129 Cf. Wagner, Frontiers in Missionary Strategy 68.
132 Owen, “Discourse on Spiritual Gifts” 486, 493.
133 Warfield, Miracles: Yesterday and Today 4.
134 Walvoord, “Contemporary Issues” 316.
135 Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts.
assume that because the two kinds appear in the same lists, they are inseparable. As pointed out earlier in this study, the words used to designate spiritual gifts fail to stipulate which are miraculous, non-miraculous, or supernatural. Furthermore, the appearance of various gifts in a common list does not dictate that they all have the same purpose or reflect the same amount of divine empowerment.

The Temporary Gifts

Those gifts viewed as temporary include all gifts existing in the first century but whose nature and purpose indicate they do not exist today.

Descriptions

Many descriptions of these gifts are far too dogmatic and more precise than is warranted by the biblical record. The identity of some gifts is clear enough to observe their temporary nature, but doubt and obscurity often clouds their scriptural descriptions. This may be a further indication of the providence of God in communicating to men that these gifts were not intended to last.

Apostles. The word primarily denotes a delegate, envoy, or messenger (cf. John 13:16). It applies chiefly to the select few who held the office of supreme dignity in the early church. They were “apostles of Jesus Christ.” An “apostle of Jesus Christ” is separate from all other gifted persons because of the gift’s foundational character (Eph 2:20). The apostles were unique in several ways. They were ones who had seen the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:22; also Paul in 1 Cor 9:1). They also possessed a divine calling or commission from Christ (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 15ff.). They were heralds of salvation, authorized by Christ to preach (Rom 10:15; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). The nature of their gift made it unrepeatable and untransferrable. Paul knew he was the last apostle (1 Cor 15:8; cf. 3:10). Those men were God’s special gift in founding of the church. No biblical basis exists for diminishing the qualifications and miraculous powers of apostles (2 Cor


137An emphasis well developed by Leon Morris, Spirit of the Living God (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1960) 63-64.

138A. F. Walls, “Apostle,” in The New Bible Dictionary, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 48, notes that “ἀποστέλλω seems frequently to mean ‘to send with a particular purpose’, as distinct form the neutral πέμπω.” “The force of ἀπόστολος is probably ‘one commissioned’—it is implied, by Christ.”

139The doctrine of apostolic authority will be developed in conjunction with the purpose of miraculous gifts.
Prophets. “Prophecy in the New Testament is the same as prophecy in the OT; it is a continuation of the same office and function.”¹⁴⁰ The apostolic age, like many OT times, was an age of revelation. The prophet had a supernatural gift whereby he was able “to reveal to his listeners new truth from God.”¹⁴¹ His function as a spokesman for God included foretelling (prediction) and forthtelling (preaching), in either case on the basis of possessing supernatural knowledge (cf. John 4:19; Eph 3:3-5). In order to claim the gift for today, some writers have identified the gift of prophecy with inspiring and enthusiastic preaching,¹⁴² or congregational prophecy, “based on a ‘revelation’ from the Holy Spirit yet not possessing the authority of God’s own word.”¹⁴³ This is totally out of keeping with all biblical data.

Discernment. The verb form, διακρίνω (diakrinō), means “to separate,” and thus διακρίσις (diakrisis) has come to mean “distinguishing,” or “differentiating.” When used with pneumatikōn it means distinguishing spirits. In 1 Cor 12:10, 14:29, 1 Thess 5:20f., and 1 John 4:1-6, the gift is often closely associated with prophecy. In these passages it relates to hearers in general, indicating its widespread use. Lindsay recognizes this point when he notes God giving on the one hand the Charisma which enabled the speaker to declare what was the message of God, and on the other hand the Charisma in the hearers which enabled them to recognize whether the message was really what it professed to be.¹⁴⁴ Scripture does not support the modern claim that the gift involves a present-day determination of demon possession.¹⁴⁵

Wisdom and Knowledge. Various attempts have been made in an effort

¹⁴¹Ibid., 18. E. J. Young, My Servants the Prophets (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 175. “The prophet labored under the conviction that the words which he was uttering were actually indited of God. Often times the personality of the prophet even recedes completely into the background, and the speaker appears to be God Himself.”
¹⁴³Grudem, Gift of Prophecy 242.
¹⁴⁵See the typically novel idea of Donald Bridge and David Phypers, Spiritual Gifts in the Church, newly revised (Fearn, Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1995) 66-69.
to distinguish and identify σοφία (sophia, “wisdom”) and γνώσις (gnōsis, “knowledge”). Scriptural leaves these terms obscure, making it difficult to define them accurately. Robertson and Plummer wisely conclude that any distinction between the two is precarious: “[T]o the Corinthians, among whom these two gifts were of common occurrence, the difference between σ. and γ. would be clear enough.” Gnōsis is directly linked with the miraculous gift of prophecy in 1 Cor 13:8. Both will be katargeòthēsetai, a term that means “de-energized.” Such a close link with the gift of prophecy leads to the conclusion that gnōsis is revelatory in nature. Its cessation accompanies that of prophecy. The close connection between the terms and their relationship to other revelatory activity indicates an underlying feature of revelation for both, putting them in the miraculous category.

**Faith.** Though the identity of the gift of faith is somewhat uncertain, probably more is in view than saving faith, since the context addresses believers. Paul, as a believer with saving faith, speaks hypothetically of having this gift of faith in 1 Cor 13:2. It is perhaps best to conclude with Hill that the inclusion of πίστις (pistis, “faith”) in the list of the Spirit’s gifts probably means that the word is to be understood as “trust” in the miraculous power of God to perform signs through human agents, rather than as the personal relationship of faith in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2).

Paul equates this faith with the seemingly miraculous activity of moving mountains in 13:2, a feat mentioned by Christ on two occasions (Matt 17:20; Mark 11:22-24). Such faith appears to be miraculous because of its close link with other miraculous gifts in 1 Cor 13:2.

**Miracles and Healings.** Included here is a wide range of miraculous activity. This is the very word used in 2 Cor 12:12 and Heb 2:4a in the description...
of authentication signs wrought by the apostles. Δύναμις (Dynamis, “Power”; plural, “Miracles”) occurs 120 times in the NT and is almost always with reference to the miracles. A survey of the Gospels and book of Acts reveals many different types of miracles including various kinds of activity. Closely associated with miracles in general is ἱάμα (iama, “healing”). Though this word occurs only in 1 Corinthians 12, the verb ἱαομαι (iaomai, “I heal”) is used often in the Gospels to speak of healings or cures.

**Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues.** The nature of tongues is a study in itself. Some hold that tongues are bonafide foreign languages. Others, however, understand tongues as ecstatic utterances. Numerous mediating positions are held such as that of Best, who suggests the Corinthians spoke in a “heavenly tongue.”

A question of greater importance to this survey is the miraculous element in tongues. Assuming that tongues are understood as foreign languages, God is working a miracle each time they occur. The gift of interpretation is closely related to that of tongues as seen in 1 Corinthians 14. Paul uses the word διερμηνεύω (diernënewo), which can mean “translate” (Acts 9:36) or “interpret” (Luke 24:27). Those viewing tongues as foreign languages see God working a miracle in translation on each occasion. As to the cessation of tongues, Scripture makes it clear that tongues will stop (παύω [pauo, “I cause to cease”] in 1 Cor 13:8). History makes it quite clear that tongues have ceased. The chaos of the modern tongues movement and the arbitrary, and often lacking, element of interpretation support this position as well.

**Purpose**

In spite of occasional obscurity in defining temporary gifts, it is clear that supernatural and divine empowerment characterized each of these gifts. Their purpose must now be addressed. The whole question of miraculous gifts revolves first around Christ, then the apostles, and then the NT church.

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154 Ibid., 83-84. See the development of the future middle indicative, παῦωνται, as it relates to tongues.

Christ. The coming of Christ to earth is truly unique in history: God in the person of His Son dwelled with mankind (cf. Matt 1:23). Christ had numerous opportunities to communicate special revelation to men (Heb 1:2) or to authenticate it with signs and wonders (cf. John 1:30-31). Miraculous activity characterized His ministry in a way never known before. He used miraculous powers extensively in the fulfillment of His Messianic office. This greatest epoch of miracle-working was faintly preceded by other epochs in which God gave revelation and accompanied it by authentication. The periods of Moses[156] and Elijah and Elisha exemplified this as well. At other times in the theocratic kingdom, God authenticated His prophets and their messages with miracles (e.g., the early chapters of Daniel).[157] Thus in the coming of Christ to earth, God gave to man the highest level of revelation and authenticating miracles yet known.[158]

The Apostles. Previous discussion has outlined distinct foundational characteristics and qualifications of apostleship. As evidenced in Matt 10:1-4, Christ officially commissioned these men, authorizing them to act in His place (cf. Matt 10:40, “he who receives you receives me”). Such a person in Rabbinic tradition, as a general rule “owed the duties of a slave.”[159] In becoming apostles of Jesus Christ, these men became the representatives or agents of Christ. An apostle “represents in his own person the person and rights of the other.”[160]

To these representatives Christ gave power, an authority predicted by Christ in Mark 16:15-18 (also John 14:26; 16:13). The apostles were to speak (Mark 16:17), and were given assurance that authenticating signs (σημεῖα, sêmeia) would accompany them. For this power the apostles waited in Acts 1:13 and then received at the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.[161]

In Rom 15:18-19 Paul speaks of this apostolic authority in his preaching, which was accompanied by en dynamei sêmeiôn kai teraïôn, en dynamei pneumatos (“in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit”). Even more clear

[158]Σημεῖον (“sign, mark, token”) is used 48 times in the Gospels; τέρης (something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, hence “wonder”), is used 3 times, and δύναμις (“power” of supernatural origin, “miracle”) 38 times in the Gospels.
[161]Smith, Tongues 67, notes four indications that only the apostles did miraculous deeds at Pentecost. In 2:7 the speakers were all Gallicans; in 2:14 Peter stood “with the eleven”; in 2:37 after the message, those whose hearts were pricked spoke to Peter and “to the rest of the apostles”; and in 2:43 it is stated that “many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”
is 2 Cor 12:12 where Paul states, “The signs [σημεία] of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles [σημείοις τέκαὶ τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν].” On this passage Hodge wisely comments, “The signs of an apostle were the insignia of the apostleship; those things which by divine appointment were made the evidence of a mission from God.”

A most emphatic statement occurs in Hebrews 2:3 where the words of Christ (“so great salvation”) were delivered to the readers of Hebrews by those who heard them (i.e., the apostles). In verse 4 God is said to have confirmed their witness with signs, wonders, miracles, and distributions (merismoi) of the Spirit. In each of these passages spiritual gifts (e.g., apostles, prophets) are used to communicate revelation, and spiritual gifts are given to authenticate this revelation (signs, miracles).

A careful study of the apostles reveals their function as agents for Christ. They alone had received the responsibility of communicating revelation and they alone could expect authenticating miraculous gifts and lay hands upon others.

The NT Church. In the historical context outlined above, Paul writes to the Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts. This church obviously had members with authenticating gifts (1 Cor 1:7). As Paul lists examples of gifts, he includes miraculous and nonmiraculous. He then stresses to the Corinthians that the authenticating gift of tongues does not edify (14:4), but prophecy does edify the body and should be emphasized. This emphasis on edification is also the thrust of Eph 4:12 where apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers are said to be given for building up the body. The purpose of the miraculous gifts was to communicate revelation and authenticate that revelation. Such gifts edified directly (in the case of revelation) or indirectly (e.g., in the case of tongues). Lightner’s suggestion seems to be helpful when he notes the purpose of gifts is edification with subordinate purposes for some gifts.

Duration

It is not difficult to see the duration of miraculous gifts in light of the above discussion. Their purpose limits such gifts to the apostolic age. As Warfield has so well stated,


163 J. Lanier Burns, “A Reemphasis on the Purpose of the Sign Gifts,” Bibliotheca Sacra 132 (1975) 247-48, argues that γὰρ οὕτως in 1:7 refers to spiritual gifts because ὥστε in 1:7 is closely linked to ἐβεβαιώθη, indicating their need for confirmation of truth, which need resulted in sign gifts.

164 Robert Lightner, Speaking in Tongues and Divine Healing (Des Plains, Ill.: Regular Baptist, 1955) 13. Note also that even those who hold tongues to be foreign languages should see their purpose as authenticating (cf. Gundry, “‘Ecstatic Utterance’ (N.E.B.)?” 303-4.
Miracles do not appear on the page of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purposes. Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle working had passed by also, as a mere matter of course.\textsuperscript{165}

To insist that miraculous gifts continue is to say that apostles exist today. One cannot claim the signs of an apostle without the office as well.

Another strong indication of the duration of miraculous gifts may be seen in Paul’s direct statements in 1 Cor 13:8-12. Another article in this issue of The Master’s Seminary Journal will deal extensively with that passage.

\textbf{The Permanent Gifts}

The above examination of the miraculous gifts makes it possible to understand more clearly the gifts involving divine enablement.

\textbf{Description}

More doubt prevails over the exact nature of the non-miraculous gifts than was true with the miraculous ones. The non-miraculous gifts appear to be representative, as were those in the previous list. Some of the titles depict ministries while others speak of effects. It is quite certain that, for the most part, the terms represent broad areas that are not intended to be closely defined. The following descriptions contrast with the diverse and arbitrary descriptions in the gift literature.\textsuperscript{166}

\textbf{Evangelist.} The word εὐαγγέλιστης (\textit{euangelistēs}, “evangelist”) occurs three times in the NT (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5). Probably, however, more evangelists were serving than Scripture mentions.\textsuperscript{167}

The activity of evangelism is widespread in the NT (2 Cor 8:18; Phil 1:15-18; 4:3; Col 4:11). Scripture gives several instances of those with other gifts who engaged in evangelism. These include the evangelistic activity of Paul as an apostle (Rom 1:9, 16:25; 1 Cor 15:3, 4; 2 Tim 2:8) and Philip’s evangelistic activity as a servant (cf. Acts 6:5, 6 with Acts 8:5; 21:8). Another illustration comes from Paul’s exhortation to Timothy. He instructs Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5, note the absence of the definite article). This instruction from Paul probably

\textsuperscript{165}Warfield, \textit{Miracles, Today and Yesterday} 25-26.


\textsuperscript{167}Gerhard Friedrich, “εὐαγγέλιστης,” \textit{TDNT} 2:737.
indicates that Timothy did not have the “gift” of evangelism.\textsuperscript{168}

In light of this pattern of close association of the work of an evangelist with other gifts such as apostleship, it is better to see \textit{evangelistēs} as denoting a function rather than an office.\textsuperscript{169}

**Pastors and Teachers.** As it occurs in Eph 4:11, the phrase τούς δὲ ποιμείνας καὶ διδάσκαλος (\textit{tous de poimeinas kai didaskalous}, “and some pastors and teachers) seems to depict a single gift. The τούς δὲ (\textit{tous de}, “and some”) combines ποιμήν (\textit{pomēn}, “pastor”) and διδάσκαλος (\textit{didaskalos}, “teacher”) as one gift for several reasons. First, the absence of the disjunctive \textit{tous de} between the titles indicates this. Secondly, other passages link the function of pastoring with teaching, as in 1 Tim 5:17 (\textit{πρεσβύτερος—διδάσκαλος, “elder—teacher”) and Tit 1:9. A third indication of this is the natural combination formed by the terms: “the teaching of God’s truth is basic to all pastoral care.”\textsuperscript{170}

Such a gift is very important and far ranging. It is a lifetime pursuit, and for some who are willing to work hard, a position of double honor (1 Tim 5:17). The \textit{didaskaloi} are those who “edify the congregation by means of their own clearer understanding.”\textsuperscript{171} They have the Spirit’s guidance apart from revelation. That a definite type of teaching gift is valid today may be seen in a number of later-NT passages (1 Tim 5:11; 2 Tim 2:2, Heb 5:12).

**Gifts of Assistance.** The words \textit{antilēmpsis} (“helps,” 1 Cor 12:28), and \textit{diakonia} (“service,” Rom 12:7) are close in meaning. As to \textit{diakonia}, etymology suggests that simply “service” or “ministry” is in view, allowing context to determine meaning. \textit{Diakonia} is used of spiritual ministry (Acts 1:25, 6:4), physical ministry (Acts 6:1), hospitality (1 Cor 16:15), giving (2 Cor 8:4), and a general preaching and teaching ministry (Acts 20:24). As a spiritual gift, \textit{diakonia} is best regarded as including a wide range of loving service. \textit{Antilēmpsis} is a NT hapax legomenon and is probably best rendered “helpful deeds.”\textsuperscript{172} Though many commentators have viewed this help as directed toward the sick (cf. verb \textit{antilambano} in Acts 20:35), it includes other areas of service as well (cf. LXX usage in Pss 22:20; 84:6; 89:19 and

\textsuperscript{168}Homer A. Kent, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1982) 286. The χέρισμα “in you” (ἐν σοί, 2 Tim 1:6) was hardly an office.

\textsuperscript{169}“Friedrich, \textit{Eφεσος}, 737.

\textsuperscript{170}Homer A. Kent, Jr., \textit{Ephesians, The Glory of the Church} (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 72.

\textsuperscript{171}“Rengstorff, \textit{Ödön, TDNT} 2:158.

\textsuperscript{172}BDAG, 89.
the verb form in Luke 1:54 and 1 Tim 6:2).\textsuperscript{173}

\textbf{Administration.} A similar situation arises with \textit{proîstēmi} (Rom 12:8), and \textit{kybernēsis} (1 Cor 12:28). In classical Greek \textit{proîstēmi} has both the idea of “presiding,” “leading,” and “directing,” and also more precisely, “to protect,” “to care for,” “to help,” “to further.”\textsuperscript{174} NT usage brings out this latter concept consistently (cf. 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17). Thus, in whatever area the gift is employed, it involves both presiding and caring.

\textit{Kybernēsis} is another NT hapax legomenon, having the meaning of “administration,” along with management, guidance, and directing.

\textbf{Exhortation.} This word is used in three major ways\textsuperscript{175} including “encouragement, exhortation” (1 Thess 2:3), “appeal, request” (2 Cor 8:4), and “comfort, consolation” (2 Cor 1:4-7). Of these, the second sense of “request” or “beg earnestly” is not likely in view as a gift.\textsuperscript{176} That leaves the ideas of “comfort” and “encouragement.” Further study of various uses points to a wide range of godly activity.

\textbf{Giving.} Romans 12:8 lists \textit{metadidōmi}, a verb coming from \textit{meta} (“with”) and \textit{diōmi} (“giving, sharing”), and having the meaning of “give (a part of)” or “share.” In its four other NT occurrences \textit{metadidōmi} clearly has this idea of “sharing” or “imparting.” Luke 3:11 speaks of sharing a coat, Rom 1:11 of imparting a spiritual gift, Eph 4:28 of the sharing of money, and 1 Thess 2:8 of sharing the gospel and one’s own soul. This gift of giving or sharing could well be then in the realm of physical giving (e.g., 1 Cor 13:3, giving to the poor) or the giving of one’s self (e.g., 1 Thess 2:8). Any one of these areas should be characterized by \textit{ἀλογίς} (“sincerity, simplicity,” Rom 12:8).\textsuperscript{177} The gift is sufficiently broad to include the

\textsuperscript{173}See F. W. Grosheide, \textit{Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 299.

\textsuperscript{174}Bo Reicke, “\textit{BD@ÄJ0:4},” \textit{TDNT} 4:700-701.

\textsuperscript{175}BDAG, 766.

\textsuperscript{176}Otto Schmitz, “\textit{B'D"6XT},” \textit{TDNT}, vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 794, affirms that the request for help denoted by this word proceeds from one in need to one with power. In view of its usage in conjunction with Paul’s request for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh (1 Cor 12:8), one might argue that this gift included prayer.

\textsuperscript{177}R. C. H. Lenski, \textit{The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans} (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1936) 764. “His slogan must ever be in simplicity; which does not mean liberality of anything regarding the size or the value of the gift imparted but refers to the giver’s own motivation: that must be single, not double.”
whole area of Christian giving.

**Showing Mercy.** Ἐλέησις (eleēsīs, “I show mercy”) is listed as a gift in Rom 12:8, having the basic idea of “mercy, compassion, pity.”

Vine explains that ἐλεος (eleos, “mercy”) is “the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” It is “kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.” Such mercy is well illustrated in God’s activity toward men (Luke 1:58) and Christ (Jude 21).

**Purpose**

These gifts are the product of divine enabling and are clearly non-miraculous. From word meaning and usage, it is evident that most of these gifts represent the kind of activity that should characterize all Christians. All of the above include God’s use of the dedicated life and the abilities He has granted. Such activity God calls a “gift” and often grants an office (e.g., pastor-teacher) to accompany the gift.

The non-miraculous gifts have no ability to give new revelation, nor do they authenticate apostolic testimony. Instead the gifts exist for the purpose of the edifying the body of Christ. The verb οἰκοδομέω (oikodomeō), has the basic meaning of “build” and is found in the NT in both a literal (of building a house) and figurative sense. This latter sense is used in 1 Corinthians 12–14 to speak of “the process of the growth and development of the community” of believers.

Various statements in 1 Corinthians 12–14 contribute to this emphasis on edification. In 12:7 the manifestations are for the common good and not individual good (1 Cor 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26). The same emphasis is present in Rom 12:5 where individually gifted members are said to be καθ’ εἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη (kath’ heis allēlōn melē, “members one of another”). Peter also stresses this same idea when he states that each one is to employ his gift in serving another. This theme not

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178BDAG, 315.
180Thayer, *Greek English Lexicon*, 203.
181Notice how the activity involved in a given spiritual gift is elsewhere commanded of all believers in the following instances; Evangelism (Acts 1:8, “you shall be My witnesses”); Pastoring (1 Thess 5:11, “build up one another”); Teaching (Matt 28:19, “teaching them”); Exhortation (Heb 10:25, “encouraging one another”).
183Ibid., 140.
only occurs in all the gift passages, but it appears to be Paul’s guiding principle (1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Cor 10:8, 12:19, 13:10; Rom 14:19, 15:2; Eph 4:12, 16, 29). Saucy gives a good summary of the Biblical idea of edification:

Edification must not be thought of only in terms of morality or emotional uplift. Rather it aims at a fullness of growth in the total life of faith through the ministry of the Word in its various applications of exhortation, encouragement and comfort (1 Th. 5:11; 1 Co. 14:3), and especially in the practice of love (1 Co. 8:1; cf. 12:31–13:3).\(^{144}\)

**Duration**

The duration of permanent gifts is determined by their description. These gifts designate regular activity of Christians. Many of the same functions constitute the emphases of the epistles. Nothing requires an understanding of non-miraculous gifts as some type of mystical enabling above talents dedicated to the Lord. The general nature of the gifts often reflects activity that God has always enabled His own to perform (cf. various OT examples).

The purpose of the building up of the body (cf. Ephesians 4) is vital in this present day. It is an important theme throughout the NT. The fact that God has always sought the edification of the body, whether by miraculous or non-miraculous gifts, indicates that when the miraculous gifts ceased, the others continued.

**Conclusion**

This study attempted to give a working definition of a spiritual gift, based on a careful examination of the biblical data. The writer believes the confusion surrounding spiritual gifts today can best be resolved by limiting the discussion to the biblical text and allowing the Scriptures to speak without propping up an experience with truth. A study of the gifts identified in Scripture reveals two kinds of gifts, both coming from the same source but each having a different purpose and duration within the edification process. Miraculous gifts characterized the apostolic age for the purpose of revelation and authentication. The purpose was to limit these gifts to the period of the apostles and others associated with them. Attempts to bring such gifts back, supported by experience, must be rejected regardless of one’s theological frame of reference. The conclusion, then, is to understand that in apostolic times God gave some temporary, miraculous gifts for authentication and others for revelation and edification. In addition, He gave certain non-miraculous gifts for edification. In addition, He gave certain non-miraculous, permanent gifts for the edification of the body.

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\(^{144}\)Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* 176.
CESSATIONISM IN 1 COR 13:8-12

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Looking at the setting of 1 Corinthians 13 first in 1 Corinthians as a whole and then in the setting of 1 Corinthians 12–14 is the beginning of an investigation of cessationism in 1 Cor 13:8-12. Next comes a study of 1 Cor 13:8-11 in the context of 1 Corinthians 13. The following step is an investigation of the terms used in 1 Cor 13:8-11, including prophecies, knowledge, and tongues. At that point the study addresses the subject of the cessation of gifts spoken of in 1 Cor 13:8-10, followed by attention given to “tongues shall cease.” The time of the cessation of the gifts in 1 Cor 13:10 is next for consideration, a time that depends heavily on the meaning of teleios in that verse. The term means “mature” in that instance, referring to a maturation that would come to the church. Then comes a tracing of the argument’s progression in 1 Cor 13:8-11. The whole discussion of the gifts’ cessation is part of the emphasis of chapter 13 on the supremacy of love, a factor that should always be in mind in a discussion of cessation. First Cor 13:8-12 intertwines revelation, cessation, and maturation with cessation and maturation coming at a related point in time, but speaking of the cessation of revelatory gifts at the time the church matures.

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THE SETTING OF CHAPTER 13 IN 1 CORINTHIANS

The larger context of the 1 Corinthians as a whole is important to a study of 1 Cor 13:8-12. After Paul’s introduction in 1:1-9, which leads strongly into his initial address, in 1:10-6:20 he mentions matters communicated to him through a personal report. But beginning in chapter 7, he responds to issues addressed to him in a written report,1 introducing the section with the words, “Now concerning the things about which you wrote ...” (7:1). He follows that with “now concerning virgins” in 7:25, “now concerning things sacrificed to idols” in 8:1, “now concerning spiritual gifts” in 12:1, and “now concerning the collection for the saints” in 16:1.

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Other items addressed in the letter such as the role of women and men in worship in 11:2-16 and conduct at the Lord’s Supper in 11:17-34 are not so introduced. The matter under consideration in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is clearly a response to a written inquiry sent to Paul.

Another significant factor in this discussion relates to the argument in the opening chapters. The chapter divisions in the first part of the book are not necessarily helpful. For example, the thought begun in 1:18 runs through to 2:5; and the rest of chapter 2 (2:6-16) may flow into chapter 3, for 3:1-4 flows directly out of 2:6-16 but also provides a transition into 3:5-17. This is independent of the discussion on 13:8-13, but the progression of thought in these early passages is important in determining the meaning of τὸ τέλειον (to teleion, “the mature”) in 13:10.

THE SETTING OF CHAPTER 13 IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12–14

In the immediate context, Paul’s response to the Corinthian inquiry covers 12:1–14:40. Paul’s ending of the chapter with the same verb (ζηλοῦτε, zêloutê, “be zealous, 12:31) that he uses to begin chapter 14 (ζηλοῦτε, zêloutê, “be zealous,” 14:1) is important. Though it could be argued that one of these verbs is indicative and the other imperative, the common form and context dictate otherwise. What is stated in 14:1 is “not a precise repetition” of what is stated in 12:31, but the imperative aspect of as 12:31 carries over. What is especially significant is that the apostle follows a pattern found elsewhere by leaving off his argument in 12:31 and then, after a brief diversion to another very important matter, resuming his discussion in 14:1 with a distinctly different emphasis. Paul clearly lists the gifts in 12:28 in their order of importance, and, in so doing, puts “apostles” first and then “prophets.” Since apostles were limited in number and were not available on a long-term basis in every church, the highest remaining gift was prophecy. Therefore, when he resumes his discussion in 14:1, he does not refer to apostleship but rather to prophecy as the leading gift available to a local body. The subject in both passages is the same.

The place of 1 Corinthians 13 in the overall argument of 12:1–14:40 is also important. Some like Jean Héring may conclude, “It could be argued, therefore, as certain that Chapter 13 did not originally occupy its present place in the Epistle,” but the majority of scholars accept the order found in the present text. A definite continuity in the development of thought prevails as Paul moves from chapter 12 to 13 and then resumes his discussion of gifts in chapter 14.

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2Ibid., 121-22.
3Ibid., 623, 654-55.
**General Observations about Spiritual Gifts**

**The uniqueness of each gift passage and list.** Due to the continuity of thought in this section, many items in chapters 12 and 14 impact an understanding of chapter 13. One of those is the discussion of gifts in chapter 12. First, at least 5 (and arguably 6) separate listings of gifts appear in the NT (1 Cor 12:8-10; 12:28-30; [13:8]; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:11) and two of those lists are in 1 Corinthians 12 (12:8-10; 28-30). It is evident that each list of gifts is unique, even the two in 1 Corinthians 12. The order is unique and some of the gifts appear only once. For example, the gift of wisdom (λόγος σοφίας, logos sophias) occurs only in 1 Cor 12:8 and the gift of “pilotage” (κυβερνήσεις, kubernēseis) only in 1 Cor 12:28. Therefore, when one approaches each list, he must ask some major questions, such as, “Why are these gifts listed here?” and “What is the significance of the presence/absence and the ordering of gifts within the list?” Answers to those have an impact on the meaning of 1 Cor 13:8 since all three mentioned there are also found in the list of 1 Cor 12:8-10. Therefore, a study of the list in 12:8-10 and the ordering of that list will have some bearing on understanding the gifts included in 13:8.

**The nature of spiritual gifts [in 12:8-10].** Two basic observations are helpful before addressing the gifts specifically. First of all, Carson contends that “the lists as a whole contain an impressive mixture of what some might label ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ endowments, or ‘spectacular’ and ‘more ordinary’ gifts.... The intriguing thing is that Paul himself makes no such distinctions: it is the same God who works all things in all men.” That conclusion is without immediate contextual support. In fact, Fee, commenting on the list in 12:8-10, writes,

> What distinguishes this listing is the concretely visible nature of these items, especially of the last seven. These, after all, are not only “gifts”; they are above all manifestations of the Spirit’s presence in their midst, most likely chosen because they are, like tongues itself, extraordinary phenomena. It would scarcely do for Paul at this point to attempt to broaden their perspective by listing less visible items. That will come in time (especially through the analogy of the body and in the lists in vv. 28-30); but for now the emphasis is on the supernatural. Indeed, the truly remarkable feature of this list is the attribution of “each one” of a whole gamut of supernatural activities—in the same matter-of-fact way that contemporary churchmen would list positions on an organizational chart?

A doctor may have great skills in his practice (all of them ultimately God-given in one way or another) and may be able to bring healing to many, but that skill is not the “gift of healing.” The gifts mentioned are—by their very nature—supernaturally and specially bestowed by God on each believer.

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2 Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 591.
The identity of spiritual gifts. In addition, one of the major problems that surfaces in so many of the discussions on gifts—be it from a cessationist or noncessationist point of view—is the attempt to give the gifts mentioned in each of these lists a 21st-century correspondent. This is certainly the source of much debate on such things as prophecy. Poythress, in addressing that specific issue, writes, “I maintain that modern spiritual gifts are analogous to but not identical with the divinely authoritative gifts exercised by the apostles.”7 The likelihood of Poythress’ premise should be weighed in light of defining all the gifts. For example, a seminary graduate remarked, “People have confirmed that I have the gift of discernment.” Now, he may well have “a gift of discernment” but he does not have “the gift of discernment” referred to by Paul in 1 Cor 12:10.8 That was unique to that day and in all likelihood has no connection with any gift a person may have today. By the same token, “the gift of pilotage” referred to only once (12:28) probably did not resemble in Paul’s mind what we think of when we refer to “the gift of administration” today.

Specific Observations on the Gifts in 1 Cor 12:8-10

At this point some basic observations are necessary with reference to the list of gifts in 1 Cor 12:8-10.

The basis for understanding the division of the gifts. Arguably, both cessationists and noncessationists have made much more over the list of gifts in 1 Cor 12:8-10 than Paul intended. Fee addresses this issue when he writes, “To illustrate the thesis of v. 7 Paul proceeds to offer a sizable list of ways in which the Spirit is manifested in the Christian assembly. Because this is the first of several such listings of ‘gifts’ in the Pauline corpus, considerable interest has been generated over this passage in terms of the nature and meaning of the various gifts themselves.”9 But, as he goes on to say, “That lies outside of Paul’s own interest, which is simply to illustrate the diversity of the Spirit’s activities/manifestations in the church.”10

An initial matter of importance is to take each list as given and try to determine the significance of the specific gifts addressed. For example, “Why does Paul chose to refer to the three gifts mentioned in 13:8?” or “What do they have in common?” As to the significance of that grouping of gifts, it is best to look back at the list in 1 Cor 12:8-10. There are many views about the arrangement of the gifts in that list. Fee addresses the issue this way:

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8Carson, Showing the Spirit 40, presents a contrary view.
9Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 590.
10Ibid.
Attempts to classify the several items are numerous and varied. Some have suggested that they reflect a descending order of value, while others have rearranged the items conceptually. A popular grouping is (1) gifts of instruction (wisdom and knowledge); (2) gifts of supernatural power (faith, healings, miracles); and (3) gifts of inspired utterance (prophecy, discerning prophecies, tongues, interpretation of tongues).\footnote{Ibid, pp. 590-91.}

The merit of this view is that it maintains the order of the gifts as given and does not rearrange them. On the other hand, Carson, who also discusses the various attempts to classify this list, writes,

If any such classification is warranted by features in the text itself, it is the one that notes the variation in the Greek terms for “another.” Sometimes Paul maintains a distinction between these two terms ἄλλος (allos, “another”) and ἑτέρος (heteros, “another”)—for example, in Galatians 1:6-7—and sometimes he does not. If the distinction is maintained here, some argue, an intelligible result is achieved: when ἑτέρος (heteros, “another”) appears, a new division in the list is intended.\footnote{Carson, Showing the Spirit 37.} Fee concurs as he writes, “If grouping is legitimate at all, it is most likely to be found in some clues Paul himself has given, by starting the third and eighth items (faith and tongues) with a different word for ‘another.’”\footnote{Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 591.} On the basis of this, Carson, much like Meyer,\footnote{Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians (reprint; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1983) 6:280.} presents the following development of thought:

This issues in the following division: the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge lie in the intellectual arena; faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and distinguishing of spirits are grouped separately, perhaps linked with special faith, the lead item in this division; and tongues and the interpretation of tongues, in a category by itself.\footnote{Carson, Showing the Spirit 37.}

\textbf{The conclusion concerning the division of the gifts.} Meyer (first published by T & T Clark in 1883) makes this observation, “The following nine charismata, enumerated in a preliminary way up to ver. 10 (besides which, others are afterwards mentioned, ver. 28), are divided into three classes, which cannot, however, correspond to the three διαίρεσις (diairesis, “varieties”), vv. 4-6, because there each sentence comprises all charismata.”\footnote{Meyer, Epistles to the Corinthians 6:280.} He then goes on to state, “The external division is distinctly marked by Paul himself in this way, namely, that
he notes the transition to a new category by ἑτέρῳ [heterō, “to another”] (while for subdivision within the classes he uses ἄλλῳ [allō, “another”), thus: (1) ver. 8, by ὁ μὲν [hō men, “to one”]; (2) ver. 9, by ἑτέρῳ δὲ [heterō de, “but to another”]; (3) ver. 10 by ἑτέρῳ δὲ [heterō de, “but to another”].”

In summary, borrowing from Meyer, we would offer the following:

I. Charismata connected with _______ (to be determined later):
   1. λόγος σοφίας (logos sophias, “word of wisdom”).
   2. λόγος γνώσεως (logos gnōseos, “word of knowledge”).

II. Charismata depending upon special energy of faith:
   1. The πίστις (pistis, “faith”) itself.
   2. Its agency in deeds, namely,
      a. ἱάματα (iamata, “healings”)
      b. δυνάμεις (dunameis, “miracles”).
   3. Its agency in words, namely, the προφήτεια (prophēteia, “prophecy”).
   4. Its critical agency, the διάκρισις πνευμ.[άτων] (diakrisis pneum.-[a tôn], “discerning of spirits”).

III. Charismata connected with the γλώσσαι (glossai, “tongues”):
   1. Speaking with tongues.
   2. Interpretation of tongues.

In spite of Paul’s clear demarcation, Carson finds it difficult to accept such a division because, according to him, “there is enough overlap between the first two categories to make the theory less than convincing. Does not prophecy, in the second division, also produce intellectual results (first division)? Is faith more characteristic of distinguishing spirits (second division) than of uttering a word of wisdom (first division)? On balance, it is best to treat the gifts one by one.”

Λόγος σοφίας (logos sophias)—word of wisdom. When anyone fails to accept the division established by Paul or seeks to reorganize the structure to make more sense, to that degree, he is not letting the text drive him. Divisions of this list are pertinent to an understanding of 1 Cor 13:8-13 for several reasons. The first is that failing to accept the order of this list—or any of the lists—as it is and seeking to discern the author’s meaning may cause someone to miss the author’s point. This is especially pertinent when attempting to ascertain why he chose the three gifts in 13:8. The second is accepting the division the text demands shows that he chose a gift from each of the three sections of 12:8-10 to consider in 13:8. It is therefore important to determine—as in the division in 12:8-10—the relationship of those gifts to each other. A third matter has to do with the meaning of the “word of

1Ibid. [emphasis in the original; transliteration and translation added]
1Carson, Showing the Spirit 37.
knowledge” in 12:8 in light of its further use in 13:8.

For example, accepting the fact that the first two gifts mentioned in 12:8 belong to the same category leads to an understanding of the meaning of ἰδίας gnōσις in 12:8 because of its association with ἰδίας sophias, which is found only here in the NT in the context of spiritual gifts. As to the significance of the word ἰδίας sophias, Fee comments,

> With a considerable stroke of inspiration Paul now does two things: (a) He uses one of their own terms to begin his list of ‘manifestations’ in the assembly that demonstrate the great diversity inherent in the one Spirit’s activities; and (b) he reshapes that term in light of the work of the Spirit so as to give it a significantly different content from their own.\(^{19}\)

As to the identity of ἰδίας sophias, Thomas writes,

> The widespread occurrence of “wisdom” in the Word of God is obvious to any Bible reader. The gift so labeled, however, has a more restricted sense because it refers to a specific function of which only a certain group in the body of Christ has been capable. That specialized sense is understandable in light of 1 Corinthians 2:6-13. In this earlier section of the epistle, Paul describes himself in connection with other apostolic and missionary teachers, such as Apollos and Cephas (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6). As divine mouthpieces, they spoke, “God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:7). By mentioning wisdom in connection with “mystery” and what is “hidden,” this passage points clearly to divine revelation received by these early Christian leaders, which they in turn transformed into words for communicating to others of their generation. It is the process of receiving and communicating this special revelation that is discussed in the paragraph through 2:13.\(^{20}\)

Δόγμα γνώσεως (logos gnōσις)—word of knowledge. When it comes to a discussion of the meaning of logos gnōσις, which is found three more times in very significant places in chapters 12–14, Fee comments that it and the “word of wisdom” should “be understood as parallel in some way,” and then concludes, “Most likely, therefore, it is a ‘spiritual utterance’ of some revelatory kind. This is suggested by its place between ‘revelation’ and ‘prophecy’ in 14:6 and by the fact that, along with prophecy and tongues, it will cease at the Eschaton (13:8).”\(^{21}\) He then further states, “How the content of such an utterance makes it gnōσις as distinguished from ‘wisdom’ and ‘revelation’ is perhaps lost to us.”\(^{22}\) Since this and the logos sophias are parallel in some way, they must both be revelatory gifts. On that basis, one could conclude that the division of 12:8-10 be defined as: (1)

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\(^{1}\)Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 591-92.


\(^{21}\)Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 593.

\(^{22}\)Ibid.
revelatory gifts; (2) faith gifts (gifts dependent upon the energy of faith [Although one may not have put prophecy in that category, it was arguably a gift that was dependent upon the energy of faith for the one communicating the revelatory word from God.]) and (3) tongues and interpretive gifts.

It is important to accept the uniqueness of each list of gifts and to try to determine the purpose and nature of the gifts. The ordering of the gifts in 1 Cor 12:28 is clear from its context. The gifts chosen by Peter (1 Pet 4:10-11) have their distinct purpose and are unique. Although there are some parallel statements between Eph 4:11-16 and 1 Cor 13:8-11, the purpose and ordering of the “gifted ones” in Ephesians 4 are unique to that context. The same could be said for the list in Rom 12:6-8. Therein lies one of the problems in attempting to come up with a comprehensive list of all the gifts. Another problem, which was addressed above, is that some (if not many/most) of the gifts were limited to that period in the life of the church and are not similarly reflected in the life of the church today.

**What does this have to do with the three gifts mentioned in 13:8?** Since understanding why Paul lists the gifts he does in each individual context is important, and since in each case the configuration and the order are unique, the same applies to 1 Cor 13:8. Furthermore, the reason an understanding of 1 Cor 12:8-10 is so significant is that in 13:8, a gift from each section of the first delineation in 12:8-10: gnōsis from the first section, prophēteiai from the second section, and głąssai from the third section. Why does Paul refer to these three gifts in that context? What is especially significant about them that sets them apart in his discussion? That will be addressed later. But two things are worth keeping in mind. First, the context in which the gifts are found must determine the conclusion. Second, the gifts are chosen for a determined purpose in that context, and because of that, one does a gross injustice to that context to conclude with Carson, “In other words, the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues (and presumably by extrapolation most other charismatic gifts) will pass away at some point future to Paul’s writing…”23 He is correct in noting that the context speaks of the cessation of these three gifts at some point future to Paul's writing, but he goes beyond the direct statement of the passage when he suggests that one can extrapolate from this context that other gifts will cease as well. Although other gifts may cease, the passage does not mention any gifts beyond those three.

**THE SETTING OF VERSES 8-11 IN 1 CORINTHIANS 13**

The primary purpose of 1 Cor 13:8-13 is not to focus on the cessation of spiritual gifts. On the other hand, though the emphasis is still on giving further proof of the supremacy of love, there is a definite statement on the cessation of certain

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23Carson, *Showing the Spirit* 70.
gifts. In fact, Fee says, “The greater urgency of this present argument ... is with the ‘only-for-the-present’ nature of the gifts, not with the permanence of love—although that is always lingering near the surface. Love is scarcely mentioned (vv. 8a, 13 only); the fact that the gifts will pass away forms the heart of the entire argument (vv. 8-12).” Interpreters may disagree about the time of the cessation, but no one doubts the statement about the cessation.

The Relationship of 13:8-13 to 13:1-7

Understanding the relationship between 13:8-13 and its immediately preceding context in 13:1-7 is absolutely essential. Carson states it quite well:

The connection between this section and what has immediately preceded is entirely natural. In the preceding verse (13:7), Paul concludes by saying that love “always perseveres”; in other words, “Love never fails” (13:8). But the connections are deeper. In the first three verses of this chapter, Paul draws a contrast between love and the χαρίζομαι (charismata, “gifts”). Now in verses 8-13, he picks up the contrast again, but with a new wrinkle. Here the contrast turns on the fact that love is permanent, while the χαρίζομαι (charismata) terminate. That, too, demonstrates love’s intrinsic superiority. Thus the statement love never fails also anticipates verse 13. Unfortunately the powerful thrust of Paul’s argument is sometimes lost under detailed debates as to when the χαρίζομαι (charismata) cease; but those debates can be an impetus to tracing out the thought of the apostle. If we get the issue of cessation straight, we shall grasp the central points of this section.

The concluding statement is quite true, but it leads the present writer to a different conclusion than it does Carson. What is especially significant, however, is that the final words of verse 7 about love always persevering are picked up in verse 8 and open the door for the discussion that follows.

The Relationship of 13:8-11 to 13:12-13

Some matters concerning 13:12-13 are important because of their impact in the minds of many with respect to the argument of 13:8-11, and especially vv. 9-10. One of the conclusions assumed by some, if not most, noncessationists (and some cessationists as well) is that one’s interpretation of v. 12 must determine the meaning of τὸ τέλειον (to teleion, “the mature”) in v. 10. On the other hand, an individual representing a cessationist position finds himself reading his view of v.

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24 Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 642.
10 into v. 12 and thereby arguing against what seems to be the clear meaning of that verse.27

That whatever is stated in vv. 8-10 must somehow relate to what Paul says in v. 12 goes without question. There is little doubt in the minds of most cessationist and noncessatinist commentators that v. 12 refers to some aspect of the παρουσία (parousia, “coming”) or the eschaton. How this thought connects with v. 10 is a matter of question. Does it reiterate in a broader context what has already been discussed, or does it flow from the thought of v. 10 and provide a further discussion of that verse’s meaning? That will be addressed later, but for the present, the major issue is the focus of the author.

A major defining syntactical matter in 13:12 is the repeated ἀρρεν ... τότε (arti ... tote, “now ... then”), which occurs twice in that verse, and around which the argument of that verse revolves. As Thiselton puts it, “The major contrast turns on ἀρρεν, just now, or for the present, and τότε, then (in the temporal rather than the logical sense). The two terms are repeated, each time with the contrastive ἀδ, but. The introductory γάρ, for, signals that Paul uses this imagery to explain what has gone before (in vv. 9-11).”28

To what does the “then” refer? Meyer states that it is the Parousia.29 Or, as Fee puts it, “as it were; at the Eschaton.”30 Carson comments on the statement “face to face” and says that it is “… almost a formula in the Septuagint for a theophany, and therefore almost certainly a reference to the new state brought about by the parousia.”31 Toussaint concludes, “Few would controvert the idea that verse twelve is anticipating the return of Christ for His own.”32 So, as can be seen, little doubt exists that v. 12 refers to being in the Lord’s presence in spite of the argument of some cessationists that this is not so.33

But once again, the thing to keep in mind—and it cannot be emphasized too much—is that the central thought of 1 Corinthians 13 is on the supremacy of love. That is evidenced in this summary: “The chapter falls into three clearly marked parts. (1) The Necessity of possessing Love, 1-3; (2) Its glorious Character, 4-7; (3) Its

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28Thiselton, 1 Corinthians 1067. [italics and boldface in the original]
29Meyer, 1 Corinthians 6:306.
30‘Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 649.
31Carson, Showing the Spirit 71.
eternal Duration, 8-13.” Although vv. 8-13 mention love only twice—the first and last verses—and although the central theme in vv. 8b-12 is the cessation of certain spiritual gifts, the overall point is still on the supremacy of love, since gifts will cease to exist but love will not. That is the clear initial statement in this section (v. 8a), “Love never fails.”

With this foundation, developing the thoughts of vv. 8-12 step by step is next.

THE TERMS USED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-11

After a consideration of the relationship of 13:8-12 to the context of the entire book and more specifically to the closer context of chapters 12–14, a look at the five verses more directly and an analysis of their vocabulary comes next. First of all, definitions of prophecy, tongues and knowledge are necessary.

The Gift of Prophecy

The first gift in 13:8 is “the gift of prophecy.” A discussion of this gift does not require much space at this point since another essay in this issue deals with that, but this quote from Thomas might help put the gift in perspective:

Persons who possessed the gift of prophecy shared with the apostles the responsibility of being channels of direct revelation; they had insight into the “mysteries” of God (1 Cor. 13:2; Eph. 2:20; 3:3, 5) as did the apostles. NT prophets were the vehicles of Divine revelation (1 Cor. 14:29), some of which passed into written form and was included in Scripture (e.g. Luke/Acts, Hebrews). The very words of their prophecies, being based on and inseparable from divine revelation, were inspired and therefore authoritative. This was an indispensable element of revelation. Without direct revelation from God, someone who promoted edification through exhortation and comfort had to base his message on the inspired words of others. This explanation of modern-day preaching is preferable to the view that equates preaching with the gift of prophecy.

Walvoord describes one thus gifted by saying, “His message is individual and personal; it revealed the will of God which otherwise might have been unknown, meeting the need which later was to be filled by the written New Testament.” He then states further, “Mere teaching guided by the Spirit as experienced by many Christians throughout the present dispensation is not evidence of a prophetic gift.

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The prophet, if a true prophet, must necessarily deliver a message free from error, a product not of his own mind, but a revelation from God.”37 Giving an added dimension to this, Hill writes, “A Christian prophet is a Christian who functions within the church, as a divinely called and divinely inspired speaker who receives intelligible and authoritative revelations or messages which he is impelled to deliver publicly, in oral or written form, to Christian individuals and/or the Christian community.”38

The Gift of Knowledge

The third gift which was to pass away is “the gift of knowledge.” For purposes of this essay, “the gift of knowledge” is the second for consideration, leaving “the gift of tongues” until last. The nature of “the gift of knowledge” was addressed above, but a few things should be added here. This is not knowledge itself but rather “the gift of knowledge.” Carson puts it this way, “What passes away, of course, is not knowledge per se, but the charismatic gift of knowledge (for knowledge itself will never pass away; and if it did, no one would know it); not the content of prophecy, but the individual prophesyings….”39 In other words, “In itself γνώσις [gnōsis] may be the result of instruction guided by reason, and it requires no special illumination; but the use of this knowledge, in accordance with the Spirit for the edification of others, is a special gift.”40 Fee writes, “Most likely, therefore, it is a ‘spiritual utterance’ of some revelatory kind. This is suggested by its place between ‘revelation’ and ‘prophecy’ in 14:6 and by the fact that, along with prophecy and tongues, it will cease at the Eschaton (13:8).”41

The cessation of gifts will be examined later, but it can be noted here that this gift will cease. Alford is incorrect in holding that prophecy and tongues will be absolutely superseded, whereas knowledge will only be relatively superseded,42 because the text uses the same verb for the cessation of both prophecy and knowledge.

The Gift of Tongues

Before a discussion of “the gift of tongues,” it would be good to remember that the gift of tongues had a valuable place in God’s economy. One of the most

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37Ibid., 177-78.
39Carson, Showing the Spirit 67-68.
40Robertson and Plummer, 1 Corinthians xix. [transliteration added]
41Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 593.
disturbing factors in the debate about tongues is that it often is portrayed as a bad gift. God deemed it as a good gift, necessary, valuable, and useful for His purpose in the early life of His church. The proper use of the gift did not disturb Paul; the abuse of the gift was of concern to him.

The Nature of the Gift

One of the most significant features about tongues is the nature of the gift. As with the other two gifts cited in v. 8, considerable debate exists today about the identity of this gift. Although a clear understanding of all aspects of this gift is not essential for a conclusion drawn from the passage, it is important to address it to some extent. As suggested earlier, Paul’s discussion of the gifts in 12:8-10 is significant since the gifts in 13:8 are in that list as well, and in fact, are each drawn from separate sections of that list. A case in point is the γένη γλῶσσών (genē glossōn, “kinds of tongues”) of 12:10 and the γλώσσαι (glossai, “tongues”) of 13:8. Paul undoubtedly refers to the same gift in the two places, but the phrase genē glossōn in 12:10 has led to all kinds of conclusions about this gift. A general idea about the use of this word itself will be helpful. This essay will restrict the discussion to the references to glossai leading up to and including 1 Cor 13:8.

The general use of glossa. Although some would base the meaning of glossa in 13:8 on their understanding of its use in 1 Corinthians 12-14, their conclusions often do not correspond to the common use in the NT or the Septuagint. The word glossa occurs 37 times in the NT (only 14 of those in 1 Corinthians) and over 150 times in the LXX. The common use in the NT agrees with the common use of the word elsewhere in literature and refers to the physical organ of the body known as the tongue (Mark 7:33, 35; Jas 3:5, 6), to languages (Rev 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15), and to anything shaped like a tongue (Acts 2:3).43

In the Septuagint, glossa appears almost invariably as the translation of the two Hebrew words: נֹפִי (nophi, “tongue”) and רָעָם (ṣārām, “lip”). The former, which is used most frequently, refers to a language (Neh 13:24), to the tongue as an organ of a man’s body (Josh 10:21; Judg 7:5, 6), to the tongue of an animal (Exod 11:7), to a (tongue-shaped) wedge of gold (Josh 7:21), to a (tongue-shaped) bay of the sea (Josh 15:2, 5; Isa 11:15), and to a tongue of fire or devouring (Isa 5:24).44 The latter word, ῥῆψι, has the basic meaning of “lip,” “speech,” and “edge”: lip as a human organ of speech (Isa 29:13), speech as a language (Gen 11:7), edge as of a sea shore (Gen 22:17) or of the bank of a river (Gen 41:3, 17).45 Neither of these


Hebrew words refers to ecstatic utterances. In fact, it could be summarily stated from the use of this noun in other places in Scripture and even outside of Scripture in NT times that no valid proof exists for its use as an ecstatic utterance.

The use of *glōssa* in Acts. The main word translated “tongue” is *glōssa*, from which the term “glossolalia” is derived (Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Corinthians 12–14), but a synonymous word not used as often is διάλεκτος (“language”). Since *glōssa* and *dialectos* are used in connection with the gift in Acts, an examination of the two words and their relationship to the gift is necessary. The term *dialectos* (found in Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 26:14) defines “the tongue or language peculiar to any people” or to a nation or region. It is so used by Aristotle (fr. Polyt. Aristotle prob. 10, 38: 895a: τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μία φωνή ἄλλα διαλεκτοὶ πολλάί [τοιο ἀνθρώπου μία πόθεν ἄλλο διαλεκτοὶ πολλαί, “one voice of man but many languages”]). Polhill, commenting on the use of *dialectos* in vv. 6-8, states, “It can only refer to a known language or dialect.” Marshall takes that a step further as he writes, “Verses 6, 8 and 11 show that human languages are meant.” It should be noted that vv. 6 and 8 use the word *dialectos* while v. 11 contains the word *glōssa*. Thomas writes, “It cannot be doubted that the word has the same meaning here (2:6, 8), being a reference to the language and dialects spoken by the persons listed in verses nine through eleven.” He further comments, “That was the nature of the gift exemplified in Acts 2, where the ‘tongues’ of verse 4 and 11 were one and the same phenomenon as the ‘language’ in verses 6 and 8.”

Although that is quite clear, Polhill comments, “The word ‘tongue’ may be ambiguous in v. 4,” and then concludes, “Luke uses the expression ‘to speak in other [heteros, ‘different’] tongues [languages]’ in v. 4, thus making a distinction from tongue-speaking (which he did know and referred to in 10:46).” The problem with that conclusion is that there is nothing linguistically or contextually that demands a distinction between what is found in Acts 2 and what is referred to in Acts 10:46.

Those who, like Dunn, suggest that the miracle was in the hearing, not the

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48Ibid.
52Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* 36.
speaking.\textsuperscript{54} must take into account that the speakers—not the hearers—were those on whom the Spirit came, or as Polhill puts it, “Indeed, if the miracle was in the crowd’s hearing rather than in the believers’ speaking, one wonders why it was even necessary for Luke to tell of the Spirit’s coming so powerfully upon them.”\textsuperscript{55}

But in the main, what is especially challenging is that while some readily admit that the basic meaning of\textit{ g\textipa{1}ss\textipa{2}a} refers to the tongue as an organ of the body and also to other things shaped as a tongue and to languages,\textsuperscript{56} they also suggest that it refers to the gift of men who, rapt in an ecstasy and no longer quite masters of their own reasons and consciousness, pour forth their glowing spiritual emotions in strange utterances, ragged, dark, disconnected, quite unfitted to instruct or to influence the minds of others.\textsuperscript{57} Behm states, “The peculiar phenomenon of \textit{lalein (\textipa{1}v)} γλώσσα (\textit{gl\textipa{2}ss\textipa{2}as}) ['‘to speak in a tongue (tongues)'] (1 C. 12–14; Acts 10:46; 19:6), with which we should link the \textit{lalein γλώσσας καιναίς ['‘to speak with new tongues']} of Mark 16:17 and the \textit{lalein \textit{ēp\textipa{1}rαίς γλώσσας} ['‘to speak with other tongues']} of Acts 2:4, may be understood only in the light of the vivid depiction in 1 C. 14:2ff.\textsuperscript{58} But, Thayer remarks that \textit{lalein \textit{ēp\textipa{1}rαίς γλώσσας} (\textit{lalein heterais g\textipa{1}ss\textipa{2}ais}, “to speak with other tongues”) means “to speak with other than their native i.e. in foreign languages, Acts 2:4 cf. 6-11” and that \textit{lalein γλώσσας καιναίς (g\textipa{1}ssais \textit{lalein kainais}, “to speak with new tongues”) means “to speak with new tongues which the speaker has not learned previously, Mark 16:17.”\textsuperscript{59}

**The “kinds of tongues” (γεν\textit{ē}ν γλώσσ\textit{ω}σ\textit{ω}ν, \textit{genē g\textipa{1}ssōn}) in 1 Cor 12:10.** If the\textit{ g\textipa{1}ss\textipa{2}ai} of 13:8 is the same as the\textit{ genē g\textipa{1}ssōn} of 12:10, the use and meaning of\textit{ genē g\textipa{1}ssōn} is an important consideration. Thiselton has an extensive contextually driven discussions on the “kinds of tongues.”\textsuperscript{60} Much of his discussion draws from the emphasis he sees in\textit{ genē g\textipa{1}ssōn}. In commenting on “kinds of tongues” and the corresponding “interpretation of tongues,” he writes, “These two gifts of the Spirit must be considered together, since our exegesis and understanding of each relates to our interpretation of the other. Our starting point must be to take γεν\textit{ē}ν, \textit{kinds}, \textit{sorts}, \textit{species}, with full seriousness.”\textsuperscript{61} After a brief discussion, he concludes, “Too much literature seeks to identify\textit{ glossolalia} as ‘one thing’ when

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{54}James D. G. Dunn, \textit{Jesus and the Spirit} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 151-52.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{55}Polhill, \textit{Acts} 100.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56}Liddell, Scott, \textit{Greek-English Lexicon} 312.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{57}Thayer, \textit{Greek-English Lexicon} 118.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{58}Johannes Behm, "\textit{λλα\textipa{1}ε\textipa{2}ιν} (\textipa{1}v) γλώσσα (γλώσσ\textipa{2}ας) ['‘to speak in a tongue (tongues)’'], TDNT 1:772.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{59}Thayer, \textit{Greek-English Lexicon} 118. [transliteration and translation added]}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{60}Thiselton, \textit{1 Corinthians} 970-88.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{61}Ibid., 970. [emphasis in original]}

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The “kinds of tongues” (γεν\textit{ē}ν γλώσσ\textit{ω}σ\textit{ω}ν, \textit{genē g\textipa{1}ssōn}) in 1 Cor 12:10. If the \textit{g\textipa{1}ss\textipa{2}ai} of 13:8 is the same as the \textit{genē g\textipa{1}ssōn} of 12:10, the use and meaning of \textit{genē g\textipa{1}ssōn} is an important consideration. Thiselton has an extensive contextually driven discussions on the “kinds of tongues.”\textsuperscript{60} Much of his discussion draws from the emphasis he sees in \textit{genē g\textipa{1}ssōn}. In commenting on “kinds of tongues” and the corresponding “interpretation of tongues,” he writes, “These two gifts of the Spirit must be considered together, since our exegesis and understanding of each relates to our interpretation of the other. Our starting point must be to take γεν\textit{ē}ν, \textit{kinds}, \textit{sorts}, \textit{species}, with full seriousness.”\textsuperscript{61} After a brief discussion, he concludes, “Too much literature seeks to identify glossolalia as ‘one thing’ when
Paul specifically takes pains to refer to different species.\textsuperscript{62}

Thiselton continues his discussion of various views on tongues with the comment, “On exegetical and largely contextual grounds the following approaches may be distinguished, and are not mutually exclusive in every case (although they are in some cases).”\textsuperscript{63} He comments on the following views: (1) “Tongues as Angelic Speech”; (2) “Tongues as the Miraculous Power to Speak Other Languages”; (3) “Tongues as Liturgical, Archaic, or Rhythmic Phrases”; (4) “Tongues as ‘Ecstatic’ Speech”; (5) “Proposed Modification from Theissen: Conscious, Unconscious, and a Release (Cf. Rom 8:26)”; (6) “Tongues as Language of the Unconscious Released in ‘Sighs Too Deep for Words’ (from the Depths of the Heart).”\textsuperscript{64} After a lengthy discussion, he refers to Theissen’s Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology and draws this conclusion, “Theissen convincingly concludes that ‘glossolalia is language of the unconscious—language capable of consciousness.’”\textsuperscript{65} On this basis, he concludes with this statement: “Tongues may then be viewed as ‘the language of the unconscious’ because it is unintelligible (unless it is ‘interpreted’) not only to others but also to the speaker.”\textsuperscript{66}

One has to appreciate all Thiselton’s work, but it is difficult to see how he can draw that much from the term genē glossōn, when in fact 1 Corinthians 14 (the same broad context of 12–14), from which he draws a great deal of support for his conclusions, has a corresponding use of genē in the phrase γένεις φωνῶν (genē phonōn, 14:10). Paul states, “There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages (genē phonōn) in the world, and no [kind] is without meaning” (NASB [italics in the original; boldface and transliteration added]). Most think that genē phonōn refers to actual languages. Even Thiselton introduces his discussion of 14:10 with this statement: “Paul now reaches his fourth example, drawn from the communication barrier which exists where, even when an intelligible language is used, if the speaker’s and addressee’s languages are not known to each other, each will effectively remain an alien.”\textsuperscript{67}

Beyond that, in spite of all his rhetoric on genē glossōn, Thiselton has little to say concerning genē phonōn and its relationship to genē glossōn except for this comment: “A long tradition of modern commentators from Meyer to Conzelmann, Fee, and Wolff suggest that Paul uses γένεις φωνῶν (genē phonōn) rather than γλώσσων (glossōn) to denote foreign languages, in order to avoid confusion with

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\textsuperscript{62}Ibid. [emphasis in original]

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., 972.

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 972-86.

\textsuperscript{65}Ibid., 988.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 1105. [emphasis in the original]
the ‘tongues’ of glossolalia.” But is there not another way to address the fact that (1) he uses the same word—genē—in both contexts to describe the nouns—phōnē and glossān—and that (2) he uses two synonymous words—phōnē and glossān—that have a commonality of meaning outside of 1 Corinthians 12–14 in referring to spoken languages? In keeping with the normal use of all the words involved and the related context (1 Corinthians 12–14), might it not rather be, as Thomas suggests, that “[d]ifferent tongues [or languages]’ (1 Cor 12:10) differs from the expression ‘different languages’ (1 Cor 14:10) in that the former were the result of supernatural enablement, while the latter came about through natural processes of learning”\(^6\)

**“The tongues of angels” (ταίς γλώσσαις ... τῶν ἀγγέλων, tais glossais ... tôn aggelôn) in 1 Cor 13:1.** In a discussion of glossān in 12:10 and glossai in 13:8, a last item to deal with is the relationship of 13:8 to the context of 1 Cor 13:1ff.

A major problem with much of this discussion is that glossā occurs only 14 times in 1 Corinthians as compared to 37 times elsewhere in the NT and over 150 times in the Septuagint. Some, like Behm, have traced the development and use of glossa and concluded that it means (1) a part of the body, (2) something tongue-shaped [as a piece of land] and (3) a language. They then seemingly disregard their own research and settle on a different meaning in 1 Corinthians 12–14. In so doing, Behm draws conclusions that do not do justice to the context. For example, he concludes from Paul’s statement in 13:1, “Some are tongues of men and others of angels.”\(^7\) In fact, he adds,

> It is used as a “technical expression for a peculiar language,” namely, the “language of the Spirit,” a miraculous language which is used in heaven between God and the angels (1 C. 13:1) and to which man may attain in prayer as he is seized by the Spirit and caught up into heaven (2 C. 12:2ff; cf. 1 C. 14:2, 13ff; Acts 10:46; 2:11). The heavenly origin of the phenomenon is certainly given strong emphasis in Acts 2:2ff.\(^8\)

Behm is not alone. Marshall writes, “Most commentators think that the gift of tongues described in 1 Corinthians 12, 14 was the ability to speak in non-human languages (the tongues ‘of angels’, 1 Cor 13:1).”\(^9\) Thiselton goes so far as to state, “There can be no doubt whatever that whereas prophecy denotes primarily speech-acts from God to the community or to individuals within the assembled church,

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\(^6\)Ibid. [transliteration added]

\(^7\)Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* 37.

\(^8\)Behm, “γλῶσσα,” 722

\(^9\)Ibid.

tongues are addressed from believers to God (14:2: to God, not to human persons), as against prophecy ‘to humans persons’ (14:3).”

Such conclusions do not reflect what Paul says in 13:1. As one has noted, “The condition (ἐὰν λαλῶ) is of the third class, a suppositional case,” or as another states, “ἐὰν λαλῶ supposes a case which never has been exemplified: ‘even if I can speak,’ or as E.V. ‘though I speak,’.” As Meyer puts it, “It supposes something, the actual existence of which is left dependent on circumstances: assuming it to be the case, that I speak, etc.….”

He then writes:

The meaning is: Supposing that I am a speaker with tongues, from whom all possible kinds of articulate tongues might be heard, not simply those of men, but also—far more wonderful and exalted still—those of the angels. Paul thus describes the loftiest of all conceivable cases of glossolalia. The tongues of angels here spoken are certainly only an abstract conception.…

Another factor that has influenced the understanding of γлагολα in chapter 13 is the introduction of the italicized word “unknown” before the word “tongue” in several instances in 1 Corinthians (e.g., KJV). The italics show its omission in the original text, and its insertion is unfortunate, for the same word is translated elsewhere simply by “tongue.” Walvoord adds a conclusion when he states,

The use of identical terms in reference to speaking with tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians leaves no foundation for a distinction. In all passages, the same vocabulary is used: ἐλέλα and γлагολα, in various grammatical constructions. On the basis of this Greek and the statement of the text no distinction is found.

The Content of the Message

Much attention in the discussion of tongues revolves around the nature of the gift. Unfortunately, very little attention is given to the content communicated by that gift. If gifts were given “for the common good,” and they were (12:7), and if no “common good” resulted from a message in tongues without interpretation as chapter 14 clearly argues, the content is important. Since benefit “for the common good” could result when “tongues” were interpreted—as Paul indicates in the words “… greater is the one who prophecies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he

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73Thiselton, 1 Corinthians 970. [emphasis added]
75Alford, Greek Testament II, 585.
76Meyer, 1 Corinthians 6:300-301.
77Ibid., 301. [emphasis in the original]
78Walvoord, The Holy Spirit 183.
interprets, so that the church may receive edifying” (14:5)—a gross injustice is done if the only focus is on the “nature” of the gift without due emphasis upon its purpose if properly used.

In addition, here as in all other lists, Paul has a distinct purpose for using these three gifts. What is it? “A popular grouping is (1) gifts of instruction (wisdom and knowledge); (2) gifts of supernatural power (faith, healings, miracles); and (3) gifts of inspired utterance (prophecy, discerning prophecies, tongues, interpretation of tongues).” Although that division does not reflect what Paul had in mind, much can be learned from it. A relationship does exist between tongues and prophecy; both are “gifts of inspired utterance.” Fee offers a related helpful point in his comment on “the gift of knowledge”: “Most likely, therefore, it is a ‘spiritual utterance’ of some revelatory kind. This is suggested by its place between ‘revelation’ and ‘prophecy’ in 14:6 and by the fact that, along with prophecy and tongues, it will cease at the Eschaton (13:8).”

Since tongues appears here between two other arguably revelatory gifts, since interpreted tongues brought the body of Christ an edifying word from God, and since 13:8-12 focuses to a great degree upon God’s revelation to His church, Paul here groups these three gifts because they are all to some degree revelatory in content. Carson suggests that maybe the distinction here is that tongues, as distinct from prophecy and knowledge, is not included in what one might term “inscripturated revelation—though Carson’s overall concept in these words differs. Might not the inclusion of all three in one group and the exclusion of tongues in the discussion in v. 9 in addition to the exclusion of tongues in the list of gifts that are “rendered inoperative,” result from such a distinction?

What is very clear is that Paul here addresses only three revelatory gifts not “presumably by extrapolation most other charismatic gifts,” as Carson suggests. As the context shows in each of the verses in 9-12, his emphasis is on God’s revelation of Himself and His truth. It is also worth noting that only knowledge and prophecy carry over from v. 8 to vv. 9-10 since they reflect—in a way distinct from tongues—inscripturated revelation and as such become the center of the argument being developed in vv. 9-10.

The Cessation of Gifts in 1 Cor 13:8-10

Another very significant matter in 13:8-12 is the cessation of the three gifts of v. 8. In fact, the reference to the cessation of gifts and more particularly the verb παύσονται (pausontai, “they will cease”) sandwiched between two uses of

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79 Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians 590-91.
80 Ibid., 593.
81 Carson, Showing the Spirit 72.
82 Ibid.
καταργέω (katargeo, “I render inoperative”) is one of the major exegetical issues to be resolved. That this is a significant issue is supported by individuals who agree in principle with one another but who reach different conclusions. Lightner writes, “The problem is, what is the force of the futures? Some say they refer to the completion of the canon, others apply them to the coming of the Lord.”83 He continues, “These future tenses of verse 8 refer to the close of the canon, or that time when God’s revelation has been all recorded and recognized.”84 On the other hand, Toussaint, who espouses the view that tongues cease before prophecies and knowledge are rendered inoperative, states, “The main ones (details) are these: the change of verbs in verse 8, the change of voice in the verbs of verse 8.”85

To emphasize the importance of this matter, Carson writes, “The debates turn on the following exegetical points,”86 followed by what he feels are the crucial exegetical matters. One matter he entitles, “The Relation Between ‘Perfection’ (τὸ τέλειον) and the ‘Imperfect’ (τὸ ἐκ μέρους).”87 The other exegetical matter, and the one he addresses first is: “The Significance of the Verb παὐσονται.”88 That is how crucial this matter is. Thus, to address this issue adequately one must discuss the use of pausontai in contrast with katargeo. Then, he must address the second of these matters, the meaning of to teleion.

Before an examination of the words individually, a major point of hermeneutics involving the interchange of verbs—καταργήθησονται ... παὐσονται ... καταργήθησεται (katagēthēsontai ... pausontai ... katagēthēsetai, “they will be rendered inoperative ... they will cease ... it will be rendered inoperative, 13:8)—deserves attention. As noted earlier, Toussaint makes much out of the change of verb and voice.89 Carson differs with Toussaint: “This view assumes without warrant that the switch to this verb is more than a stylistic variation.”90 This essay does not reach the same conclusion as either Toussaint or Carson and is not at this point taking issue with the difference of opinion, but it does take issue with the principle reflected in Carson’s words “without warrant” since Paul has no compunction about using katargeo four times in vv. 8-11 while only using paudō only once.

84Ibid.
85Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen” 314.
86Carson, Showing the Spirit 66.
87Ibid., 67.
88Ibid., 66.
89Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen” 314.
90Carson, Showing the Spirit 66.
The Use of Καταργέω (Katargeō)

The verb katargeō depicts the cessation of prophecy and knowledge in both vv. 8 and 10. All three occurrences are future passive, with the two uses in v. 8 differing only in the first being plural because of the plural “prophecies” and the second singular with the singular “knowledge.” Several points to observe in v. 8 include, first of all, the verb has a basic meaning of: “to render inoperative or invalid, to abrogate, abolish.”91 Some even use “destroy.”92 The second point is that, since all three uses of this verb in verses 8 and 10 are passive, they denote that the action of the respective nouns—prophecies and knowledge—is achieved by something outside themselves. Taking the two points together shows that to translate the verbs “will pass away”93 does gross injustice to the verb’s meaning and voice. The third point indicated by the future tenses in v. 8 is that the action would happen at some point after the writing of this epistle. A specific time for this action is not to be found in these verbs, but, if stipulated at all, in something else in the context.

One thing that is certain in this passage: the cessation of both prophecy and knowledge happen in the same manner. In addition, the use of the same verb for the cessation of these gifts does not support Alford’s statement, “The two first, προφ. and γλώσσα, shall be absolutely superseded: γνώσις relatively.”94

“Tongues Shall Cease”

The Use of Παύω (Pauō)

Regarding the verb παύονται (paustai) Carson states,

In verse 8, the verb with prophecies and with knowledge is in the passive voice: prophecies and knowledge “will be destroyed,” apparently in connection with the coming of “perfection” (v. 10). But the verb with “tongues,” παύονται (paustai), is in the middle; some take this to mean that tongues will cease of themselves. There is something intrinsic to their character that demands they cease—apparently independently of the cessation of prophecy and knowledge. This view assumes without warrant that the switch to this verb is more than a stylistic variation. Worse, it interprets the middle voice irresponsibly. In Hellenistic Greek, the middle voice affects the meaning of the verb in a variety of ways; and not only in the future of some verbs, where middles are more common, but also in other tenses the middle form may be used while the active force is preserved. At such points the verb is deponent. One knows what force the middle voice has only by careful inspection of all occurrences of the verb being studied. In the New

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93 Grudem, Systematic Theology 1032ff.
Testament, this verb prefers the middle; but that does not mean the subject “stops” under its own power. For instance, when Jesus rebukes the wind and raging waters, the storm stops (same verb, middle voice in Luke 8:24)—and certainly not under its own power.95

He concludes, “In short, I do not think that very much can be made of the use of παύειν (pausontai) in verse 8, any more than one can make much of other stylistic features that regularly escape detailed comment (e.g., prophecy and knowledge change their order when Paul moves from v. 8 to v. 9).”96

Just a brief review of the comments on παύομαι between the two immediate and four extended uses of katargeō is in order. First, this writer does not think the argument of the passage depends on the use of παύομαι, as Carson’s argument may suggest.97 But neither can he view this verb as merely “rhetorical”98 or a “stylistic variation.”99 Paul used παύομαι for a distinct purpose, a purpose different from what he communicated by katargeō. The use of the two different verbs was not merely to avoid repetition, because Paul uses katargeō four times in vv. 8, 10, and 11. Thus a distinction is intended. On the other hand, it is a major stretch to make pausontai refer to something that would happen so many years before two gifts cease, as does Toussaint.100 That seems to be an attempt to accommodate a presupposition rather than assess the statement.

Second, this writer has a problem with Carson’s statement about the “irresponsible” interpretation of the middle voice. No doubt, the majority of uses of παύομαι in the NT (13 of the 15)101 are in the middle form. On the other hand, from a historical comparative point of view, most if not all “deponent” verbs became deponent because of the nature of word meanings and not because of an edict of grammarians. Thus, a verb like this, much like δέχομαι (dechomai, “I receive”), tends to have a meaning that most readily corresponds to the middle voice. The nature of the verb may tend toward a middle usage, without arguing against the verb having a meaning that reflects middle usage. In addition, anyone who has studied the Greek language extensively knows that the middle voice, with all its nuances, is most difficult to understand for those studying the language many years later.

Another intriguing thought comes from Carson’s statement, “In the New Testament, this verb prefers the middle; but that does not mean the subject ‘stops’

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95Carson, Showing the Spirit 66-67. [emphasis in the original]
96Ibid., 67.
97Ibid., 66-67.
99Carson, Showing the Spirit 66.
100Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen” 315-16.
under its own power.”102 Does anyone believe that? In light of all that has been said and written about the divine source of spiritual gifts, does anyone really believe that tongues or any other gift comes to an end without God’s divine intervention? In addition, Carson goes on to say, “For instance, when Jesus rebukes the wind and raging waters, the storm stops (same verb, middle voice in Luke 8:24)—and certainly not under its own power.”103 This same passage is used by Houghton (a cessationist) to make a similar point.104 That text says, “And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm” (NASB). It does not say, “He stopped them.” Rather, it says, “They stopped.” The winds ceased to blow and the waves ceased to surge—of themselves if you please—but not without divine intervention. Once again, even if there is a significance to the middle voice, it cannot be to argue—any more than with the winds and waves—that they ceased of themselves without divine intervention. A difference of verb and a difference of voice occurs in v. 8, with some significance to that difference even if what that may mean is not clear. Although it is not the crucial issue, the arguments presented by Carson are not sufficient to disprove that “[t]here is something intrinsic to their [tongues] character that demands that they cease—apparently independently of the cessation of prophecy and knowledge.”105

The Combined Use of Pauō and Katargeō

Further, accepting the fact that Paul’s use of pauō is not merely rhetorical or merely a stylistic variation and believing that it is there for a distinct purpose, probably not to be found primarily in the fact that Paul uses the middle voice, “What then might its purpose be?” First of all, there is a significance to the variation of the vocabulary, but it is worth considering that for all the emphasis given to pausontaı, the issue which is more to the point is why he uses katargeō so often in such a short span (4 times) in the context of his discussion of prophecy and knowledge rather than using pausontaı. A hint might come from the distinction that Carson makes (without at the same time accepting the viewpoint he is discussing) when he states, “The view that Paul is referring to the closing of the canon depends on understanding New Testament prophecy and related gifts as having the same revelatory and authoritative significance as inscripturated prophecy.”106 This essay is not arguing for to teleion being a reference to the completion of the canon, but maybe the distinction being drawn by Paul is that although all three gifts—prophecy, tongues and knowledge—are to some degree revelatory, the first and third have a “revelatory

102 Carson, Showing the Spirit 67.
103 Ibid.
105 Carson, Showing the Spirit 66. [brackets added]
106 Ibid., 72.
and authoritative significance” with a possible “inscripturated” function that tongues do not have, and thus are dealt with separately as gifts which will—at some time future to the writing of this chapter—be forcefully “rendered inoperative.” Maybe that also answers the question relative to the reference to “we know in part” (a possible reference to the “gift of knowledge”) and “we prophesy in part” (certainly a reference to the above mentioned “gift of prophecy”) in the following verse without any reference to tongues.

The Time of the Cessation (13:10)

The time of the cessation of these gifts, a major issue in 13:10, centers on the meaning of to teleion. Therefore, the meaning of to teleion in this verse is of considerable importance in understanding the passage as a whole. Ruthven, commenting on v. 10, writes, “1 Cor 13:8-13 is perhaps the locus classicus in the discussion on the continuation of spiritual gifts.”

Or, as Fowler White writes about v. 10, “Cessationists have ordinarily regarded agreement with noncessationists on this point as the kiss of death for the cessationist position, and vice versa.”

Defining to teleion is therefore a crucial part of this discussion.

Several views exist on the meaning of to teleion in 1 Cor 13:10. Two of the major views are (1) the closing of the canon or (2) a point of time in the future related to the coming of Christ. To deal with this, a look at the use of τέλειος (teleios) in other Pauline passages is necessary.

Significantly, ton teleion of 13:10 is the only use of the adjective teleios as “a neuter, articular substantive” and here it was “probably created precisely to serve as a contrast to “the partial” or “the imperfect.” Carson, responding to the possible problem created by παρουσία (parousia, “coming”) being feminine and to teleion being neuter, states, “The objection is without merit, for ‘perfection’ is not the parousia itself, but the state of affairs brought about by the arrival of the parousia.”

Also, Carson’s statement with regard to Gaffin is significant for he comments, “[I]f with Gaffin that perfection is connected with the parousia, then his interpretation sees too little in the text.”

Another key factor in understanding of 13:8-12 is the presence of the thrice repeated ἐκ μέρους (ek merous, “in part”), a major connecting link between vv. 9-
10 and v. 12. The phrase gives continuity to the progression of thought in the passage. It should be understood in light of its direct meaning, not what one wants to make it say. For example, Godet writes, “In contrast to ἐκ μέρους, in part, one would expect τὸ πᾶν, the whole, the entire.” Certainly, the use of τὸ πᾶν (to pan) instead of τὸ τέλειον (to teleion) might have been a good support here for those who see this as a reference to the completion of the canon. But Godet continues with a statement worth considering: “But it is not without reason that the apostle says τὸ τέλειον (to teleion), the perfect, substituting the idea of perfection in quality for that of completeness in quantity.” Although one may argue that the reference is not to “the perfect,” it is worth noting that the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity or completeness.

*The Use of Teleios in the New Testament.*

To gain an understanding of teleios in this context, a consideration of its use inside and outside the NT is in order. Sometimes the use outside the NT—namely in the LXX—gives a great deal of insight but that is not the case here. The main Hebrew words translated in the Septuagint by teleios are ὅλος (hōlos, “complete”) and ἄριστος (áristos, “complete”). These words are used for teleios about seven times apiece, with the latter referring to that which is sound or complete, the stress being on what is whole, perfect or intact and having the sense of something being sound, healthful, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, or having integrity (cf. Exod 12:5; Gen 6:9). The former word, ὅλος, is used for what is complete, finished, or sound.

In the NT, teleios is used in the sense of “having reached its end, finished, mature, complete, perfect.” The word refers to people and to things. With respect to people, its general use denotes being full-grown, mature, complete, or perfect with the “… idea of complete goodness, without reference either to maturity or to the philosophical idea of τέλος.” With reference to things, the word means complete or perfect. Danker and Abbott-Smith concur that teleios is not used in this second manner more than five times (i.e., the minority or one-quarter of the times) in the

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114Ibid. [transliteration added]
117Ibid.
119Ibid.
120Ibid.
NT, and both cite 1 Cor 13:10 as one of those examples.\textsuperscript{121} Seven other uses, in connection with persons, have the idea of complete or perfect.\textsuperscript{122}

**The Use of Teleios in the Pauline Corpus**

One soon realizes that the study of the use of teleios in the LXX and the rest of the NT gives supportive evidence but does not give conclusive evidence as to its meaning in 1 Cor 13:10. One might conclude from earlier statements that since it is not here referring to a person, it refers to what is perfect or complete. But Thayer writes, “What ‘end’ is intended the reader must determine by the context.”\textsuperscript{123} What seems to be of some significance is that of the approximately twenty times teleios appears in the NT, eight occurrences (almost one-half) are in Paul’s writings (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12). A detailed look at Paul’s use of teleios is therefore essential to determining its meaning in 1 Corinthians 13:10.

**The Use of Teleios in Romans 12:2**

Romans 12:2 is a good place to begin in a study of teleios in the Pauline corpus, since its meaning of “perfect” there is one of the justifications for translating it the same way in 1 Cor 13:10. In Rom 12:2, teleion is used, along with ἄγαθόν (agathon, “good”) and εὐάρεστον (euaresston, “pleasing”), in apposition with τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ (to theλma tou theou) to describe God’s will.\textsuperscript{124} In this case, it has an adjectival sense, with the definite meaning of “perfect.” Cranfield summarizes this way: “God’s will, that which God requires of us, is perfect, complete, absolute; for He claims us wholly for Himself… Thus the last of the three terms interprets the other two; for it makes it clear that this ἄγαθόν καὶ εὐάρεστον is not something manageable and achievable … but the absolute demand of God…”\textsuperscript{125} This is the only use of teleios by Paul where the absolutely certain meaning is “perfect.” A noticeable feature is that the word it describes is in the immediate context.

**The Use of Teleios in Paul Outside Romans 12:2**

No doubt surrounds Paul’s use of teleios in Rom 12:2, but how does he use it the remainder of the time? The other eight uses of teleios by Paul are Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12. Four (or one-half) of

\textsuperscript{121}Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New 7; Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament 442.


\textsuperscript{123}Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon 620.


\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.
those (1 Cor 2:6; 14:20; Eph 4:13; Col. 1:28) are best rendered “mature.” In one of the three remaining uses, Phil 3:15, although the opinions are divided, a fair rendering would be, “Therefore—as many as are mature—let us think this way/have this attitude….” Walvoord makes a good case in that passage as he writes,

Relative perfection is frequently in the Scripture, as indicated by the context. In some instances, spiritual maturity is referred to as perfection. Paul writes to the Philippians, “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect—teleioi, be thus minded” (Phil. 3:15). That he is referring to spiritual maturity rather than sinless perfection is made clear by the reference in the same passage in verse twelve, “Not that I have already obtained or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus.” The reference in Philippians 3:12 is to ultimate perfection which will include sinlessness, of course, but this Paul denies as a present possession. Spiritual maturity may be compared to physical maturity—full development without, however, absolute perfection.126

Another Pauline reference where teleios could be considered to mean “perfect” is Col 4:12. Yet in Col 1:28, where the same term is used, Paul states that his goal is to present every man “mature” or “full grown” in his walk with God. Little debate surrounds that conclusion. If Paul in Col 1:28 used teleios to depict “maturity” as a goal of his ministry in each person’s life, it is arguable that he would use it the same way in Col 4:12 as he expresses in prayer his desire for them. If that be the case, the only passage left is 1 Cor 13:10.

In summary, Paul obviously uses teleios to mean “mature.” Ephesians 4:13; 1 Cor 2:6; 14:20 (all to be discussed below) are definitely translated “mature.” Colossians 1:28 refers to maturity (and likely 4:12). Out of the eight uses by Paul, four are definitely “mature”; two are possibly even probably so; only one is definitely “perfect” (Rom 12:2) since “the word is governed there by the preceding τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ. Knowledge of the ‘perfect,’ ‘entire’ will of God in the concrete situation is developed by renewal of the power of judgment through the Holy Spirit.”127 The one remaining use is in 1 Cor 13:10.

**The Use of Teleios in 1 Corinthians**

*The use of teleios in 1 Corinthians.* A major consideration in resolving the meaning of to teleion in 13:10 is the way Paul uses the word in the broader context of 1 Corinthians, i.e., the larger setting of the entire book. Therefore, the first issue will be usage in the whole book, and the second will be the immediate context of 1 Cor 13:8ff.

**1 Corinthians 2:6–3:5.** The larger context of 1 Corinthians argues for the

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126John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* 208-9. [emphasis in original]

meaning “mature” in 2:6–3:5. Not only is this true because of the apostle’s usual usage, but also because each time in this book, it appears in a context in contrast with τέλειος (nêpios) or a related verb or noun, evident in 2:6–3:5. That pairing of words is important because “the antithesis between τέλειος (2:6) and νηπίος (3:1) is frequent (14:20; Ephesians 4:13, 14).” 128 In this book alone, the contrast occurs three times, and within chapters 12–14, it occurs twice (13:10-11; 14:20). In these “other connections, τέλειος denotes the state of mature manhood in contradistinction from a νηπίος or παις.” 129 Thiselton states,

On the lexicography of the word, see above on 2:6, where it clearly carries the different sense of mature (usually of persons), as it does in its remaining use in this epistle, ταῖς δὲ φρεσκὸν τέλειον γίνεσθε (14:20). However, here there is also a further hint of τέλειος as denoting a goal. For just as in 2:6 the wisdom for the mature is not for those who exhibit childish self-centeredness and immediacy, even so here Paul is about to draw the same contrast with being infantile or childish or childlike in v. 11a and the goal of mature adulthood. Hence it combines the two related notions of fulfillment or goal and the completed whole. No English word alone can fully convey the meaning in this context. 130

The idea of such a contrast is established in 1 Cor 2:6 where the apostle describes his manner of speech to those who were mature, τοῖς τέλειοῖς (tois teleiois), and later he remarks that he could not speak to the Corinthians in this manner, but would have to speak to them as νηπίοις (nêpiois, “infants”) (1 Cor 3:1). First Cor 2:6 reads, Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τέλειοις (sophian de laloumen en tois teleiois)…. But 3:1 speaks of the readers as νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ (nêpiois en Christō). A definite contrast between teleiois and nêpiois is intended.

1 Corinthians 14:20. This same idea appears in 1 Corinthians 12–14, specifically in 14:20, when Paul uses παιδία (paidia) and νηπιάζετε (nêpiazete), the verb form of nêpios, in contrast with teleios. In 14:20, we read, Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσκῖν ἄλλα τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσκῖν τέλειοι γίνεσθε (adelphoi, mē paidia gineste tais phresin alla tē kakia nêpiazete, tais de phresin teleioi gineste). Again teleioi stands in contrast to nêpios, represented in its cognate nêpiazete, and in a context with a related word paidia. The idea in 14:20 is, “Play the part of babies, if you like, in freedom from malice; but in common sense try to act like grown up people.” 131 A similar thought transferred to 1 Cor 13:10 leads to the conclusion that this was “a severe rebuke to

128 Robertson and Plummer, 1 Corinthians 298.
130 Thiselton, I Corinthians 1065. [emphasis in the original]
131 Robertson and Plummer, I Corinthians 315.
those who prided themselves on their intelligence. Children prefer what glitters and makes a show to what is more valuable; and it was childish to prefer ecstatic utterance to other and far more useful gifts.\textsuperscript{132}

\textit{The Use of Teleios in Eph 4:13-14}

Before a final conclusion on Paul’s meaning in 1 Cor 13:10, a look at another passage where the apostle uses \textit{teleios} in discussing spiritual gifts, Eph 4:1-16, is beneficial. Though his use of \textit{teleios} there may not be determinative of its meaning in 1 Cor 13:10-11, it is certainly corroborative. The Ephesians passage has the same author and the same subject matter—although with a distinctly different emphasis. Paul refers to the purpose of gifts and states that a reason for the gifts is that the church might attain to the status of \textit{άνδρα τέλειον} (\textit{andra teleion}, “a mature man”) (Eph 4:13), in order that they might no longer be \textit{nēpioi} (Eph 4:14) “tossed here and there by waves” (Eph 4:14, NASB). Note that \textit{teleion} and \textit{nēpioi} stand in contrast with one another, and \textit{teleion} clearly refers to maturity.\textsuperscript{133} In comparing the two passages, one does well to keep in mind several key issues.

\textbf{The context is very similar but unique.} Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 12–14 are similar in that they both deal with spiritual gifts and spiritually gifted people. In addition, both emphasize the importance of love. Not only is love a key issue in Ephesians 4, but in v. 2 it occupies an emphatic position, and as Robinson puts it, “As elsewhere in this epistle (cf. 1:4; 3:17; 4:15, 16), love is introduced as the climax, the comprehensive virtue of the new life that includes all the rest.”\textsuperscript{134} “The duty of mutual forbearance is to be practiced in love—its motive, inspiration and life being found in love.”\textsuperscript{135} The result of love is unity (vv. 3, 13), an issue of great concern to Paul in 1 Corinthians 12–14. The word for unity—\textit{ἐνοχή} (\textit{henochē})—occurs only here in the NT, and yet this theme of unity stands out in this passage and is reflected throughout most of the epistle. A final similarity between 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 is in the use of \textit{nēpioi} and \textit{teleion} in both with the former following the use of the latter in both. In both cases, an added pictorial illustration further defines the initial statement.

\textbf{The progression of argument is clear.} The progression of argument in Eph 4:11-16, where \textit{nēpioi} and \textit{teleion} occur, is quite clear. First, 4:11 mentions the gifts/gifted people, and v. 12 states the purpose of the giving of the gifts/gifted

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\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{133}T. K. Abbott, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians}, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897) 120.

\textsuperscript{134}J. Armitage Robinson, \textit{Ephesians} (reprint; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979) 92.

people. In stating the purpose, three prepositional phrases introduced with (1) πρὸς (pros), (2) εἰς (eis) and (3) εἰς (eis). The goal function of the gifts/gifted people comes in 4:13, and once again, three prepositional phrases occur with the verb καταντάω (katantao, “I come to”). The three phrases show that the threefold goal is: (1) εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ θεοῦ (eis tēn henostēta kai tēs epignōseos tou theou)—“unto the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God”; (2) εἰς ἀνδρὰ τέλειον (eis andra teleion)—“unto a mature man” and (3) εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (eis metron helikias tou pērōmatos tou Christou)—“unto the measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Christ.” Of additional interest is the relationship of the three phrases: (1) The second—“unto a mature man”—more clearly defines the first—“unto the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God”—and (2) the third—“unto the measure of the stature that belongs to the fullness of Jesus Christ”—more clearly defines the second—“unto a mature man.”

Verses 14-16 state the result of reaching the goal. The first outcome is negative (v. 14)—“that we no longer be children [nēpios]…. ”; and the second is positive (v. 15)—“speaking the truth in love … grow up.” All this“causes the growth of the body … in love” (4:16).

The focus on “the mature man” is clear. One might question what this “mature man” looks like. That is not difficult to discern. Teleion, is singular—"one new man" (not "new men") in Christ, as opposed to the plural nēpios—"immature ones." The difference in number clearly indicates that individualism is a mark of immaturity. So the goal is that the church would “come of age” or reach the maturity of unity. The emphasis is on mature adulthood that should be evident in contrast with the childishness mentioned in the following verse.

Application to an understanding of to teleion in 1 Cor 13:10. When one applies the above conclusions to to teleion in 1 Cor 13:10, several observations are appropriate. First, the context of ‘spiritual gifts’ is the same. Second, the emphasis on love and unity runs through both passages. Third, the contrast of teleios with nēpios is evident. Even the order is the same, with teleios coming first and nēpios following in the next verse. Added to that is the fact that the first verse (Eph 4:13; 1 Cor 13:10) speaks of the state of teleios and in the next verse he discusses further—or illustrates—the other state by referring to nēpios.

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\(^{137}\)Best, Ephesians 399; Lincoln, Ephesians 255.


\(^{140}\)Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians 257.
The similarities are clear. Ephesians 4 uses the two words, *teleios* and *nēpios*, which when used in close proximity in other contexts refer to maturity and immaturity. In fact, the only place where Paul definitely uses *teleios* to mean “perfect” (Rom 12:2) has neither *pais* nor *nēpios* in the immediate context. Also, the basic content of 1 Corinthians 12–14 is similar to that found in Eph 4:11-14. These gifts were useful “in part” in bringing about “that which is mature” or the maturity of the church. Such an interpretation more aptly fits the common use by Paul and also the argument of 1 Corinthians 13, and thus eliminates such a statement as, “The difference between a *nēpios* and a *teleios* is as nothing compared with the twilight of this world and the brightness of the perfect day, but it will help us to understand this.” Such a statement stems from a gross misunderstanding of the meaning of the two words.

**The Use (and Meaning) of *Teleios* in 1 Cor 13:10**

In 1 Cor 13:10 *teleion* appears again and, in this case, it is not only in the proximity of *nēpios*, but v. 11 gives support for the argument made in vv. 9-10. Therefore, in an even more marked way, the two words should be seen in contrast with each other. Even Toussaint, who does not accept the rendering “maturity,” writes, “At first flush this interpretation of the passage appears to be the most attractive.”

Furthermore, Barrett, although not using the word ‘maturity’ and not coming to the same conclusion as this essay, writes about v. 10, “The adjective (in the neuter gender, and with the article, τὸ τελείον rendered *totality* is fairly common in Paul; see ii. 6; xiv. 20. It takes its precise meaning from the context, and here, in contrast with *in part* (ἐκ μέρους) it means not perfection (in quality) but *totality*…”

Significantly, Robertson and Plummer comment on 2:6 this way: “By τέλειον St. Paul means the mature or full-grown Christians, as contrasted with νήπιοι (iii. 1). The word is used again xiv. 20; Phil. iii. 15; Eph iv. 13.” After failing to cite the related construction in 1 Cor 13:10 as a similar use of this word, they come to 1 Cor 13:8-13 and make two interesting comments in light of their view that *to teleion* is a reference to the “Second Advent.” The first comment deals with the construction ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ τελείον (*hotan de elthē to teleion*) in v. 10. They write, “He does not say, ‘But when we shall have come to the perfection of the other world,’ etc. He is so full of the thought of the Second Advent, that he represents the perfection as coming to us.” And then, when commenting on v. 11, because they do not render *to teleion* as mature, they are forced to conclude that the

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141 Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen” 313.
143 Robertson and Plummer, *1 Corinthians* 35.
144 Ibid., 297.
Taking teleios to mean “mature” as it does in both of its other references in this epistle—and especially in proximity with nēpios—makes it a very adequate illustration which is also very much to the point.

Thus, the reference here is to a point in Paul’s future—and the future of the church at that time—when to teleian would come, i.e., when a maturation would come to the church and at which point the revelatory gifts of prophecy and knowledge would be “rendered inoperative” by God. The verse does not give a date but it does state a conceptual truth. Peter’s reference to Paul’s writing being alongside “the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet 3:14-16) suggests that the two apostles realized that they were a part of God’s revelatory ministry to His church. What this verse clearly communicates is that there would be a time—at the maturation of the church (conceptually implied here)—when the revelatory process would cease to exist and the revelatory gifts brought to an end.

THE PROGRESSION OF ARGUMENT IN 13:8-11

The Progression of Thought in 13:8-12

That the focus and central thought of 1 Corinthians 13 is the supremacy of love is worth repeating. Although love is only mentioned twice in vv. 8-13, in the first and last verses, and although the central theme in vv. 8b-12 is on the cessation of certain spiritual gifts, the overall point being made, even by these verses, is still on the supremacy of love. Gifts will cease to exist, but love will not. That is clear in the initial statement (v. 8a), “Love never fails.”

With Paul’s emphasis on the supremacy of love, he does cite three gifts at this point, all three of them being to some degree revelatory in nature. The statement of this passage does not allow for Carson’s assumption about including most other gifts. In addition, by the progression of argument in the succeeding verses, the focus continues on “revelation” which reaches its pinnacle in the anticipated final “face to face” revelation of v. 12.

Following an often repeated practice of Paul and other NT authors, Paul moves from one thought to another. This did not start in v. 8a, but appears throughout the chapter, especially in the section immediately preceding. Having started with the thought that love is “more excellent” (“I show you a more excellent way,” 12:31b) than gifts (vv. 1-3), Paul builds on the thought of love’s greatness by discussing some very significant qualities of love (vv. 4-7). He ends the list of the qualities with “love endures” (v. 7d) and immediately follows with “love never fails.” So once again, having introduced the verses under discussion with the overriding statement, “Love never fails,” Paul moves on to compare the “non-

14Ibid.

14Carson, Showing the Spirit 70.
failing” nature of love with the “failing nature” or the “cessation” of three revelatory gifts. Having introduced the subject of the “cessation” of the three, he turns the discussion away from love’s supremacy and it does not surface again until v. 13. He develops the cessation of the gifts further by discussing the process of the cessation. And lest one should miss the point of vv. 9-10, he illustrates it in v. 11. As will be noted later, the illustration leads him to a new but not totally unrelated thought in v. 12.

At this juncture the importance of v. 11 in the development of Paul’s argument deserves special attention. It is a key point in many ways. No doubt, Paul introduced v. 11 to support statements in vv. 9-10, and it surely does. But directly connecting v. 12 with the thought of v. 10, as sometimes happens, creates a major problem. Robertson and Plummer show this when they assess v. 11 as a “very inadequate …” illustration of to teleion in v. 10. It is only “inadequate” if the usual meaning of teleios is rejected and if v. 11 is taken as an illustration of v. 12.

Many unnecessary conclusions result from a misunderstanding of the argument of these verses. For example, Toussaint, after admitting the attractiveness of the meaning “maturity,” remarks that the emphasis in 13:12 on Christ’s return is a disturbing factor for such a view. Grudem, whose view on cessation differs from Toussaint’s, also draws conclusions from v. 12 that argue against a “maturity” view, commenting, “First, the meaning of verse 12 seems to require that verse 10 is talking about the time of the Lord’s return. The word ‘then’ (Gk. tote) in verse 12 refers to the time ‘when the perfect comes’ in verse 10.” That is the basis for many conclusions he proceeds to draw. Just a point to remember: if vv. 10 and 12 are not addressing the same thing, many of his conclusions are invalid. Houghton, whose views vary from Grudem’s, also ties both verses together, and has to argue against the ‘parousia’ in v. 12 to make it conform with his view on vv. 9-10.

The Relationship of 13:8-11 to v. 12

As noted above, many of the conclusions about vv. 9-11 result from reading v. 12 back into the preceding verses, but that is backward. A NT and Pauline pattern is for one thought to flow into another and that into another. First Cor 13:1-13 illustrates that pattern. From beginning to end the overwhelming message is the primacy of love in transcending the importance of spiritual gifts. The overall continuity of thought is evident from “I show you a still more excellent way (12:31b) … but the greatest of these is love” (13:13b, NASB). The continuity is even clearer in 13:8-13. Paul starts with “love never fails” (13:8) and ends with “now abide faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love” (13:13, NASB). A definite

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14Robertson and Plummer, 1 Corinthians 297.
147Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen” 313.
148Grudem, Systematic Theology 1033.
progression of thought exists and nowhere is it more clearly seen than in the transition from v. 7 to v. 8. Verse 7 ends with “[love] always perseveres,” v. 8 begins with “love never fails” or, as Carson states it, “In the preceding verse (13:7), Paul concludes by saying that ‘love always perseveres’; in other words, ‘Love never fails’ (13:8).”

The argument in vv. 8-11 starts, “Love never fails,” and leaves his discussion of love until verse 13. Though love does not appear again until v. 13, the thought of the supremacy of love is never far below the surface. To solidify the statement concerning the “abiding nature” of love, he moves into a discussion of the “non-abiding nature” of gifts, and in so doing, mentions just three of them: prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. Once he has introduced the non-abiding nature of primarily revelatory gifts, he moves away from love and explains the cessation of these gifts (primarily the two most noticeably revelatory ones) and explains further their cessation. He uses the verb katargeō again. Having done this and illustrating the point made in v. 10, Paul introduces an illustration of man’s developing maturity. He takes the partial’s being superseded with a fuller revelation a step further and introduces a new thought which, although related in thought with vv. 9-10, completely transcends that to take readers to the “fullest revelation,” which will take place when believers enter Christ’s presence.

The thought in v. 12 far transcends that in v. 10. Verse 10 does not speak of ultimate revelation when believers see Christ face to face. Furnish makes this very clear:

> The line of thought developed in verses 8b-10 is extended in verse 12, but in the process Paul both narrows and enlarges his discussion. He narrows it, because just as he had mentioned glossolalia along with prophesying and knowledge in verse 8, but then not in verse 9, he now leaves prophesying, too, behind to focus exclusively on knowledge. He also enlarges his discussion, however, by shifting attention to another kind of knowledge. His subject is no longer the special gift of knowledge granted by the Spirit to some and not to others, but the knowledge that is constitutive of one’s relationship to God. This shift of meaning begins with his use of a metaphor which contrasts the indirect and therefore partial vision provided by a mirror with the kind of seeing that is direct and complete: “For now we see in a mirror, indirectly, but then face to face” (v. 12a). Although the distinction made here between “now” and “then” is roughly analogous to the one in verse 11 between childhood and adulthood, this statement moves beyond the preceding one by bringing to the surface the underlying eschatological orientation of this whole chapter. “Now,” in this present age, one sees only indirectly and imperfectly; but “then,” in the age to come, one will see “face to face.”

The point of this metaphor is given in the second part of the verse, where Paul speaks again of knowledge: “Now I know in part [ginōskō ek merous], but then I will know fully even as I have been fully known [tote de epignōsomai katibōs kai epeignōsthē]” (v. 12b). It is clear from both the context, which affirms the enduring reality and critical
importance of love, and the reference to knowing as one has “been known,” that the underlying premise is the one Paul has set forth in 8.1-3 about knowledge and love. However extensive and significant one’s knowledge about God, because it belongs only to this age it remains indirect, as in a mirror, and therefore partial. But Paul anticipates that in the age to come one’s knowledge of God will be of a radically different order, a direct, “face to face” communion with God that is appropriate to the saving power of agapē by which one has already “been known” (graced and claimed) by God (kathōs kai epegnōstikēn; cf. 8.3, “known by him,” egnōstai hyp’ autou).

Not only does Furnish show that the matter addressed in v. 12 far transcends that of v. 10, but some also suggest that the use of v. 11 to illustrate v. 12 “is very inadequate….”

Paul has moved from one thought about God’s revelatory work to another, which far transcends the earlier revelation. That distinction alone should show two different levels of revelation in the two statements, but both having to do with God’s revelatory ministry to believers. Thus, Paul concludes with statements about the permanence of love in v. 13. In so doing, in his discussion of the permanence of love in contrast to the temporary character of three revelatory gifts, he addresses (1) the developing revelation in v. 8, (2) the fuller revelation in vv. 9-11 and (3) the ultimate revelation in v. 12. As evident in the transition between vv. 7-8, one thought leads into another. All are somewhat distinct but interconnected.

Not only is a progression of thought characteristic of this passage, but so also is the continuity of thought in the overall passage. It should be noted that this progression does not interfere with the overall theme. Carson puts it this way:

But the connections are deeper. In the first three verses of this chapter, Paul draws a contrast between love and the χαρίσματα (charismata). Now in verses 8-13, he picks up the contrast again, but with a new wrinkle. Here the contrast turns on the fact that love is permanent, while the χαρίσματα (charismata) terminate. That, too, demonstrates love’s intrinsic superiority. Thus the statement love never fails also anticipates verse 13.

**SUMMARY**

That Paul’s primary purpose in 13:8-12—as throughout the remainder of chapter 13—is not to present a discourse on the cessation of gifts, but rather to develop the thought of the supremacy of love needs to be understood clearly. Even in the verses in which he discusses the cessation of certain gifts, he is showing that
gifts—as good as they may be—will cease, but love will not. In the process of making this point, though, he chooses three gifts that are all revelatory in nature.

What is of some interest is how Paul moves from one thought to another throughout chapter 13 without losing sight of his main point. This is certainly true in vv. 8-12. He begins by referring to three revelatory gifts—prophecy, knowledge, and tongues—in v. 8 as he discusses revelation being given at the time of the writing. He then narrows this to two revelatory gifts—prophecy and knowledge—in vv. 9-11 as he discusses a fuller revelation, specifically inscripturated revelation. He then narrows further to one gift—knowledge, and that in a secondary manner—in v. 12 as he moves to the ultimate revelation of Christ Himself.

Since Paul is not delivering a treatise on cessation, one should not read more into statement than what it says. He sets forth a conceptual statement concerning the cessation of these three revelatory gifts—in developing the thought of love’s supremacy. His purpose is not to set a date. From a present perspective, the gap between the subjects in vv. 8-11 and in v. 12 is many years, but that was not obvious to Paul. To him, that the process of revelation was taking place (v. 8) and that there would be a time when the revelatory process would come to an end (vv. 9-11) was a conceptual truth, but he saw that even such revelation, no matter how great, could not begin to compare with the final and full revelation when seeing Christ face to face (v. 12).

No doubt, Paul addresses the cessation of three gifts, all of which were revelatory. The focus is on the verb katargeō, which occurs four times in as many verses. Every time it is used with reference to inscripturated revelation, it is in the passive voice. This emphasizes the fact that inscripturated revelation, represented here by the gifts of prophecy and knowledge, would be forcefully brought to an end at some point future to the time of writing. Tongues, also a revelatory gift, but probably separated from the other two in vv. 9-11 since it was not in the category of inscripturated revelation, would also come to an end. The verb used with tongues is pauō in the middle voice (pausontai), which also suggests cessation. In contrast with katargeō, however, the termination of this gift would not have the same dramatic ending as the other two. It would in its own way come to an end, but certainly not without divine intervention.

The time of the cessation of these three gifts is of major concern in these verses. On the basis of Paul’s use of teleios throughout his epistles and more specifically elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, it is evident that 1 Cor 13:10 uses to teleion in contrast with nēpios as a reference to “maturity” and not to “completeness” or the presence of the Lord, although the latter is clearly in view in v. 12. Although to teleion does not refer to the completion of the canon, the overall emphasis on divine revelation in this passage and the reference to three revelatory gifts shows that the revelatory process is a major theme. By the time the church becomes mature, the revelatory process reflected in the three gifts will come to an end by God’s intervention. Thus tongues—a supernatural manifestation of the use of earthly languages—will end prior to or at the time of this maturation.
Verses 8-12 present three things: revelation, cessation, and maturation. They are intertwined. Cessation and maturation, although happening at a related time, should not be confused with each other. All revelatory gifts would come to an end before or at the maturation of the church (a concept, not a specific point in time). At the maturation of the church (whenever that happens) all revelatory gifts will have come to an end according to this passage.
DOES GOD STILL GIVE REVELATION?

John MacArthur
President and Professor of Pastoral Ministries

Strange private prophecies have been a noted characteristic of the Charismatic Movement, prophecies such as those received by Oral Roberts, Linda Fehl, Jack Hayford, Larry Lea, and Kenneth Hagin. J. Rodman Williams endorses such experiences, but Edward N. Gross correctly dismisses such special revelations as erroneous and limits such revelations to those resulting in the writing of the Bible. According to 2 Tim 3:16, inspired means that Scripture is God-breathed, i.e., God Himself speaking. Some modern theologians such as Dewey Beegle support the charismatic agenda by teaching that the canon of Scripture is not closed and that God is still giving special revelation. Such teaching of progressive revelation, supported also by J. Rodman Williams and Kenneth Copeland, creates great turmoil in the church and is tantamount to violating the scriptural injunctions not to add prophecies to what has been written in its pages. The biblical canon closed after the writing of Revelation and was popularly recognized soon after in the ancient church. Jude 3 speaks of “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” and warns repeatedly against tolerating false prophets. The early church applied tests of apostolic authorship, content, and responses by the churches to determine which books met the criteria of inspiration, resulting in a uniquely inspired and authoritative set of books.

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“God told me . . . “ has become the anthem of the Charismatic Movement. Strange private prophecies are proclaimed by all kinds of people who evidently believe God speaks to them. Surely the most infamous is Oral Roberts’ preposterous death-threat prophecy. In 1987 Roberts told his nationwide audience that God had threatened to “call him home” if he couldn’t raise eight million dollars by his
 creditors’ deadline. Whether and how that threat might have been carried out, the world will never know; Roberts received a last-minute reprieve in the form of a large check from a Florida dog-track owner.

Two years later, when Roberts was forced to close his multimillion-dollar, Tulsa-based City of Faith medical center anyway, he asked God why. Roberts maintains that God gave him an answer:

God said in my spirit, “I had you build the City of Faith large enough to capture the imagination of the entire world about the merging of My healing streams of prayer and medicine. I did not want this revelation localized in Tulsa, however. And the time has come when I want this concept of merging My healing streams to be known to all people and to go into all future generations.”

As clearly in my spirit as I’ve ever heard Him, the Lord gave me an impression. “You and your partners have merged prayer and medicine for the entire world, for the church world and for all generations,” He said. “It is done.”

I then asked, “Is that why after eight years you’re having us close the hospital and after 11 years the medical school?”

He said, “Yes, the mission has been accomplished in the same way that after the three years of public ministry My Son said on the cross, ‘Father, it is finished.’”

We may gasp at Oral Roberts’ hubris, but he is not the only charismatic who thinks he is receiving private revelation from God. Most Charismatics, at one time or another, feel that God speaks to them in some specific manner, either through an audible voice, an internal impression, a vision, or simply by using them as a vehicle to write a song, compose a poem, or utter a prophecy.

Linda Fehl, founder of Rapha Ranch, sells a tape with a song titled, “The Holy Ghost.” She says the song was given to her by the Holy Spirit as she was being healed of cancer. An editor for a Christian publisher once told me he receives submissions every week from charismatics who claim God inspired them to write their book, article, song, or poem. My editor friend noted that the manuscripts are

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3Occasionally, one of the “inspired” books finds a publisher. David Wilkerson, *The Vision* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Spire, 1974) is one such example. The book was subtitled *A Thrilling Prophecy of the Coming of Armageddon.* “Deep in my heart I am convinced that this vision is from God, that it is true, and that it will come to pass,” Wilkerson wrote (12). It didn’t. Wilkerson predicted, “Nature will release its fury with increasing intensity over the next decade. There will be short periods of relief, but almost every day mankind will witness the wrath of nature somewhere in the world” (36). Wilkerson predicted a cataclysmic earthquake that would start a panic somewhere in the United States— “the biggest, most disastrous in its history” (32). He foresaw many cataclysms, including worldwide financial calamity. Perhaps most ironic of all, Wilkerson predicted a decline of the “positive thinking” doctrines (25).

I recently received another supposedly inspired book by mail. An endorsement on the book’s back
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often poorly written, filled with bad grammar, marred by factual and logical errors, or full of poems that either mutilate the language or attempt to rhyme but just miss.

Lest you think cranks, obscure eccentrics, or naive charismatic believers are the only ones who would make such claims, listen to Jack Hayford, internationally known author, media minister, and pastor of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California. Hayford told the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America that God has told him a new era is coming:

Hayford then related a vision in which he had seen Jesus seated on His throne at the right hand of the Father. In Hayford’s vision, Jesus began to lean forward and rise from his seat. As the anointing caught in the folds of His garments, it began to splash out and fall over the church. Jesus said, “I am beginning to rise now in preparation for my second coming. Those who will rise with Me will share in this double portion of anointing.”

And Larry Lea, popular charismatic author and pastor, wrote,

Recently, when I was in Chicago preparing to preach, the Lord’s Spirit came upon me. He spoke in my heart: “I’m going to tell you now the name of the strongman over this nation.”

I listened intently.

“The spiritual strongman you are facing—the demonic strongman that has your nation under his control—is the strongman of greed.”

We certainly don’t have to look very long to find evidence to back up this Word of the Lord.

Kenneth Hagin surely has the most unusual story of all. He says that when he was younger and still single, God led him to break off a relationship with a girl by revealing to him that she was morally unfit. How did that happen? In a most unconventional way. Hagin claims God miraculously transported him out of church one Sunday, right in the middle of the sermon. Worst of all, Hagin was the preacher delivering the sermon!

Suddenly I was gone! Right in the middle of my sermon, I found myself standing along a street in a little town fifteen miles away—and I knew it was Saturday night. I was

cover, written by Dr. T. L. Lowery, senior pastor of the National Church of God in Washington, D.C., says, “Unlike other books, I believe that the Holy Spirit has brought this writing into being for time and eternity. The experiences and the message are of utmost importance to the body of Christ. I believe that God’s anointing will rest upon this book and minister to every person who reads these contents.” Clearly, Pastor Lowery believes the book is on par with Scripture. But I thumbed through the 171-page book and found it to be filled with speculation, bizarre fantasy, and much teaching that is inconsistent with Scripture (Mary Kathryn Baxter, A Divine Revelation of Hell [Washington: National Church of God, n.d.]).”


leaning against a building, and I saw this young lady come walking down the street. About the time she got to where I was standing, a car came down the street. The driver pulled up to the curb, sounded the horn, and she got into his car. He backed out, turned the other direction, and started out of town—and suddenly I was sitting in the back seat!

*They went out in the country and committed adultery. And I watched them.* I was still in the cloud. Suddenly I heard the sound of my voice, and the cloud lifted. I was standing behind my pulpit. I didn’t know what to say, because I didn’t know what I had been saying, so I just said, “Everyone bow your head,” and we prayed. I looked at my watch, and . . . I’d been gone about fifteen minutes in the cloud.

While I was shaking hands with people as they went out the door, this young lady came by. I said, “We missed you last night.” She said, “Yes, I was over in __________” (and she named the little town). I said, “Yes, I know.”

On the basis of that questionable experience, Hagin determined that the girl was promiscuous and assumes to this day that she was guilty of adultery. He follows that report with a similar one, where he was suddenly transported into a car where another young girl was supposedly engaged in moral compromise. Ironically, immediately after telling those two tales, he writes, “You’ve got to realize, friends, that there is a fine line between fanaticism and reality. Many people get off into error seeking experiences.” Hagin has never drawn a truer application from his anecdotes.

Would God really transport Hagin miraculously into cars so he could witness acts of adultery? Did God talk to Oral Roberts? Did he write a song for Linda Fehl? Did Jack Hayford actually see Christ rise from His seat next to God? Was Larry Lea’s prophecy really a “Word of the Lord”? Are Christians still receiving, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, direct revelation from God? Can people today—writing songs or books, preaching or teaching, or making decisions—legitimately claim that they are under divine inspiration?

Many charismatics answer a loud “Yes!” For example, J. Rodman Williams wrote:

> The Bible truly has become a fellow witness to God’s present activity. . . . If someone today perhaps has a vision of God, of Christ, it is good to know that it has happened before; if one has a revelation from God, to know that for the early Christians revelation also occurred in the community; if one speaks a “Thus says the Lord,” and dares to address the fellowship in the first person—even going beyond the words of Scripture—that this was happening long ago. How strange and remarkable it is! If one speaks in the fellowship of the Spirit the Word of truth, it is neither his own thoughts and reflections (e.g., on some topic of the day) nor simply some exposition of Scripture, for the Spirit transcends personal observations, however interesting or profound they may

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2Ibid., 15-16.
3Ibid., 16.
be. The Spirit as the living God moves through and beyond the records of past witness, however valuable such records are as a model for what happens today.9

What is Williams saying? He is alleging that the Bible is not our final source of God’s revelation but simply a “witness” to additional revelation that God is giving today. Williams is declaring that Christians can add to the Bible—and that they can accept others’ additions to Scripture as normal and conventional. He believes the Bible is a “model” for what the Holy Spirit is doing today to inspire believers.

That is a frighteningly relativistic view, but it is growing in popularity as the Charismatic Movement expands. Edward N. Gross, noting this deadly trend in the church today, observes:

The age of models has come. A model takes the place of a law. Models are human perceptions of truth. They are tentative and thus subject to change as new data becomes available. These models are open and constantly tested. No scientist dares claim any longer that one model is the way to explain all known phenomena for fear that some newly discovered data will prove that scientist to be a precipitous old fool. The world of science has progressed from the old approach (closed systems) to the new approach (open systems). . . .

If the Bible is a closed system of truth, with no new revelation being given through inspired prophets or apostles, then the “model approach” is an erroneous and dangerous tool in hermeneutics.

There should be no confusion in this area. The orthodox teaching of Christianity has always affirmed that God’s special, saving revelation to mankind is restricted to the teachings of the Scriptures. . . .

This is the issue. If the Bible is complete, then it represents a closed system of truth. If it entails a fixed and absolute standard of truth, then the teachings of Scripture may be ascertained and dogmatically asserted. If God is still granting new revelation, then the truth of God is still being progressively revealed, and if this were the case, our duty would be to faithfully listen to today’s prophets as they unravel God’s truth in new and clearer representations than we find in Scripture. Few Christians really consider the subtleties of today’s “prophets” as an improvement upon the sanctifying truths given in the Word. I certainly do not.10

Nor do I. Scripture is a closed system of truth, complete, sufficient, and not to be added to (Rev 22:18-19). It contains all the spiritual truth God intended to reveal.

What Does Inspiration Mean?

Our word inspired comes from a Latin root meaning, “to breathe in.”

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Unfortunately, that does not convey the true meaning of the Greek term used in Scripture. Actually the concept of breathing *in* is not found in 2 Tim 3:16 (“All Scripture is inspired by God”). Reading it *in* has misled many people about the meaning of *inspiration*. They have assumed that God breathed some kind of divine life into the words of those who penned the original documents of Scripture. But the Greek term for inspiration is *theopneustos*, which means “God-breathed.” Literally the verse says, “All Scripture is God-breathed”—that is, Scripture is not the words of men into which God puffed divine life. It is the very breath of God! Scripture is God Himself speaking.

That truth is one many people seem prone to misunderstand. Inspiration does not mean the Bible contains God’s revelation. It does not mean gems of revealed truth are *concealed* in Scripture. It does not mean men wrote God’s truth in their own words. It does not mean God merely assisted the writers. It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God Himself. Every word of Scripture was breathed *out* by God.

At the burning bush, God said to Moses, “Go, and I, even I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (Exod 4:12). Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Judah, received this charge from God: “All that I command you, you shall speak. . . . Behold, I have put My words in your mouth” (Jer 1:7, 9). And God said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel. . . . Take into your heart all my words which I shall speak to you, and listen closely . . . and speak to them” (Ezek 3:4, 10-11).

A key passage describing how God speaks through Scripture is 2 Pet 1:21. Literally it says “No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The most important word here is “moved,” which speaks of being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Theologian Thomas A. Thomas recalls that as a boy he would play in the little streams that ran down the mountainside near his home.

We boys liked to play what we called “boats.” Our “boat” would be any little stick which was placed in the water, and then we would run along beside it and follow it as it was washed downstream. When the water would run rapidly over some rocks the little stick would move rapidly as well. . . . In other words, that little stick which served as my boyhood “boat” was carried along, borne along, under the complete control and direction of the water. It moved as the water moved it. So it is with reference to the writers of the Scriptures. They were carried along, borne along, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit of God. They wrote as the Spirit directed them to write. They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was exactly that which the Holy Spirit intended should be there. What they wrote was, in a very real sense, not their words; it was the very Word of God.  

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Modern Views of Inspiration

What, then, is the contemporary approach to Scripture? Some modern theologians want to allow for continued inspiration or updated revelation. At least one, Dewey Beegle, believes that some of the classic anthems of the church are inspired in the same way as Scripture. He has written, “Some of the great hymns are practically on a par with the Psalms, and one can be sure that if Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Augustus Toplady, and Reginald Heber had lived in the time of David and Solomon, and been no more inspired than they were in their own day, some of their hymns of praise to God would have found their way into the Hebrew canon.”

Beegle refers in particular to the experience of George Matheson, a blind Scottish pastor who wrote “Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go” during a time of great personal distress. On the evening of his younger sister’s wedding, Matheson was reminded vividly of the agony he had suffered twenty years before when his fiancé had rejected him because she had learned he was going blind. Matheson wrote the hymn in just a few minutes, though he claimed he had no natural sense of rhythm. According to Matheson, he did no changing or correcting of “Oh Love That Will Not Let Me Go”; it came “like a dayspring from on high.”

Beegle believes George Matheson’s experience was . . . the kind of inspiration of which the Psalms were made. There is no difference in kind. If there is any difference, it was a matter of degree. When the Biblical writers served as channels of God’s revelation they needed more divine help, but the inspiration was not distinct in kind from that given to all the messengers of God down through history. What distinguishes the Bible is its record of special revelation, not a distinctive kind of inspiration.

Beegle believes the canon of Scripture has never been closed. He has written, “The revelation and inspiration of God’s Spirit continues. . . . For this reason there is no basis in considering all of the biblical writers and editors as qualitatively different from postcanonical interpreters.” He continues,

If the church had a more dynamic sense of God’s inspiration in the twentieth century, it would be more effective in its witness and outreach. It is well and good to protect the distinctiveness of the Bible, but to think only in terms of its inspiration as absolutely different in kind from inspiration in our time is too high a price to pay. Christians today need to have the same sense of being God-motivated and God-sent as did the biblical writings.

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13 Ibid., 141.
15 Ibid.
writers and interpreters. In a genuine sense, the difficulty of interpreting God’s record of revelation to this complex age requires as much of God’s inbreathing and wisdom as did the process of interpretation in the biblical periods.\(^{16}\)

In effect, that is precisely what charismatics believe. The truth, however, is that there is no way to “protect the distinctiveness of the Bible” if God is inspiring new revelation today. If the canon is still open, and if God is still giving new prophecies, new songs, and new words of wisdom, we should be earnestly seeking to compile and study these most recent revelations along with Scripture—and maybe even more diligently, since they speak expressly to our time and culture.

Some Charismatics actually reason that way.\(^{17}\) But it is error of the worst kind. The canon is not still open. God’s Word, made of the Old and New Testaments, is one unique miracle. It came together over a period of 1,500 years. More than forty men of God, prophets and apostles, wrote God’s words—every jot and tittle—without error and in perfect harmony. No hymn is worthy to be compared to Scripture. No modern prophecy or word of wisdom is even in the same realm with God’s eternal Word. Heaven and earth will pass away; God’s Word will abide (Matt 5:18).

**Progressive Revelation?**

Charismatics struggle to explain how the supposed revelation they receive through tongues, prophecies, and visions fits with Scripture. J. Rodman Williams, as we have seen, claims these charismatic phenomena are simply new manifestations of what was happening in biblical times: “It is good to know... if one speaks a ‘Thus says the Lord,’ and dares to address the fellowship in the first person—even going beyond the words of Scripture—that this was happening long ago.”\(^{18}\) His explanation of the charismata amounts to an argument for “progressive” or “continuing” revelation: “In the Spirit the present fellowship is as much the arena of God’s vital presence as anything in the Biblical account. Indeed, in the light of what we may learn from this past witness, and take to heart, we may expect new things to occur in our day and days to come.”\(^{19}\) Williams went on to describe just

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1. Ibid., 309.
2. This, strangely enough, is exactly what a recent Charisma article recommended:
   
   To meditate on our personal prophecies, we should record them if at all possible. If someone approaches us saying he or she has a word from God, we should ask the person to wait a moment until we can get an audio recorder, or else ask the person to write it down. If the word comes from someone on the platform during a meeting that is not being recorded, we must try to write down as much as possible, getting at least the main points (Bill Hamon, “How to Receive a Personal Prophecy,” Charisma and Christian Life 16/9 [April 1991]:66).
3. Williams, Era of the Spirit 16 (emphasis added).
4. Ibid. (emphasis in original).
how new revelation occurs. He put great emphasis on the “gift of prophecy”:

In prophecy God speaks. It is as simple, and profound, and startling as that! What happens in the fellowship is that the Word may suddenly be spoken by anyone present, and so, variously, a “Thus says the Lord” breaks forth in the fellowship. It is usually in the first person (though not always), such as “I am with you to bless you . . .” and has the directness of an “I—Thou” encounter. It comes not in a “heavenly language,” but in the native tongue of the person speaking and with his accustomed inflections, cadences, and manners. Indeed, the speech may even be coarse and ungrammatical; it may be a mixture of “King James” and modern; it may falter as well as flow—such really does not matter. For in prophecy God uses what He finds, and through frail human instruments the Spirit speaks the Word of the Lord. . . .

All of this—to repeat—is quite surprising and startling. Most of us of course were familiar with prophetic utterance as recorded in the Bible, and willing to accept it as the Word of God. Isaiah’s or Jeremiah’s “Thus says the Lord . . .” we were accustomed to, but to hear a Tom or a Mary today, in the twentieth century, speak the same way . . . ! Many of us also had convinced ourselves that prophecy ended with the New Testament period (despite all the New Testament evidence to the contrary), until suddenly through the dynamic thrust of the Holy Spirit prophecy comes alive again. Now we wonder how we could have misread the New Testament for so long!

That is tantamount to saying that current instances of charismatic prophecy are divine revelation equal to Scripture. Such a claim is disturbing because the possibilities of fraud and error by present-day “prophets” are obvious. Williams recognized that danger and wrote:

Prophecy can by no means be taken casually. Since it is verily God’s message to His people, there must be quite serious and careful consideration given to each word spoken, and application made within the life of the fellowship. Also because of the ever present danger of prophecy being abused—the pretense of having a word from God—there is need for spiritual discernment.

Though Williams admitted the risks, nowhere in his book did he spell out how “careful consideration” and “spiritual discernment” are to be employed to distinguish the false from the true.

Perhaps Williams later realized the problems he raised, because he attempted to clarify his thinking in the Logos Journal:

I do not intend in any way to place contemporary experience on the same level of authority as the Bible. Rather do I vigorously affirm the decisive authority of Scripture; hence, God does not speak just as authoritatively today as He spoke to the biblical authors. But he does continue to speak (He did not stop with the close of the New

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20Ibid., 27-28.
21Ibid., 29.
Testament canon); thus, he “moves through and beyond the records of past witness,” for he is the living God who still speaks and acts among His people.\(^{22}\)

That explanation fails to resolve the issue. The distinction between biblical authority and additional revelation seems to be artificial. Are some of God’s words less authoritative than others?

The fact is, Williams’s view is indistinguishable from the neoorthodox position espoused by Dewey Beegle. If evangelicalism allows that view to gain a foothold, the uniqueness of Scripture will be sacrificed, and the basis for all we believe will be compromised. That is precisely what is happening today. Because of the growing influence of charismatic teaching, much of the church may mistakenly abandon its cornerstone; \textit{Sola Scriptura}, the principle that God’s Word is the only basis for divine authority.

Once a congregation sees Scripture as less than the final, complete, infallible authority for faith and practice, it has opened the doors to theological chaos. Anyone can claim to be speaking God’s revelation—and almost anything can be passed off as divinely revealed truth. And make no mistake, some of the best-known charismatic leaders have abused their people’s trust by claiming they are receiving new truth from God, when what they are really teaching are lies and fabrications.

Perhaps the most brazen example of that is a widely publicized “prophecy” delivered by Kenneth Copeland. He claims Jesus gave him a message “during a three-day Victory Campaign held in Dallas, Texas.”\(^{23}\) Judge for yourself whether this could be a message from the Christ of Scripture:

\begin{quote}
It’s time for these things to happen, saith the Lord. It’s time for spiritual activity to increase. Oh, yes, demonic activity will increase along at the same time. But don’t let that disturb you.

Don’t be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you’re God. Don’t be disturbed when people accuse you of a fanatical way of life. Don’t be disturbed when people put you down and speak harshly and roughly of you. They spoke that way of Me, should they not speak that way of you?

The more you get to be like Me, the more they’re going to think that way of you. They crucified me for claiming that I was God. But I didn’t claim I was God; I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me. Hallelujah. That’s what you’re doing.\(^{24}\)
\end{quote}

Copeland’s “prophecy” is clearly false. The real Jesus—the Jesus of the NT—\textit{did}

\begin{footnotes}
\item Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Does God Still Give Revelation? 227

claim He was God; using the covenant name of God, He told the Jewish leaders, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

Is Copeland genuinely a prophet, or is he one of whom Peter spoke when he warned, “False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them” (2 Pet 2:1)? The obvious answer to that question is clouded only to those who aren’t sure whether modern “prophecies” might supersede God’s Word.

Not all charismatic prophecies and visions are so clearly in conflict with Scripture. Some are merely frivolous. Larry Lea wrote,

Several years ago one of my dear pastor friends said, “Larry, when I was praying for you the other day, I had a vision. I saw you with great big ‘Mickey Mouse’ ears. Everything else about you looked normal except for those elephant-sized ears. When I asked the Lord to tell me what the vision meant, the Spirit of the Lord spoke back to me and said: ‘Larry Lea has developed his hearing. He has developed his spiritual ears.’”

Charismatics have abandoned the uniqueness of Scripture as the only Word of God, and the result is a spiritual free-for-all. A longing for something new and esoteric has replaced historic Christianity’s settled confidence in the Word of God—and that is an invitation to Satan’s counterfeit. Confusion, error, and even satanic deception are the inescapable results.

Melvin Hodges is a charismatic pastor who has admitted his strong reservations about “new” revelations:

Today, some people tend to magnify the gifts of prophecy and revelation out of their proper proportion. Instances have occurred in which a church has allowed itself to be governed by gifts of inspiration. Deacons have been appointed and pastors removed or installed by prophecy. Chaos has resulted. The cause is obvious. Prophecy was never intended to usurp the place of ministries of government or of a gift of a word of wisdom. Paul teaches us that the body is not made up of one member but of many, and if prophecy usurps the role of the word of wisdom or the word of knowledge, the whole body is dominated by one ministry, that is, prophecy. In other words, the whole body becomes ruled by the prophetic member. . . .

The idea that the voice of prophecy is infallible has confused many people. Some have felt that it is a sin to question what they consider to be the voice of the Spirit. However, in the ministry of all gifts there is a cooperation between the divine and the human.26

Note that Hodges speaks of “the gifts of prophecy and revelation.” It is evident that he believes God is giving new revelation today. At the same time, he is obviously

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well aware that so-called prophetic utterances create problems in the church. Throughout, he assiduously avoids concluding that the charismatic “gift of prophecy” is in any way less authoritative than Scripture. Yet he still wants to warn charismatics against taking modern prophecies too seriously or placing too much emphasis on them. He is seeking a way to resolve the confusion, but there is no way. When “prophetic utterance” is equated in any degree with “divine revelation,” the result is a hopeless muddle. Scripture loses its uniqueness, and all the damaging results Hodges describes are sure to occur.

Not all charismatics would agree that the problem of prophetic abuses is one of overemphasis. Some blame it on ignorant misuse of the gift. Their answer to the problem is to offer training. One group has started a “School of the Prophets.” Their appeal for students says, in part,

Perhaps you feel that you have been called to be an oracle of the Lord and have had difficulty explaining your experiences or finding someone that you could relate to and learn from. The School of the Prophets is designed to help bring grounding and clarity to the myriad of dreams and visions that are the hallmark of the prophet and seer ministries and to assist in the restoration of the prophetic ministry within the Body of Christ. There are many that have become disillusioned and disenchanted with the prophetic ministry because of abuses and ignorant usage of the gifting. Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water, for if you’ve had the bitter experience of the counterfeit, know that there is a reality to discover. . . . Abuses and misrepresentations occur simply because of the abomination of ignorance. Come and be trained at the School of the Prophets so that you will be properly prepared to fulfill the destiny that God has chosen for you!27

That strikes me as a peculiar approach to the problem of false prophecy. Can a school teach neophyte prophets how to use their “gift”? Can people be taught to give their dreams and visions “grounding and clarity”? Is the distinction between true and false prophecy simply a matter of education?

I think not. False prophecy is hardly a peccadillo. God told the Israelites, “My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God” (Ezek 13:9).

The law prescribed a stern remedy for false prophets:

The prophet who shall speak a word presumptionously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And you may say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?” When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not

come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him (Deut 18:20-22; cf. 3:1-5).

No second chance was offered. A false prophet—anyone who prophesied something that did not come to pass—was to be put to death. It is a serious matter to claim to speak for the Lord.

Nevertheless, some charismatics believe any believer who wants to can get revelation from God. The same issue of Charisma that carried the above ad also featured one touting a cassette tape album promising to teach believers “How you can hear the voice of God.” The ad asserts, “It is the inheritance of every believer to hear God’s voice for every need and every situation.” Jerry Hester, the speaker on the tapes, features “Listening Seminars,” which he claims “instruct you how to talk with God on an intimate conversational level 24 hours a day!”

Evidently, if you want to declare a private revelation from God, you can go to the School of the Prophets; if you only want to receive private revelation from God, you can go to a Listening Seminar.

That all has the unfortunate effect of pointing Christians away from Scripture, which is trustworthy, and teaching them to seek truth through subjective means—private conversation with God, prophecies, dreams, and visions. It deprecates God’s eternal, inspired Word and causes people to look beyond the Bible for fresher, more intimate forms of revelation from God. It is perhaps the Charismatic Movement’s most unwholesome and destructive tendency, as René Pache has noted:

The excessive preeminence given to the Holy Spirit in their devotions and their preoccupation with gifts, ecstacies, and “prophecies” has tended to neglect of the Scriptures. Why be tied to a Book out of the past when one can communicate every day with the living God? But this is exactly the danger point. Apart from the constant control of the written revelation, we soon find ourselves engulfed in subjectivity; and the believer, even if he has the best intentions, can sink rapidly into deviations, illuminism or exaltation. Let each remind himself of the prohibition of taking anything away from Scripture or adding anything to it (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). Almost every heresy and sect has originated in a supposed revelation or a new experience on the part of its founder, something outside the strictly biblical framework.

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29René Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture (Chicago: Moody, 1969) 319.
The Canon Is Closed

The truth is, there is no fresher or more intimate revelation than Scripture. God does not need to give private revelation to help us in our walk with Him. “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17, emphasis added). Scripture is sufficient. It offers all we need for every good work.

Christians on both sides of the charismatic fence must realize a vital truth: God’s revelation is complete for now. The canon of Scripture is closed. As the apostle John penned the final words of the last book of the NT, he recorded this warning: “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev 22:18-19). Then the Holy Spirit added a doxology and closed the canon.

When the canon closed on the OT after the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, there followed four hundred “silent years” when no prophet spoke God’s revelation in any form.

That silence was broken by John the Baptist as God spoke once more prior to the NT age. God then moved various men to record the books of the NT, and the last of these was Revelation, also the last book in our Bibles. By the second century A.D., the complete canon exactly as we have it today was popularly recognized. Church councils in the fourth century verified and made official what the church has universally affirmed: that the sixty-six books in our Bibles are the only true Scripture inspired by God. The canon is complete.

Just as the close of the OT canon was followed by silence, so the close of the NT has been followed by the utter absence of new revelation in any form. Since the book of Revelation was completed, no new written or verbal prophecy has ever been universally recognized by Christians as divine truth from God.

How the Biblical Canon Was Chosen and Closed

Jude 3 is a crucial passage on the completeness of our Bibles. This statement, penned by Jude before the NT was complete, nevertheless looked forward to the completion of the entire canon: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once [literally, ‘once for all’] delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). In the Greek text the definite article preceding “faith” points to the one and only faith. There is no other. Such passages as Gal 1:23 (“He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith”) and 1 Tim 4:1 (“In latter times some will fall away from the faith”) indicate this objective
use of the expression “the faith” was common in apostolic times.

Greek scholar Henry Alford wrote that the faith is “objective here: the sum of that which Christians believe.”

Note also the crucial phrase “once for all” in Jude 3 (KJV). The Greek word here is **hapax**, which refers to something done for all time, with lasting results, never needing repetition. Nothing needs to be added to *the faith* that has been delivered “once for all.”

George Lawlor, who has written an excellent work on Jude, made the following comment:

> The Christian faith is unchangeable, which is not to say that men and women of every generation do not need to find it, experience it, and live it; but it does mean that every new doctrine that arises, even though its legitimacy may be plausibly asserted, is a false doctrine. All claims to convey some additional revelation to that which has been given by God in this body of truth are false claims and must be rejected.

Also important in Jude 3 is the word “delivered.” In the Greek it is an aorist passive participle, which in this context indicates an act completed in the past with no continuing element. In this instance the passive voice means the faith was not discovered by men, but *given to men by God.*

And so through the Scriptures God has given us a body of teaching that is final and complete. Our Christian faith rests on historical, objective revelation. That rules out all prophecies, seers, and other forms of new revelation until God speaks again at the return of Christ (cf. Acts 2:16-21; Rev 11:1-13).

In the meantime, Scripture warns us to be wary of false prophets. Jesus said that in our age “false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect” (Matt 24:24). Signs and wonders are no proof that a person speaks for God. John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Ultimately, Scripture is the test of everything; it is the Christian’s standard. In fact, the word **canon** means “a rule, standard, or measuring rod.” The canon of Scripture is the measuring rod of the Christian faith, and it is complete.

Of course, throughout history spurious books have been offered as genuine Scripture. For example, the Roman Catholic Bible includes the Apocrypha. The Roman Catholic Church accepts those books as Scripture, but it is clear that they are
They contain errors in history, geography, and theology. Although Jerome (345-419) clearly was a spokesman for excluding the apocryphal books, some of the early church fathers (most notably Augustine) did accept them, though not necessarily on a par with the Hebrew OT. Finally, in the sixteenth century, the Reformers affirmed *Sola Scriptura*, the truth that the Bible alone is authoritative revelation, and thus denied the Apocrypha a place among the inspired writings. The Roman church reacted against the Reformers in the Council of Trent (1545-63) by stating that all the Apocrypha was canonical. Protestants and Catholics have maintained the disparity to the present time.

The OT canon was generally agreed upon by the people of God from the time the last OT book was written. How did the Jewish people know which books were inspired? They chose the books written by those known as spokesmen for God. They studied those books carefully and found no errors in history, geography, or theology.

Christians in the early church applied similar tests to prove which NT books were authentic and which were not. A key test was *apostolic authorship*. Every NT book had to be written by an apostle or a close associate of the apostles. For example, Mark, who was not an apostle, was a companion of Peter. Luke, who was not an apostle, worked closely with the apostle Paul.

A second test used by the early church was *content*. Acts 2:42 tells us that the first time the church met, they gave themselves to prayer, fellowship, breaking of bread, and the apostles’ doctrine. Later, in considering which writings were to be revered as Scripture, they asked, “Does it agree with apostolic doctrine?” This test was very important because of all the heretics that tried to worm their way into the church. But their doctrinal errors were easily spotted because they contradicted the apostles’ teaching.

A third test was *the response of the churches*. If God’s people accepted it, used it for worship, and made it part of their lives, and if Christians were universally being taught and blessed by the book, that was another important stamp of approval.

By A.D. 404 the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible was complete. It was the earliest known translation of all sixty-six books of the Bible. They were the same books we still have in our modern English Bibles. God spoke once for all, and His Word has been preserved through the ages.

From the time of the apostles until the present, the true church has always believed that the Bible is complete. God has given His revelation, and now Scripture is finished. God has spoken. What He gave is complete, efficacious, sufficient, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. Attempts to add to the Bible, and claims of

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33For a more detailed treatment of the canon, see Geisler and Nix, *Introduction*; and F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988).
Does God Still Give Revelation?

further revelation from God have always been characteristic of heretics and cultists, not the true people of God.

Although charismatics deny that they are trying to add to Scripture, their views on prophetic utterance, gifts of prophecy, and revelation really do just that. As they add—however unwittingly—to God’s final revelation, they undermine the uniqueness and authority of the Bible. New revelation, dreams, and visions are considered as binding on the believer’s conscience as the book of Romans or the gospel of John.

Some charismatics would say that people misunderstand what they mean by prophetic utterance and new revelation. They would say that no effort is being made to change Scripture or even equal it. What is happening, they assume, is the clarifying of Scripture as it is applied or directed to a contemporary setting, such as the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 11:28. 34

The line between clarifying Scripture and adding to it is indeed a thin one. Besides, Scripture is not clarified by listening to someone who thinks he has the gift of prophecy. Scripture is clarified as it is carefully and diligently studied. (See the account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:28-35.) There are no shortcuts to interpreting God’s Word accurately (cf. Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Christians must not play fast and loose with the issues of inspiration and revelation. An accurate understanding of those doctrines is essential for distinguishing between the voice of God and the voice of man. As we have seen, men who professed to speak for God but spoke their own opinions were to be executed under the OT law (Deut 13:1-5). New Testament believers are also urged to test the spirits and judge all supposed prophecies, shunning false prophets and heretics (1 John 4:1; 1 Cor 14:29).

It has always been important to be able to separate God’s Word from that which is false. God worked through a historical process to establish the authenticity of the canon so that the whole church might have a clear standard. If we now throw out that historical standard and redefine inspiration and revelation, we undermine our own ability to receive God’s truth. If we subvert the uniqueness of the Bible, we will have no way of distinguishing God’s voice from man’s. Eventually, anyone could say anything and claim it is God’s Word, and no one would have the right to deny it. We are perilously close to that situation even now.

The Holy Spirit is working mightily in the church today, but not in the way most charismatics think. The Holy Spirit’s role is to empower us as we preach, teach, write, talk, witness, think, serve, and live. He does lead us into God’s truth and direct us into God’s will for our lives. But He does it through God’s Word, never apart from it. To refer to the Holy Spirit’s leading and empowering ministry as inspiration or revelation is a mistake. To use phrases such as “God spoke to me,”

34 It is not accurate to use Agabus or Philip’s daughters to support theories of continuing revelation, however, because they spoke while prophecies were still being given and the canon was still open.
or “This wasn’t my idea; the Lord gave it to me,” or “These aren’t my words, but a message I received from the Lord” confuses the issue of the Spirit’s direction in believers’ lives today.

Inviting that kind of confusion plays into the hands of the error that denies the uniqueness and absolute authority of Scripture. The terms and concepts of Eph 5:18-19 and 2 Pet 1:21 are not to be mixed. Being filled with the Spirit and speaking to one another in psalms and hymns is not the same as being moved by the Holy Spirit to write inspired Scripture.
THE MONTANIST CRISIS: A KEY TO REFUTING THIRD-WAVE CONCEPTS OF NT PROPHECY

F. David Farnell
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The Signs and Wonders Movement, also called the Third Wave, has made tremendous inroads into evangelicalism since the early 1980s. After initial arguments against it in the late 1980s and early 1990s, debate has mostly subsided. Current general opinion has been acceptance, indifference, or tolerance of the movement and its view of spiritual gifts, especially its form of “prophecy.” The prime justification for the revival of what this group terms the “prophetic gift” has been the work of Wayne Grudem. Many articles, including those of the present writer, have examined the exegetical, theological, and doctrinal errors of his position. The present article uses a unique approach to refuting Grudem’s viewpoint of non-authoritative congregational prophecy by examining the earliest “charismatic” crisis in the early church, the one caused by the Montanist movement. The earliest ancient sources to refute Montanism reveal how the early church immediately after the apostolic period understood the gift of prophecy. An examination of the ancient churches’ understanding of prophecy and refutation of Montanism also supplies a striking condemnation of Grudem’s viewpoint and strongly reinforces the argument that he has imposed a novel as well as unorthodox interpretation of the NT gift of prophecy.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTROVERSY

Throughout church history, the nature and practice of spiritual gifts have acted as a proverbial lightning rod for controversy. In recent times, the early to mid-twentieth century witnessed the rise of Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, and charismatic movements that brought the so-called gifts of “tongues” and “prophecy”
into church controversy.\(^1\) This practice of so-called tongues and prophecy was confined generally to those groups favorable to their practice. Furthermore, in church history a sharp divide existed between those termed “cessationists” who believed miraculous gifts had ceased and “noncessationists” who argued for their continuance in some form.

Now in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, sharp boundaries between noncessationists and cessationists have been blurred or broken with the rise of the Signs and Wonders Movement. C. Peter Wagner, a professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, coined the expression “Third Wave,” when he classified the rise of Pentecostalism as the first wave, the rise of the Charismatic Movement as the second wave, and the current Signs and Wonders Movement as the third wave.\(^2\) The Third Wave has so greatly influenced the practice of controversial gifts, especially prophecy, that a unique brand of “prophecy” has become accepted practice among many former cessationists. Recent interest in the prophetic gift has caused some to cross the traditional boundaries in an apparent attempt to find a mediating position between the cessationist and noncessationists perspectives.

Wayne Grudem has probably been the most prominent advocate of attempted mediation. Belonging to the cessationist Reformed tradition, Grudem has been influenced by the Third Wave. His work on the NT gift of prophecy has made significant inroads into traditionally noncessationist groups. On the back cover of

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\(^{2}\)Under the auspices of Fuller Theological Seminary, Wagner helped develop MCS510—*“Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth,”* a course taught by John Wimber. Wagner said about the “third wave,” “I see the third wave of the eighties as an opening of the straight-line evangelicals and other Christians to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that the Pentecostals and charismatics have experienced, but without becoming either charismatic or Pentecostal. I think we are in a new wave of something that now has lasted almost through our whole century.” Wagner disassociated himself, however, from charismatics and Pentecostals, claiming, “I myself have several minor theological differences with Pentecostals and charismatics, which don’t mar any kind of mutual ministry but keep me from saying I’m a charismatic” (C. Peter Wagner, “The Third Wave?” *Pastoral Renewal* (July-August 1983): 4-5. For a succinct treatment of the similarities and/or differences between such groups, see also Wayne Grudem, “Preface,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 10-12.
The Montanist Crisis

his work, several endorsements reflect that impact: former cessationist J. I. Packer commented, “Careful, thorough, wise, and to my mind, convincing.” Vern Poythress, NT professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, wrote, “... a fresh, biblically sound, readable contribution ... its depth of scholarship, pastoral solidity, and cautions against abuses are special strengths. Highly recommended”; L. Russ Bush, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at Southeastern Theological Seminary, related, “If Grudem’s convincing thesis could be heard, a new path of dialog could perhaps be opened up in the Christian community. The research, clarity, and typical Grudem candor continue to make this the finest book of the subject to date.” As a result, Grudem’s efforts in the area of spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, may now be considered the main theological justification for the breakdown of barriers between cessationists and noncessationists.

To provide a counter to such a breakdown, the present writer has written a dissertation as well as several articles that focused on the controversy and significant problems surrounding the nature and function of the NT prophetic gift, especially as described by Grudem. Those writings contain a more comprehensive discussion of the crucial issues involved in the debate. The cited works highlight enough exegetical, contextual, and theological problems in Grudem’s approach to cast grave doubt upon the viability of his hypothesis regarding NT prophecy.

The present discussion will focus on significant historical problems with his approach. More specifically, it will examine the post-apostolic period and the great “charismatic” crisis of the mid-second century known as Montanism, a crisis that was a watershed occasion in analyzing the immediate post-apostolic church’s understanding of NT prophecy. More specifically, the church’s handling of the crisis reveals how the very early church, right after the period of the apostles, conceptualized the NT gift. Such an analysis discloses whether the early church’s handling of the prophetic crisis gives any credence to Grudem’s view.

Two key areas are decisive in revealing the post-apostolic church’s understanding of NT prophecy: First, how did the early church respond to this crisis? Second, what arguments did these early church fathers use to reject such a movement as Montanism? Simply summarized, the basic question regarding Montanism centers in the following issue: does the post-apostolic church exhibit agreement with Grudem’s definition of prophesy in its handling of Montanism? The

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logic of argumentation, of course, would be compelling and would be twofold: (1) the Montanist crisis was the greatest struggle over NT charisma, especially prophecy, that the post-apostolic church experienced up to that time and (2) because it occurred so very early in period, immediately after the time of the apostles and the close of the NT writings, the church’s handling of the crisis would reflect how the post-apostolic church understood the nature of that prophetic gift. At the very least, key elements of Grudem’s hypothesis should be reflected in the early church’s handling of Montanism if Grudem’s position has any validity (e.g., authoritative NT apostolic prophecy vs. non-authoritative congregational prophecy; true prophets who could err in their prophecies). How the church handled that situation would also most likely reflect a view that more closely mirrors apostolic teaching on such a gift since it was so near to the apostolic period. If the primitive church’s handling of the crisis reveals no correspondence with Grudem’s supposition, the conclusion would be greatly strengthened that Grudem has imposed a novel, unorthodox definition of prophecy, and his conception of prophecy is, therefore, unorthodox. In discussing the issue, a review of Grudem’s approach is necessary to permit a comparison of the early church’s understanding with that of Grudem.

CURRENT CONTROVERSY OVER THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

A Definitional Compromise between Cessationist and Noncessationist Groups

Grudem crossed traditional lines of understanding by proposing a compromise between the cessationist and noncessationist regarding prophecy. In the second edition (2000 [1988]) of his work on the subject, he writes,

In this book I am suggesting an understanding of the gift of prophecy which would require a bit of modification in the views of each of these three groups. I am asking that charismatics go on using the gift of prophecy, but that they stop calling it “a word from

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4 In the nineteenth century, Lightfoot argued against the Tübingen School of F. C. Baur and his hegelian (Fichte) dialectical approach (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) with his assertions of opposition between Gentile Christianity represented by Paul and Jewish Christianity represented by Peter. He also opposed Baur’s theory that the two factions produced early second-century incipient Catholicism—“The Christ-Party in the Corinthian Church” (F. C. Baur, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde,” Tübingen Zeitschrift für Theologie V/4 [1931]:61-206). Baur had also used this concept to place the dates of large portions of the NT after A.D. 130. Lightfoot successfully demonstrated the genuineness of the writings of Clement and Ignatius (post-apostolic church fathers) were genuine and that they exhibited no trace of any such conflict. The church fathers decisively refuted foreign ideas imposed on the NT by Baur, and they also do so in the case of Grudem. For further information on Lightfoot’s refutation of Baur’s assertions through his use of the early church fathers, see Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, The Interpretation of the New Testament 1961-1986, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988) 56-60; Werner Georg Kümmel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems, trans. S. MacLean Gilmour and Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972 [1970]) 127-43.
the Lord”—simply because that label makes it sound exactly like the Bible in authority, and leads to much misunderstanding. . . .

On the other side, I am asking those in the cessationist camp to give serious thought to the possibility that prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human—and sometimes partially mistaken—report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone’s mind. And I am asking that they think again about those arguments for the cessation of certain gifts. . . .

I should make it very clear at the beginning that I am not saying that the charismatic and cessationist views are mostly wrong. Rather, I think they are both mostly right (in the things they count essential), and I think that an adjustment in how they understand the nature of prophecy (especially its authority) has the potential for bringing about a resolution of this issue which would safeguard items that both sides see as crucial.5

By calling for a compromise between cessationists and noncessationists regarding prophetic and related gifts, Grudem stirs up a “hornets’ nest” of discussion on the gifts.

As the above quote notes, Grudem offers his own novel definition of Christian prophecy that he admits is a “somewhat new definition of the nature of Christian prophecy,” and by developing it, he hopes that “both pro-charismatic and anti-charismatics may be able to find a ‘middle ground’ with a considerable potential for reconciling their current differences.”6 His concept differs markedly from traditional orthodox understanding of the gift throughout church history, when he contends, “[P]rophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority but was simply a very human—and sometimes partially mistaken—report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone’s mind.”7 In other words, prophecy consists of “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.”8 He traces his definition to both cessationists and charismatics. In common with the former, he takes prophecy as noncompetitive with the authority of the canonical NT because of the close of the canon at the end of the apostolic era, but he concurs with the charismatic understanding that prophecy preserves “the spontaneous, powerful working of the Holy Spirit, bringing things to mind when the church is gathered for worship, giving ‘edification, encouragement, and comfort’ which speaks directly to the needs of the moment and causes people to realize that

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‘truly God is among you’ (1 Cor. 14:25).” Consequently, NT prophets were “Speaking Merely Human Words to Report Something God Brings to Mind” and “these prophecies did not have the authority of the words of the Lord.” Grudem argues,

Much more commonly, prophet and prophecy were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds. There are many indications in the New Testament that this ordinary gift of prophecy had authority less than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church. In another place, he terms NT prophecy as “an unreliable human speech-act in response to a revelation from the Holy Spirit.” Hence, NT prophets at Corinth were sometimes accurate and sometimes not. In certain circumstances, even a genuine NT prophet, like Agabus, could make “mistakes.” Only NT apostles spoke inspired prophetic words. The very words of NT prophets were not inspired as were those of OT prophets. This leaves Grudem with two kinds of NT prophecy: nonauthoritative “congregational” prophecy and authoritative (i.e., apostolic) prophecy. The crucial

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10 Ibid., 51, 77.
11 Grudem, “Still Prophecy,” 30 [emphasis original].
13 Grudem, in a markedly strained effort to impose his concepts on the NT, goes so far as to assert, “[By] Old Testament standards Agabus would have been condemned as a false prophet, because in Acts 21:27-35 neither of his predictions are fulfilled” (Grudem, Prophecy in the New Testament 77-78).
15 Grudem, Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 69-70.
16 In a more popular edition that largely reflected his technical treatise on prophecy, Grudem attempts to disassociate himself from advocating two kinds or forms of prophecy: “If I argue, as I do in this book, that the apostles could ‘prophecy’ with absolute divine authority, but that ordinary congregational prophets did not have that kind of authority, am I then saying that there are two kinds of prophecy in the New Testament? Some could make that distinction, and in fact I did speak that way in an earlier, more technical book on this subject, in keeping with the terminology that had been used in previous scholarly discussion of prophecy.

“However, I have decided in this book not to speak of ‘two kinds of prophecy’ in the New Testament because such language can be misunderstood to imply that the ‘kinds’ of prophecy were different in many ways, with large differences in the prophet’s own experience, etc. But the New Testament does not support such differences (and I did not affirm them in the earlier book)” (Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today 47-48). This equivocation is a telling admission on Grudem’s part that actually buttresses the dubious nature of his assertions. It also reveals a weakness in his hypothesis: its self-contradictory nature. On one hand, he advocates a bifurcation of the gift into two parts and, on the other, he denies it—a tenuous position. See also (Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy
point of his thesis is that apostles, not NT prophets, were the true successors of the OT prophets and, like their earlier counterparts, spoke under the authority derived from the inspiration of their words.  

He distinguishes that kind of gift from the one exercised at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 12–14), Thessalonica (1 Thess 5:19-21), Tyre (Acts 21:4), Ephesus (Acts 19:6), and other places (e.g., Agabus, Acts 11:28; 21:10-11). Only the general content of this secondary prophecy is reliable, with allowances made for its partial error. As a result, it was allegedly open to being disobeyed without blame (Acts 21:4), to being assessed critically by the whole congregation (1 Cor 14:29), and to being rejected outright as subordinate to Paul’s apostolic revelations (1 Cor 14:37-38). According to Grudem, “these prophecies did not have the authority of the words of the Lord.” Therefore, his position posits a sharp discontinuity between OT prophets and NT prophets/prophesy. NT prophets did not stand in line with their OT counterparts. Qualitative differences exist between OT and NT prophets and prophecy, especially in terms of their accuracy and authority. The net result is advocacy of NT prophecy as an inspired utterance that may well contain error—a contradictory and tenuous position.

### The Montanist Crisis: An Important Key to Understanding the Primitive Church’s Understanding of NT Prophecy

In connection with the basics of Grudem’s hypothesis, an examination of the primitive church’s great prophetic crisis is vital, for how and why the church refuted this crisis in its very early history becomes key to understanding how the early church conceptualized NT prophecy and the prophetic gift as a whole. Though subjective and speculative hypotheses exist as to the developments of Montanism in relationship to the rise of Romanism and alleged reasons why the early church rejected it, objective, reasoned scholarship must allow the church fathers and their...
valid reform movement protesting a corruption in the catholic church or as an enthusiastic self-deceived movement rebelling against the legitimate representatives of the church. This is to say that the understanding of Montanism was in some sense shaped by whether the particular historian considered the development of the ancient catholic church as valid or not” (Frederick Charles Klawiter, “The New Prophecy in Early Christianity: The Origin, Nature and Development of Montanism, A.D. 165-200” [PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1975] 36). Since many a priori assumptions about Romanism and the origins of Montanism are very subjective, reasons for its development and rejection connected with Romanism are not nearly as certain as the clearer reasons given by the fathers. More important, such speculation about Romanism does not allow the church fathers to speak for themselves by attributing acutely subjective motives to them.


expression of the Spirit. 24 Previously, Montanus had been a priest in an old Asiatic cult known as Cybele. Claiming the prophetic gift for himself, he was joined by the two women, who also prophesied in an ecstatic state. 25

Because no writings of Montanus and his two prophetesses have been preserved, 26 the sources for understanding the earliest developments of this movement are the writings of the early church fathers. Two of the earliest and most helpful sources are (1) Eusebius and (2) Epiphanius.

Eusebius quotes two sources that preserve the earliest information. The first source is unnamed by Eusebius, and contemporary scholars refer to him as “the Anonymous.” 27 The Anonymous wrote his treatise against the Montanists thirteen years after the death of Maximilla. 28 Prior to this, according to Eusebius, the Anonymous “had also taken part in oral controversy against them.” 29 Apollonius is the second source cited by Eusebius, who notes, “This same Apollonius . . . says that it was forty years from the time when Montanus plotted his fictitious prophecy, to the time when he wrote his book.” 30

Eusebius prefaces his introduction to the Montanist controversy by indicating his own disdain of the movement with the following caustic words:

The enemy of the church of God, who hates good and loves deeply all that is wicked, left untried no kind of plot against men and again strove to raise up strange heresies against the church. Of these some like poisonous reptiles crawled over Asia and Phrygia, and boasted that Montanus was the Paraclete and that the women of his sect,

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24 According to Klawiter, “Montanism probably appeared sometime around A.D. 165. . . . By A.D. 179 the foremost leaders—Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla had died. Hence, the period A.D. 165-179 marks the first phase of the movement” (Klawiter, “New Prophecy in Early Christianity” 63).

25 According to Apollonius, Priscilla and Maximilla had been married previously, but Montanus persuaded them through his prophetic prowess to leave their husbands and join his movement (Eusebius HE 5.183-84). It is rumored by the one known as “the Anonymous” that both Montanus and Maximilla may eventually have committed suicide (see ibid., 5.16.12-15).

26 Heine notes, “There is evidence in early Christian literature that the Montanists produced numerous treatises. All have perished, however, except those treatises written by Tertullian after his adoption of Montanism” (Ronald E. Heine, The Montanist Oracles and Testimonia, North American Patristic Society, Patristic Monograph Series 14 [Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1989] xi). For sources that have been collected, edited, and translated, see ibid.

27 Apparently, “the Anonymous” wrote approximately at the end of the second century as a contemporary of Montanus (cf. Eusebius HE 5.16.1).

28 Eusebius HE 5.16.18-19.

29 Ibid., 5.16.2-3.

30 Ibid., 5.18.12.
Priscilla and Maximilla, were the prophetesses of Montanus.\textsuperscript{31}

In this quote, Eusebius labels the movement as a “strange heresy” (αἱρέσις ξένας, hairēsion xenon), an indication that the movement was never accepted within mainstream Christianity.

**The Anonymous**

Although Eusebius relates that there arose “many . . . learned men of that time” who refuted the heresy and left behind “abundant material for history” in refuting Montanism,\textsuperscript{32} he focuses his discussion on two sources to illustrate how the church dealt with the heresy. Eusebius does not indicate why he limited his discussion to only two of the “many.” Perhaps he quotes these because they are typical of those “learned men.”

He first quotes from the Anonymous who gives this account of Montanism’s origins. Labeling Montanistic teaching as “the lie,” he relates, “[W]hen I [the Anonymous] had just come to Ancyra in Galatia and perceived that the church in that place was torn in two by this new movement which is not, as they call it, prophecy but much rather, as will be shown false prophecy [ψευδοφητήρεια, pseudopropheia] . . .”\textsuperscript{33} This statement shows that Montanism had caused quite a schism in the early Galatian church where it began. The Anonymous denied their activities were true “prophecy.” Instead, he marked them as “false prophecy.” He also says that his dispute with Montanists went on “for many days continuously in the church” and that the elders of the regional orthodox churches, to help them in the future, asked him for a written guide of how he had refuted the Montanists.\textsuperscript{34}

The Anonymous describes the beginnings of Montanism as follows:

Their opposition and their recent heretical schism from the church had the following origin. In Phrygian Mysia there is said to be a village called Ardabav. There they say that a recent convert called Montanus, when Gratus was proconsul in Asia, in the unbounded lust of his soul for leadership gave access to himself to the adversary, became obsessed and suddenly fell into frenzy and convulsions. He began to be ecstatic and to speak and to talk strangely prophesying contrary to the custom which belongs to the tradition and succession of the church from the beginning. Of those who at that time heard these bastard utterances some were vexed, thinking that he was possessed by a
devil and by a spirit of error, and was disturbing the populace; they rebuked him, and forbade him to speak, remembering the distinction made by the Lord, and his warning to keep watchful guard against the coming false prophets; but others, as though elevated by a holy spirit and prophetic gift, and not a little conceited, forgot the Lord’s distinction, and encouraged the mind-injuring and seducing and people-misleading spirit, being cheated and deceived by it so that he could not be kept silent. But by some art, or rather by such an evil scheme of artifice, the devil wrought destruction for the disobedient, and receiving unworthy honours from them stimulated and inflamed their understanding which was already dead to true faith; so that he raised up two more women and filled them with the bastard spirit so that they spoke madly and improperly and strangely, like Montanus.  

From this quote, one learns that Montanus, who was a recent convert to Christianity, began the heresy. He conveyed his prophecies in an ecstatic manner that involved “frenzy” as well as “convulsions.” The prophecies of Montanus differed markedly from accepted standards in the early church, for his ecstatic prophecy caused considerable alarm in the church with “some . . . thinking that he was possessed by a devil and by a spirit of error.” The Anonymous attributed the activity to Satan himself.  

The standard upon which the Anonymous (and the orthodox church that he represented) rejected Montanus’ prophesying lies in the phrase “contrary to the custom which belongs to the tradition and succession of the church from the beginning.”36 “From the beginning” most likely refers to the biblical prophetic eras of the OT and the NT. First, that the Anonymous had those Scriptural periods in mind with his phrase “from the beginning” is strongly reinforced by his reference to Scripture, specifically Matt 7:15, where Jesus, during His earthly ministry, had warned that false prophets would come and that the church must guard against them: “[T]hey [those who opposed Montanus in Galatia] rebuked him, and forbade him to speak, remembering the distinction made by the Lord, and his warning to keep watchful guard against the coming of false prophets.”37  

Second, he later countered the Montanists’ ecstatic prophecies by pointing to the pattern of prophets in both the OT and the NT as well as those who stood in the same biblical tradition: “But the false prophet speaks in ecstasy, after which follow ease and freedom from fear. . . . But they [the Montanists] cannot show that any prophet, either of those in the Old Testament or those in the New, was inspired in this way; they can boast neither Agabus, nor of Judas, nor of Silas, nor of the daughters of Philip, nor of Ammia in Philadelphia, nor of Quadratus, nor of any

35Ibid., 5.16.6-9.
36Ibid., 5.16.7-8.
37Ibid., 5.16.8.
others who do not belong to them.”

For the Anonymous, the biblical precedents of prophecy must furnish standards to examine any claim of prophecy. For the Anonymous, such ecstatic, irrational prophesying violated scriptural standards for prophecy, a thought that accords with Paul’s instruction in 1 Cor 14:30-33, that prophecies should come in an orderly and rational manner—“and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace”—although the Anonymous does not refer to the passage.

Another important refutation of Montanism by the Anonymous relates to the fulfillment of prophecy. The Anonymous noticed that Maximilla had made predictions that did not come true. He had catalogued predictions of Maximilla “in which she foretold future wars and revolutions” that did not come true. The Anonymous related, “Has it not been made obvious already that this is another lie? For it is more than thirteen years today since the women died, and there has been in the world neither local nor universal war, but rather by the mercy of God continuing peace even for Christians.”

For the Anonymous the biblical standard of true prophets was that their predictions were fulfilled. This standard also reflects close attention to OT and NT patterns that the predictions of true prophets always came true as evidenced in Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22; and 1 Cor 14:29 where prophecies were to be examined.

Another important standard that the Anonymous used against Montanism was their misinterpretation and misuse of Scripture. He relates that the Montanists applied Jesus’s warning in Matt 23:34 to themselves: “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city.” The Montanists explained the early church’s hostility to their prophets as a fulfillment of this Scripture. The Anonymous relates that the Montanists called those who opposed them “murderers of the prophets because we [the anti-Montanists like the Anonymous] did not receive their chattering prophets (for they say that these are those whom the Lord promised to send to the people), let them answer us before God.” The Anonymous gave a scathing critique of this tactic by noting that the details of this text did not fit the the Montanists:

Is there anyone, good people, of those whose talking began with Montanus and the women, who was persecuted by the Jews or killed by the wicked? Not one. Or was there anyone of them who was taken and crucified for the name? No, there was not. Or was

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38Ibid., 5.17.3-4. This appears to be a quote taken by the Anonymous from a man named “Miltiades” who also wrote a treatise against the Montanists and was in agreement with the Anonymous.

39Ibid., 5.16.18.

40Ibid., 5.16.18-19.

41Ibid., 5.16.19.

42Ibid., 5.16.11-12.
any one of the women ever scourged in the synagogues of the Jews or stoned? Never anywhere. It was a different death that Montanus and Maximilla are said to have died; for the story goes that each one of them was inspired by a mind-destroying spirit to commit suicide, though not together.  

Montanus and his two women prophets apparently influenced a few sections of the Asian churches. The Anonymous attributes such influence directly to a laxity in not knowing or heeding the Scriptures that warn against false prophets: “[O]thers, as though elevated by a holy spirit and prophetic gift, and not a little conceited, forgot the Lord’s distinction, and encouraged the mind-injuring and seducing and people-misleading spirit, being cheated and deceived by it so that he could not be kept silent.” The Asian churches, as well as the early church as a whole, however, were decidedly negative to Montanus and his “charismatic” movement, for the Anonymous notes that “few of the Phrygians were deceived. But when the arrogant spirit taught to blaspheme the whole Catholic church throughout the world, because of the spirit of false prophecy received from it neither honor nor entrance, for Christians of Asia after assembling for this purpose many times in many parts of the province, tested the recent utterances, pronounced them profane, and rejected the heresy,—then at last the Montanists were driven out of the church and excommunicated.” Once again, the fact surfaces that the early church examined such prophets in accordance with OT/NT stipulations.

Another important observation from the Anonymous’s discussion is that the early church did not allow for alleged prophets who prophesy false or ecstatically to be considered true prophets, i.e., no person was considered a true prophet who prophesied incorrectly or inaccurately. For the Anonymous and those whom he cites, the issue was starkly black and white: two kinds of prophets existed—either true or false; no hybrid prophets who prophesy falsely or contrary to OT/NT standards could still be considered true prophets or acceptable. Failure to adhere to biblical standards brought rejection and excommunication of the prophet. The issue always centered on discerning true from false prophets in the Anonymous’s discussion.

Finally, a careful, honest examination of the Anonymous’s discussion leads also to the conclusion that he allowed for the possibility of prophetic activity at the time of his writing against Montanism, but his arguments focused on the issue of distinguishing true from false prophets rather than refuting the possibility of prophecy. For the Anonymous, however, genuine prophets had to abide by scripturally designated standards if they were to be accepted by the church.

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4Ibid., 5.16.8.
4Ibid., 5.16.9-10.
4Ibid., 5.17.4.
Apollonius

The next early source cited by Eusebius for early Montanism is Apollonius, who refuted Montanism forty years from the time that Montanus appeared.\textsuperscript{47} Eusebius wrote that Apollonius “composed a refutation and published it as a separate work against them [the Montanists],” using a twofold tactic: (1) “proving word by word that their alleged prophecies were false” and (2) “showing the true character of the life of the leaders of this heresy.”\textsuperscript{48}

Regarding the first tactic, Eusebius gives no details as to how precisely Apollonius scripturally refuted Montanist prophecies. Since he discusses Apollonius’s refutation of Montanism right after his survey of the Anonymous, one may reasonably conclude that he may not have given details because this would have overlapped of much material already covered in the discussion of the Anonymous.

Instead, Eusebius focused on Apollonius’s exposure of the lifestyle of Montanist leaders.\textsuperscript{49} Apollonius argued,

\begin{quote}
[T]he deeds and the teachings of this recent teacher [Montanus] show his character. It is he who taught the annulment of marriage, who enacted fasts, who gave the name of Jerusalem to Pepuza and Tymion, which are little towns in Phrygia, and wished to hold assemblies there from everywhere, who appointed collectors of money, who organized the receiving of gifts under the name of offerings, who provided salaries for those who preached his doctrine in order that its teachings might prevail through gluttony.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

He further asserted regarding Priscilla and Maximilla, “[W]e prove that these first prophetesses themselves deserted their husbands from the moment that they were filled with the spirit. What a lie it is then for them to call Priscilla a virgin,” and “Does not all Scripture seem to forbid a prophet from receiving gifts and money? Therefore when I see that the prophetess has received gold and silver and expensive clothes, how should I refrain from blaming her?”\textsuperscript{51}

Apollonius next cited other followers of Montanism, whose central focus was on money or greed, arguing, “[W]e will show that their so-called prophets and martyrs make gain not only from the rich but from the poor and from the orphans and widows.”\textsuperscript{52} After delineating such activity, Apollonius twice alludes to a combination of Matt 12:33 and 7:15-17 about testing: “it is necessary to test all the fruits of a

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{47}] Ibid., 5.18.12.
\item[\textsuperscript{48}] Ibid., 5.18.1.
\item[\textsuperscript{49}] Ibid., 5.18.1.
\item[\textsuperscript{50}] Ibid., 5.18.2.
\item[\textsuperscript{51}] Ibid., 5.18.3-5.
\item[\textsuperscript{52}] Ibid., 5.18.7-8.
\end{itemize}
Apollonius scrutinized the activities of Montanus and his followers with data from Scripture. Those who claimed to be prophets but whose lifestyles did not correspond to Scripture were to be rejected outright. Heine makes this important observation: “While we cannot see the Scriptures used in the debate between Apollonius and the Montanists, we can see that it is the same debate that is present in the Anonymous and in the source drawn on by Epiphanius. The question at the center of the debate was whether the Montanist prophets were genuine or false prophets.” Important for this discussion are Apollonius’ views: either the prophet is true or he is false. No middle ground existed. He did not entertain a hybrid concept of a true prophet whose activities contradict Scripture.

Epiphanius

Besides “the Anonymous” and Apollonius, the other important source for an understanding of earliest Phyrgian Montanism is Epiphanius. The chief writings about Epiphanius’s life are his own works and correspondence, references in Jerome who was Epiphanius’ friend, Palladius’ work called Dialogue, Basil of Caesarea, Theophilus of Alexandria, the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomen, and the anonymous preface to the ancient editions of Epiphanius’s Ancoratus. Somewhere perhaps between A.D. 310 and 320 he was born in Palestine at a village called Besanduc. According to his Letter to Theodosius, he indicates that he was raised by Christian parents “in the faith of the fathers of Nicaea.” He received his early education from monks who imparted to him a Christian and scriptural rather than a classical education. At the age of twenty, Epiphanius founded a monastery in Palestine at Eleutheropolis and presumably served as its abbot. Although little is known of his governance of the monastery, he diligently kept the community free from heresy and fostered the beliefs of Nicene Christianity. In A.D. 367, he moved to Cyprus to become bishop of Salamis (Constantia) near the modern Famagusta. During his many years in Cyprus, he battled against Apollinarius and his disciples and dealt with disputes between eastern and western Christianity. The Origenist crisis with its effect on the church consumed the last years of Epiphanius’ life. Although he respected Origen’s scholarship, he considered Origen’s doctrine

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53Ibid., 5.18.8-9, 11.
54Heine, Montanist Oracles and Testimonia 10.
56Cited in Nicephorus, Adversus Epiphaniun XV.61; cf. also Frank Williams, “Introduction,” in The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, ed. J. M. Robinson and H. J. Klinkelit (Leiden: Brill, 1997) xi-xvi. All quotes from Epiphanius in this article are from Williams’ work.
Gnostic in character, the source of Arianism, and a danger to the church.\footnote{Cf. \emph{Panarion} 64 where he discusses at length his objections to Origen.} Around A.D. 402-403, Epiphanius journeyed to Constantinople to defend orthodoxy and expose Origenism, but died at sea on his way home to Cyprus.\footnote{For further information on Epiphanius’s life, see Williams, “Introduction” xi-xvi.}

His major literary effort was the \emph{Panarion}, meaning “Medicine Chest.” He began the work in A.D. 374 or 375 and finished it in three years. It is basically a heresiology or refutation of religious bodies, systems, and views that Epiphanius considered dangerous. He wrote concerning the purpose of this work,

I shall be telling you the names of the sects and exposing their unlawful deeds like poisons and toxic substances, matching the antidotes with them at the same time—cures for those who are already bitten, and preventative for those who will have this experience—I am drafting this Preface here for the scholarly, to explain the ‘Panarion’ or chest of remedies for the victims of wild beasts’ bites.\footnote{Panarion Proem I, 1, 2.}

Epiphanius divided this work into three books totaling seven sections (or, “Anacephalaeeoses”) and undertook the monumental task of listing all pre- and post-Christian heretical sects, totaling eighty, from Adam to Epiphanius’s own lifetime. He sketched their chief doctrines as he understood them, advising his readers how to refute them.\footnote{Epiphanius based the figure of eighty on Song of Songs 6:8-9: “There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, and maidens without number; but my dove, my perfect one, is unique: she is her mother’s only daughter; She is pure child of the one who bore her. The maidens saw her and called her blessed, the queens and the concubines also, and they praised her.” To Epiphanius, the eighty concubines were these heretical sects while the “dove” is the true church. See \emph{Panarion} 35. 3. 6.}

Epiphanius was of great importance in that he was a rigorous Christian apologist whose work reflected primitive, orthodox Christianity (Nicean), which he defended against many heretical movements that threatened the church. In the second book, Epiphanius dealt with Montanism. His source of information is difficult to identify. In \emph{Panarion} 48.15.1, he acknowledges drawing on both oral and written sources and notes that he had gleaned the information “by word of mouth, and from treatises, documents, and persons.” He does not indicate, however, when or whom he is quoting. The generally accepted conclusion among scholars is that the source for his discussion of Montanism runs from the middle of 48.1 through 48.13.\footnote{Heine, “The Gospel of John” 3.}

Researchers have advanced various theories on the specific identity of the source, including the Anonymous, Apollonius, Rhodo, a native of Asia, and also Hippolytus.\footnote{For a list of proposals about who Epiphanius’s source was, consult Pierre de Labriolle, \emph{Les Sources De L’Histoire Du Montanisme} (Fribourg: Librairie de L’Université, 1913; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1980) LIII-LIV.} Such attempts, however, are speculative, and the
identity of the author of Epiphanius’s source remains unknown.

Epiphanius’s source follows a line of argumentation very similar to the Anonymous, but it reveals much more detail. The source acknowledges that the Montanists were orthodox in some parts of their teaching, for they “accept every Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and affirm the resurrection of the dead.” Furthermore, “they agree with the holy catholic church about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” The source, nevertheless, draws a sharp distinction between the orthodox church and the Montanists in the area of spiritual gifts: “But they boast of having Montanus for a prophet, and Priscilla and Maximilla for prophetesses, and have lost their wits by paying heed to them. . . . [They] have separated themselves by ‘giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils’ and saying ‘We must receive the gifts of grace as well.’” It goes on to separate qualitatively the Montanists understanding and practice of spiritual gifts from that of the orthodox community; “God’s holy church also receives the gifts of grace—but the real gifts [ἀλλὰ τὰ ἑν τῶν χαρισμάτων, alla ta onóx charismata], which have already been tried in God’s holy church through the Holy Spirit, and by prophets and apostles, and the Lord himself.”

For Epiphanius’s source, the Montanists’ practice of spiritual gifts differed sharply from the genuine gifts of the orthodox, because the orthodox practice corresponds to that handed down from the NT period. Important, the source affirmed a direct continuity between the current orthodox community’s practice of spiritual gifts and those exhibited by Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets. A NT expression of spiritual gifts was markedly different from that exhibited in Montanism. The source cites 1 John 4:1 where the apostle John warned against false prophets—“Try the spirits, whether they be of God”—and 1 John 2:18-19 where John warned regarding coming antichrists who would separate from the orthodox community. The source relates, “The Phrygians are truly not ‘of’ the saints themselves. They ‘went out’ by their contentiousness, and ‘gave heed’ to spirits of error and fictitious stories.”

Epiphanius’s source then launched a twofold attack on the Montanist prophecies: (1) prophecies of true prophets are fulfilled and (2) true prophets, unlike the Montanist prophets, spoke in full possession of their understanding. Regarding

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63 *Panarion* 48.1.3.
64 Ibid., 48.1.4.
65 Ibid., 48.1.3-4.
66 Ibid., 48.1.5. All Greek citations from Epiphanius are from *Epiphanius II*, Panarion haer. 34-64 (Herausgegeben von Karl Holl, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlage, 1980] 220. [transliteration added]
67 *Panarion* 48.1.6.
68 Ibid., 48.1.7.
the first argument, the source starts with a minor argument to demonstrate a logical inconsistency in the Montanist viewpoint of spiritual gifts. Montanists insisted on the continuance of spiritual gifts like prophecy when they asserted, “We must receive the gifts of grace as well.” Yet Maximilla had prophesied that no prophet would arise after her because of the end of the world. The source argued,

For look here, their religion is itself proof that they cannot keep their contentiously made promises. If we must receive the gifts of grace, and if there must be gifts of grace in the church, why do they have no more prophets after Montanus, Priscilla and Maximilla? Has grace stopped working, then? Never fear, the grace of the holy church does not stop working! But if the prophets prophesied up to a certain time, and no more after that, then neither Priscilla nor Maximilla prophesied; they delivered their prophecies after the ones which were tried by the holy apostles, in the holy church.69

The source goes on to argue,

Their stupidity will be exposed in two ways, then. Either they should show that there are prophets after Maximilla, so that their so-called “grace” will not be inoperative. Or Maximilla will be proved to be a false prophet, since she dared to receive inspiration after the end of the prophetic gifts—not from the Holy Spirit but from devils’ imposture—and delude her audience.70

The logic of the source’s argument seems to be that though the Montanists insist that one must receive spiritual gifts like prophecy, they insist that it ended with Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla. For Epiphanius’s source, they cannot have it both ways. Either they must prove that prophets exist after the three passed away and that the gift continues presently if one must receive the gifts of grace, or face the alternative of admitting that neither Priscilla nor Maximilla were prophetesses because of Maximilla’s prophecy of no prophecy after her own. Since the end did not occur and since prophecy continues, then the three must be false prophets because of her prophecy that the end would come after her.

Admittedly also, as with the Anonymous discussed above, the continuance of prophecy in the church is not the issue, for Epiphanius’s source argued that “Never fear, the grace in the holy church does not stop working!,” which admittedly implies that he might not have been arguing against the continuance of the prophetic gift per se, but the argument hinges on distinguishing the genuine spiritual gift of prophecy from that practiced by the Montanists. One cannot over-stress that an overwhelmingly crucial issue for Epiphanius’s source is his insistence that the genuine spiritual gift of prophecy does not err, i.e., does not prophesy inaccurately. This factor of non-err-ing prophesy serves as a clear demarcation between genuine

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69Ibid., 48:2.1-2.
70Ibid., 48.2.3.
and Montanist prophecy. After exposing this logical contradiction, Epiphanius’s source contends,

> And see how they can be refuted from the very things they say! Their so-called prophetess, Maximilla, says, “After me will be no prophet more, but the consummation.” Look here, the Holy Spirit and the spirits of error are perfectly recognizable! Everything that the prophets have said, they also said rationally with understanding; and the things they said have come true and are still coming true. But Maximilla said that the consummation would come after her, and no consummation has come yet—even after so many emperors and such a lapse of time! There have been about 206 years from Maximilla’s time until ours, the twelfth year of Valentinian and Valens and the eighth of Gratian’s, and we have yet to see the consummation announced by this woman who boasted of being a prophetess, but did not even know the day of her own death.71

In this quote, the phrase “the things they have said have come true and are still coming true” is strategic. For Epiphanius’s source, the mark of a true prophet is accuracy and consistency of fulfillment.

One must also draw attention to the fact that from the discussion of Epiphanius’s source that he firmly held that someone who claims the prophetic gift and prophesies falsely is a false prophet. No hybrid category exists for a genuine prophet to prophesy inaccurately and still be a true prophet. He reinforces this later in his discussion when he notes regarding the NT prophet Agabus’s prophecy regarding a worldwide famine (Acts 11:27-30), “And in turn, prophets came down to Antioch and declared that there would be a worldwide famine, and their prediction did not fail; to show that they were true prophets, the scripture adds at once, ‘which thing came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.’”72 Here, he perceptively recognizes Luke’s affirmation of the fulfillment of the prophecy that reinforces the genuineness of Agabus as a NT prophet.73

One other discussion deserves mention regarding accurate prophecy. Epiphanius’s himself wrote that “Phrygians also venerate a deserted spot in Phrygia, a town once called Pepuzza though it is now leveled, and say that the heavenly Jerusalem will descend there. And so they resort there, celebrate certain mysteries on the site, and, as they suppose, sanctify themselves.”74 He continued with the

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71Ibid., 48.2.4-7.
72Ibid., 48.8.4-5.
73This is in direct contrast to Grudem’s contention that genuine prophets may be inaccurate. He criticizes Agabus’ prediction by describing it elsewhere in Acts 21:10-11 as “a prophecy with two small mistakes.” For Epiphanius’s source, Agabus was a genuine prophet because he was accurate in his pronouncements and Luke reinforced this by noting the fulfillment of his prophecy. In Acts 11:28, Grudem overlooks the impact of this phrase as it relates to Agabus’ prophecy (cf. Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy 77).
following note regarding some whom he recognized as a Montanist sub-group.\textsuperscript{75}

The Quintillianists in their turn, who are also called Pepuzians and known as Artotyrites and Priscillianists, are the same as the Phrygians and derive from them, but in a certain way are different. For the Quintillianists or Priscillianists say that either Quintilla or Priscilla—I cannot say for certain, but one of them, as I said, slept in Pepuzza, and Christ came to her and slept beside her under the following circumstances, as the deluded women said: “Christ came to me dressed in a white robe,” she said, “in the form of a woman, imbued me with wisdom, and revealed to me that Jerusalem will descend from heaven here.”\textsuperscript{76}

Since the descent of Jerusalem at Pepuzza had not occurred, Epiphanius adds this as another proof of Montanist false prophecy.

A crucial question arises at this point. Upon what basis would Epiphanius’s source have derived such a contention that true prophets must prophesy accurately? The context of his discussion reveals the answer, when in contrasting accurate predictions with unfulfilled Montanist prophecies, the source anchors his argument by comparing Montanist prophecies with data of the OT and the NT: “By comparing what they [i.e., the Montanists] have said with the teachings of the Old and New Testaments—which are true, and which have been delivered and prophesied in truth—let us determine which is really prophecy, and which is false prophecy.”\textsuperscript{77}

Briefly stated, for Epiphanius’s source, if prophecy and prophets do not measure up to OT and NT stipulations and examples of prophecy, they are false prophets. He based his standard on biblical stipulations regarding prophets (Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22; 1 Sam 3:19; 1 Cor 14:29-32) and the example of behavior and practice of OT/NT prophets. Also, the source reveals through this statement that only two categories of prophets exist: one is either a true, genuine prophet or is a false prophet. There exists no middle ground for a genuine prophet who does not conform to these prophetic protocols/standards. No shades of gray allow one to be an inaccurate prophet and still be a genuine prophet.

Epiphanius’s source’s use of the OT and NT texts regarding prophets and prophecy as a basis for evaluating Montanist prophecy/prophets receives reinforcement in the second argument used: genuine prophets are rational, i.e., they are in full possession of their understanding. He devoted even more space to this argument than the first, arguing “let us determine which is really prophecy and which is false.

\textsuperscript{75}Williams notes, “Only Epiphanius distinguishes this group from the Montanists. . . . Epiphanius might have conjectured the existence of this sect from the distinctiveness of Priscilla’s vision, or from its occurrence in a document different from the collection of Montanist prophecies” (Frank Williams, \textit{The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis}, Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies, Books II and III, trans. Frank Williams [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984] 21 n. 1).

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 49.1.1-3.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 48.3.3.
by examining the activities and prophetic expression of both OT and NT prophets. He argued, “A prophet always spoke with composure and understanding, and delivered his oracles by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration.”

Important to note is the fact that the writer bases the rationality of true prophecy on the behavior of the prophet and his inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Epiphanius’s source examined the prophetic activity as well as the prophesies of OT and NT prophets like Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, David, Abraham, Agabus, Paul, and Peter as proof that biblical prophets were always in control of their faculties of reason and understanding in their prophetic activity.

Important for this discussion is that Epiphanius’s source saw a direct continuity between OT and NT prophets by linking both eras of prophecy together, for as noted above, he related, “By comparing what they have said with the teachings of the Old and New Testaments . . . let us determine which is really prophecy, and which false prophecy.”

In contrast to the OT and NT prophets, he contended that much of the Montanists’ expression of prophecy was ecstatic or irrational. He noted,

But when the Phrygians profess to prophesy, it is plain that they are not of sound mind and rational. Their words are ambiguous and odd, with nothing right about them. Montanus, for instance says, “Lo, the man is as a lyre, and I fly over him as a pick. The man sleepeth, while I watch. Lo, it is the Lord that distracteth the hearts of men, and that giveth the heart to man.”

Now what rational person who receives the ‘profitable’ message with understanding and cares for his salvation, can fail to despise a false religion like this, and the speech of someone who boasts of being a prophet but cannot talk like a prophet? For the Holy Spirit never spoke in him. Such expressions as “I fly,” and “strike,” and “watch,” and “The Lord distracteth men’s hearts,” are utterances of an ecstatic. They are not the words of a rational man, but of someone of a different stamp from the Holy Spirit who spoke in the prophets.

Epiphanius’s source also notes that the Phrygians admitted the ecstatic nature of prophecy and attempted to use scriptural examples to support it: “When the Phrygians are out to combine falsehood with truth and rob those who care for accuracy of their intelligence, they collect heaps of texts to make a false case for their imposture, and to prove their lies from them, say that certain scriptures bear a
resemblance to it.”\textsuperscript{83} Apparently, the Phrygians cited the sleep of Adam and his response to Eve’s creation in Genesis 2:21-23 as an example of proof for ecstatic prophecy. Epiphanius’s source proceeds to demonstrate that “Adam’s case was nothing like theirs... God brought the unconsciousness of sleep upon Adam, not distraction of mind,”\textsuperscript{84} and “Adam’s senses and wits were not in abeyance.”\textsuperscript{85} He commented further that regarding “the future he prophesied, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.’ These are not the words of a man in ecstasy or without understanding, but of a person of sound mind.”\textsuperscript{86}

Very importantl for this discussion, Epiphanius’s source reveals that the Montanists appear to have been aware of this charge that their form of prophecy differed substantively from biblical standards and expression. After reviewing OT prophetic activity and demonstrating its rationality, he relates, “But even though they [the Montanists] choose to reply, ‘The first gifts are not like the last ones,’ how can they prove it. The holy prophets [OT] and the holy apostles prophesied alike.”\textsuperscript{87} In other words, the Montanists drew a distinction between OT prophecy and NT prophecy, claiming that the two gifts were different from each other in order to justify their form of prophecy. Epiphanius’s source strongly refuted such contentions: “The holy prophets and the holy apostles spoke alike.”\textsuperscript{88} In other words, the gift of prophecy is the same in the OT and the NT, i.e., one gift that is both rational and accurate. From this statement, Epiphanius as well as his source maintained not only a continuity of OT and NT prophecy/prophets but their equal authority as well. One can see this affirmed when Epiphanius’s source then proceeded immediately after refuting distinctions in eras of prophecy to examine NT prophets like Agabus, Paul, and John in order to demonstrate the same characteristics shared in common with OT prophets.\textsuperscript{89} He summarizes by concluding,

We find then that every prophet, whether in the Old Testament or in the New, prophesies with understanding, as St. John said in Revelation: ‘The Lord revealed these things to his servants through his servant John, and, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ The person who said this was sound of mind and understanding—see how he says the same thing as the Old Testament prophets who say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and ‘the vision which he saw.’\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 48.4.4.
\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., 48.4.4-6.
\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., 48.6.4.
\textsuperscript{86}Ibid., 48.6.6.
\textsuperscript{87}Ibid., 48.8.1.
\textsuperscript{88}Ibid., 48.8.1.
\textsuperscript{89}Ibid., 48.8.2-48.9.10.
\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., 48.10.1-2; cf. Rev 1:1.
Epiphanius’s source next remarks, “But this Montanus, who has deceived his victims with his boast of being a prophet, describes things which are not consistent with sacred scripture,”91 and a little later, “Montanus is thus in total disagreement with the sacred scriptures, as any attentive reader can see. And since he is in disagreement, he himself and the sect which like him boasts of having prophets and gifts, are strangers to the holy catholic church. He did not receive the gifts; he departed from them.”92 The source, therefore, equated OT and NT prophetic gifts. Important, for Epiphanius’s source, a direct continuity and authority existed between OT and NT prophecy. Anyone who departed from those biblical data or norms did NOT have the genuine gift of prophecy. Instead, their heterodox departures from these biblical norms regarding prophecy demonstrated they were false prophets.

The Consequences of Differences in the Use of Spiritual Gifts

Because of such differences between prophecy in the early orthodox church and in Montanism, a sharp cleavage between these two groups developed. Eusebius’s sources as well as Epiphanius’s source reveal that the early church rejected Montanist claims that their practice of spiritual gifts was orthodox and normative. As a result, Montanus and his followers left the orthodox church because of their practice of spiritual gifts and formed their own movement:

When you Phrygians say you left the church over gifts of grace, how can we believe you? Even though you are disguised with the title of “Christian,” you have launched another enemy attack on us. You have taken up the barbarians’ quarrel and mimicked the enmity of the Trojans, who were also Phrygians! Things that are different from gifts and—as your own prophets say—not the same kind that the Lord promises, cannot be gifts.93

From this quote, one learns that though Montanists called themselves “Christian,” they also apparently admitted that their expression of spiritual gifts differed from that exhibited in Scripture (“as your own prophets say—not the same kind that the Lord promises, cannot be gifts”).

The movement also became known from the earliest times as “the New Prophecy” (νέα προφητεία).94 A debate among patristic scholars questions whether this title was a self-appellation or a name that the early church gave to Montanism.95 Klawiter argued, “There is no reason a priori that it was the church

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91Ibid., 48.10.3.
92Ibid., 48.11.4.
94Ibid.; Eusebius HE 5.19.2.
95For a detailed discussion of this debate, see Klawiter, “New Prophecy in Early Christianity” 63-70.
which attached the adjective new to the Montanist phenomenon.96 Aune argues that the term “‘New Prophecy,’ appears to have been the original self-designation of the Montanists.”97 Either way, the term indicates the sharp distinctions in the practice of spiritual gifts between the orthodox church and the Montanists (or Phrygians). Though prophecy per se was not the problem, it was the sharp departure from accepted biblical norms of prophecy stipulated in both the OT and NT, in terms of its manner of expression and content—e.g., especially false prophesying and ecstasy as detailed above—which caused alarm in the early church in the period immediately after the apostles. Klawiter summarizes, “By about A.D. 177, the churches in Asia and Phrygia had rejected the New Prophecy. By the end of the second century, the New Prophecy was being combatted also at Hierapolis (Phrygia), Antioch (Syria), and Ancyra (Galatia).”98

Although Montanus’ teaching gained many adherents, the early church as a whole rejected the Montanists as false prophets due to these sharp departures from biblical norms of prophecy. The abuse of prophecy by Montanism led to the gradual discrediting and disappearance of prophecy from the beginning of the third century onwards.99 As Friedrich observes, “Montanism was the last great flare up of prophecy in the Church.”100 Hill confirms this, noting “the repudiation of Montanism marks the effective end of prophecy in the Church.”101 Montanus was orthodox in some teachings,102 but his (and his followers’) deviations from apostolic doctrine in important areas, his false prophesying, and the great excesses of this movement resulted in a growing resistance of the early church to anyone who later claimed to possess the prophetic gift.103

One of the first direct references to the early-church belief regarding the cessation of the prophetic gift is in the Muratorian Fragment, which most modern scholars now date around A.D. 170. This work contains the oldest existing list of the canonically accepted NT books. Italian historian and theological scholar Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750) discovered this work in the Ambrosian Library of Milan and published it in Milan in 1740. (The Latin document consists of eighty-

96Ibid., 69.
97David E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 439 n. 64.
102For instance, he held to the doctrine of the Trinity, maintained the universal priesthood of believers, and affirmed the millennial reign of Christ on earth.
five lines and is a fragmentary work with the beginning and end possibly broken off.\textsuperscript{104} The work refers to both apostles and prophets, stating explicitly that the number of prophets “is complete,” indicating an end to prophetic expression.\textsuperscript{105} Heine notes the following regarding the Muratorian list:

It should be noted that the Muratorian canon, which is to be dated at approximately this same time [as the Montanist Controversy] and located at Rome, rejected the \textit{Shepherd of Hermas} for the same reason that Hippolytus advanced against the Montanist prophecy: it is a recent writing, and prophecy ceased with the apostles. There was, then, at Rome, in the late second and early third century a different attitude toward the possibility of contemporary prophecy than we have seen exhibited in the documents coming from the Montanist controversy a little earlier in Asia.\textsuperscript{106}

The church father Hippolytus (d. ca. 235) was a presbyter in Rome in the early third century. In dealing with the heresy of Noetus,\textsuperscript{107} who espoused a modalistic monarchianism, Hippolytus appealed to a closed canon: “There is, brethren, one God, the knowledge of whom we gain from the Holy Scriptures, and from no other source.”\textsuperscript{108} Although the word prophecy is not mentioned, such a statement amounts to a denial of the charisma of prophecy. Hippolytus also appeals to a closed canon when he notes about the Montanists,

But there are others who themselves are even more heretical in nature (than the foregoing), and are Phrygians by birth. These have been rendered victims of error from being previously captivated by (two) wretched women, called a certain Priscilla and Maximilla, whom they suppose (to be) prophetesses. And they assert that into these the Paraclete Spirit had departed; and antecedently to them, they in like manner consider Montanus as a prophet. And being in possession of an infinite number of their books, (the Phrygians) are overrun with delusion; and they do not judge whatever statements are made by them, according to (the criterion of) reason; nor do they give heed unto those who are competent to decide; but they are heedlessly swept onwards by the reliance which they place on these (imposters). And they allege that they have learned something


\textsuperscript{105}For further information, see Harry Y. Gamble, \textit{The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning} (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 95. Gamble gives an English translation of the Latin text. The \textit{Muratorian Fragment} associates the termination of the gifts of apostleship and prophecy and, in speaking of the \textit{Shepherd of Hermas}, says, “It cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the prophets, whose number is complete, nor among the apostles, for it is after their time.”


\textsuperscript{107}Tradition about Noetus is conflicting. Theodoret indicates that he was a native of Smyrna, while Epiphanius says that Noetus was an Asian of the city of Ephesus (\textit{Panarion} 37.1.1). According to Epiphanius, Noetus made his heresy public about 130 years before Epiphanius lived. Since Epiphanius wrote around 375, Noetus would date about 245. For further information, \textit{ANF} 5:223 n. 2.

\textsuperscript{108}Hippolytus, \textit{Against the Heresy of One Noetus} 9; \textit{ANF} 5:227.
more through these [their own books] than from law, and prophets, and the Gospels.109

From the demise of Montanism until the turn of the present century, the prophetic phenomenon was never a part of a major movement in Christianity.110 Instead, focus shifted to apostolic doctrine and a study of the Scriptures as the source of Christian doctrine and knowledge.

CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction, this discussion has focused on the very early post-apostolic period and the great “charismatic” crisis of the mid-second century known as the Montanism. The Montanist crisis constituted a watershed in analyzing immediate and primitive, post-apostolic understanding of the NT gift of prophecy. More specifically, the church’s handling of this crisis as reflected in tradition through “the Anonymous,” Apollonius, and Epiphanius’ source revealed how the early church, immediately after the period of the apostles, conceptualized the NT gift of prophecy.

Two areas were decisive in revealing the post-apostolic church’s understanding of NT prophecy. First, how did the early church respond to this prophetic crisis? The orthodox church rejected Montanism outright. They did not embrace it or tolerate it. They did not dialogue with it—the orthodox church rejected it summarily based on a careful examination and comparison of the biblical data regarding OT and NT stipulations for prophets. They tied their refutation to the biblical data that upheld a direct continuity and authority between the eras of OT and NT prophecy/prophets. When they compared and contrasted Montanistic claims of prophecy to the data expressed in both the OT and NT, Montanism failed the test. When the Montanists tried to claim distinctions between OT and NT prophets/prophesy, the early, orthodox church rejected such attempts and strongly upheld a direct continuity between these eras, especially in the area of prophetic continuity and authority.

Second, what type of arguments did church fathers use to reject such a movement? Their arguments were also based in the same stipulation of a direct continuity between OT and NT prophets/prophesy. (1) They examined the Montanists’ prophetic pronouncements. As stipulated in both OT and NT, prophets who prophesied incorrectly or falsely were considered false prophets with no middle ground for genuine prophets who were sometimes inaccurate. For these sources, the issue was black and white: either one is a genuine prophet who prophesies accurately or one is a false prophet. The early church never accepted the concept of an inaccurate, genuine prophet. This standard reveals that the early church maintained

109 Hippolytus Refutation of All Heresies 8.12; ANF 5:123.
the continuity and authority of OT and NT prophecy. They maintained no distinctions in eras of prophecy.

2 They also found Montanist prophecy incompatible with biblical data regarding rationality. Biblical prophets were rational, but Montanistic prophets were ecstatic (irrational). Hence, Montanist prophets/prophecy did not correspond to true OT and NT prophets/prophecy.

3 The early church also recognized the authoritative nature of NT prophets and prophecies. This can be seen in how they perceived Montanism to be an acute danger. Because of the authority inherent in a professed prophetic voice of the Lord, the early church decisively rejected Montanism because of its departures from Scripture in prophetic areas. The fathers perceived Montanism to be leading the church astray by their heterodox brand of prophecy that was irrational and incorrect in its prophetic pronouncements.

Grudem attributes the decline to an alleged neglect of his own peculiar distinction between two types of NT prophecy, one having an authority of actual words and another having only an authority of general content. He suggests that prophets who had only the latter type of revelation mistakenly took it for the former, leading to an eventual downfall of the gift altogether. Grudem asserts, “If our understanding of the authority of ordinary Christian prophecy is correct, then the primary application to our lives today would be to encourage ourselves not to make the same mistake as some made in the early church by overvaluing prophecy and thinking of prophecies as the very words of God.”

Grudem’s claim deserves several important responses. First, he reveals an Enlightenment-based prejudice against early church tradition by rejecting the orthodox church’s stipulations regarding prophecy as “a mistake.” Sources cited by Eusebius (“the Anonymous” and Apollonius) and Epiphanius lived immediately after the apostles and most likely reflected apostolic views of prophecy. Those closest to the period most naturally reflect positions corresponding to apostolic views. Why and how they rejected Montanism reveals how the church today should define and understand prophecy today. Grudem has made a grievous “mistake” when he cavalierly dismisses such data since it does not correspond to his own peculiar conceptions of prophecy.

Second, Grudem’s statement constitutes a very telling admission. He admits that the early church (post-apostolic) did not reflect his concept of NT prophecy. In contrast to Grudem’s assertion, the three early sources discussed above reveal that the orthodox church displayed none of the characteristics of Grudem’s view of prophecy. Based on how that church dealt with Montanism, one may confidently assert that second-century orthodoxy would have rejected Grudem’s view outright as unorthodox and heretical. Furthermore, because Grudem admits that that church did not recognize his viewpoint on prophecy, the idea is reinforced

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that his view is an entirely novel reinterpretation foreign to the church’s traditional understanding of the gift of prophecy.

Third, a careful examination of the primitive sources also reveals the following: Grudem, as well as the Signs and Wonders or Third-Wave Movement who depend upon his position on NT prophecy, have a priori imposed a heterodox (i.e., unorthodox) interpretation upon NT prophecy that would not have been countenanced by the very early church. Since in the period of OT prophecy prophets were considered fully authoritative and inerrant (as Grudem admits), and in the church immediately after the NT era, both OT and NT prophets were considered fully authoritative, inerrant, and in continuity with each other (as this study has revealed), then the full continuity, authority, and inerrancy of NT prophets/prophesy in the NT period itself must be maintained. As a result, Grudem’s view must be rejected as unorthodox.
CESSATIONISM, “THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS,”
AND DIVINE HEALING

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The study of divine healing must include the tragic abundance of false teachers with false teachings and false practices, who claim biblical authority, but upon closer examination are clearly not of God. Do “gifts of healings” mentioned in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 still operate today as in NT times? This sign-gift ceased with the close of the NT canon. Does God still heal as He did in both the OT and the NT? An inductive study of the biblical record (including the OT, Gospels, Acts, and NT Epistles) establishes unmistakable characteristics of genuine divine healing. The biblical standards become the measure by which alleged contemporary divine-healing claims should be judged, whether of God or not. Next, God’s ultimate healing promise of salvation in 1 Peter 2:24 deserves attention. In context, the passage speaks of spiritual healing (salvation), not physical healing. Finally, a series of theological observations lead to the practical conclusion that Christians should focus on the spiritual/eternal rather than the physical/temporal. When God does heal today, it will not be through human agency, and it will be characterized as were His healings recorded in Scripture.

* * * *

Regarding the idea of cessationism, a recent publication contained this remarkable comment. What is your reaction to it?

If you take a new convert, who prior to his conversion knew nothing about the history of Christianity or the New Testament, and you lock him in a room with a Bible for a week, he will come out believing that he is a member of a body that is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and a body that consistently experiences miracles and works miracles. It would take a clever theologian with no experience of the miraculous
to convince this young convert differently.¹

At first glance and without much thought, we might agree. But look at the statement again. For me, this quickly becomes an agree/disagree situation.

I agree that a new convert who is totally ignorant of history, who has no experience interpreting the Bible, and who has no study tools might conclude that the church today experiences miracles like the first-century church.

But I totally disagree, and I suspect you do, too, that the new convert would be correct. Since when do we ask a new convert with nothing but a Bible for the correct theological expression of a subject so complex as miracles? Further, why would the theologian have to be “experienced” in the miraculous to be credible if we believe that the Scriptures are sufficient to articulate clear doctrine (2 Tim 3:16-17)?²

This raises an even bigger question: Why do trained theologians, who do have a knowledge of history and who do have the capabilities to use good Bible-study tools, come up with the same immature conclusion as a new believer who knows nothing? Could it be that they have used a combination of experience and a predetermined theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?

Cessationism involves the belief that the NT miraculous sign gifts (cf. Acts 2:22; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4) ceased with the apostles’ passing and the NT canon’s completion.² In general, noncessationists hold that all NT spiritual gifts have remained operative, even until today.³

This essay presents the cessationist perspective. The NT “gifts of healings” (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30) in particular and biblical healing in general are addressed. The subject of healing is so vast that one article is quite insufficient in doing justice to the topic. Therefore, the reader should refer to this writer’s comprehensive work, The Healing Promise,⁴ for a more thorough coverage of this broad subject and for a background sufficient to understand how the parts relate to the whole.


³For a representative presentation of the case for non-cessationism, read Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 1031-46.

PERSPECTIVE

With the issue of healing, the discussion and accompanying conclusions go far beyond mere theological debate and doctrinal purity. Whatever one believes on this topic dramatically influences his expectations when serious illness or injury affects a loved one or even oneself. Whatever theological position one takes on the subject, it is imperative that it be strongly substantiated by Scripture, lest he sincerely believe in promises that God never actually made. When this happens, tremendous discouragement, depression, and even disillusionment with Christianity can set in.

False Teacher

One of the most visible and vocal exponents of non-cessationism and an alleged practitioner of healing is Benny Hinn. His recent books have been bestsellers; he also appears as a regular guest on the Trinity Broadcasting Network. Hinn intimates that he has taken up where Kathryn Kuhlman left off.

Because of his unusually widespread influence and because he has attempted to express a theology of healing in Lord, I Need a Miracle, it becomes particularly important to examine what Benny Hinn teaches. This brief analysis compares what Hinn believes about healing with what the Scriptures teach. You can then make up your own mind about Hinn’s teaching credibility (see Acts 17:11).

2. Hinn believes that God always intends for believers to be healed. In contrast, the Bible teaches that some of the greatest saints, including Jacob and Paul, had physical infirmities from which they were never healed.
3. Hinn teaches that believers should command God to heal. The Bible teaches them to ask (1 John 5:14-15).
4. Hinn suggests that miraculous healing from God is gradual. Healing by Christ and the apostles occurred instantly.
5. Hinn teaches that faith on the part of the sick person is essential to healing. Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter could not have exercised faith.

\[\text{For a well-documented summary of Hinn’s ministry and teachings, read Hank Hanegraaff,} \]
\[\text{Christianity in Crisis (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House, 1993) 33-34, 339-45. Also William Lolodell, “The} \]
\[\text{Price of Healing,” Los Angeles Times Magazine (July 27, 2003):20, 30-32.} \]
\[\text{Benny Hinn, The Anointing (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992) 59-60.} \]
\[\text{Benny Hinn, Lord I Need a Miracle (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993) 63.} \]
\[\text{Ibid.} \]
\[\text{Ibid., 74-75.} \]
\[\text{Ibid., 79, 81, 83-84.} \]
\[\text{Ibid., 85-87.} \]
The Master’s Seminary Journal

when they were raised from the dead.

6. Hinn writes that we must do our part before God can heal.\textsuperscript{12} The Bible teaches that God is sovereign.

7. Hinn believes that Christians should not be sick.\textsuperscript{13} The Bible teaches that Christians can be sick and will all eventually die.

8. Benny Hinn implies that a person’s healing can be lost and that the healed person must do certain things to keep the healing.\textsuperscript{14} The Bible nowhere teaches such.

Amazingly, Hinn not only contradicts Scripture on the subject of healing, but he also contradicts himself. In 1992 Hinn wrote,

This recalls the day years ago when I heard Kathryn Kuhlman prophesy in her own inimitable way that the day would arrive, before the coming of the Lord, when the power of God would be so great that everyone would be healed. “There will not be one sick saint in the body of Christ,” she declared.

With her customary drama, pointing of finger, and hand on hip, she asked, “Could it be today?”

Of course, she never saw it come, but it will come. The Holy Spirit has convinced me of that.\textsuperscript{15}

Later, in a 1993 interview, Charisma magazine asked Hinn, “You’ve mentioned some other changes in your theology. Have you changed your view of healing?” Compare his 1993 answer to what the Holy Spirit allegedly told him in 1992:

Huldah Buntain, the missionary to India, was in our church recently, and she talked about how her husband, Mark, died. The story broke me up because I realized some of the greatest saints on earth have gotten sick.

Jacob walked with a limp. Elisha died a sick man, though the power of God lingered in his bones. Even the apostle Paul had an infirmity—although we’re not sure what it was. Why didn’t God heal them?

You know, my father died of cancer. Sadly, in the past, I stated publicly: Had my father known then what I know now, he wouldn’t have died. How cruel! I’m not going to say that about anyone again.

Yet I still believe that healing is promised to all of us as children of God. The Word of God is clear on that. Psalm 103 says: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.”

So I believe with all my heart that healing is a part of our inheritance as believers.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 58-62.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 67, 72.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 100-102.
\textsuperscript{15}Benny Hinn, The Anointing 146-47.
It’s a provision of God’s covenant with us. But now I have come to realize that God is sovereign, and there are things I just don’t understand.”

Either the Holy Spirit spoke correctly in 1992 and Hinn has chosen to correct the Spirit in 1993, or the Spirit didn’t speak what Hinn alleged in 1992 and he has resorted to damage control in 1993. All the evidence points to the latter conclusion.

**False Teachings**

False teachings about healing have taken various forms but almost always contain a mixture of truth and error. Half-truths about divine healing fuel the injurious errors of our day. Let me alert you to some of these more frequent half-truths so that you can be prepared to reject them.17

1. Because God wills that Christians enjoy His blessings, sickness shows that you are out of His will.
2. Sin is the root cause of sickness; therefore you must resist sickness as you would sin.
3. Since Christ died for your sickness and your sin, you can be freed from both.
4. If you had enough faith, you would be healed.
5. What you confess is what you possess; so talk sickness and you will get sick; talk health and you will get well.
6. All adversity comes from Satan; so sickness, like Satan, should be rebuked.
7. If you only knew the secret fact of God’s healing power, you could be healed.
8. Since Christ and the apostles healed in their day, Christians can heal today.
9. Since sickness is from Satan, nothing good can come from sickness.
10. Since God wants you well, never pray, “Thy will be done” in regard to healing.
11. Since sin is the cause of sickness, if you are sick, then you have a pattern of sin in your life.
12. God has healed you, but the devil is not letting the symptoms leave.

**False Practices**

Thousands of people could testify how painful these half-truths can be. Dr. C. Everett Koop recalls a particularly brutal episode.

We hired an investigative writer to look into some of the cults and into faith healers specifically. Our investigator traveled to a Southwestern city where a healing campaign

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17This discussion has been modeled after William C. Moore, “Nine Half-Truths on Healing,” *Eternity* (May, 1983):36-38.
had been advertised some weeks in advance....

Among those who applied for healing was an elderly Christian gentleman who lived out on the prairie. His vision was becoming dim, and he most likely was developing cataracts. The only lighting in the little cabin where he lived was a kerosene lamp. He was a devout Christian, read his Bible daily—or tried to—and had all the faith necessary for healing, if faith indeed does secure healing. His major complaint was that his sight had deteriorated to the point where he could no longer read his Bible.

On the night of his appearance before the healer, the old man was brought up in the atmosphere of a sideshow. The faith healer said, “Well, Pop, you can’t see anymore. You’ve gotten old, you can’t even see with your glasses. Your vision is failing.” Then he reached over and took off the old man’s spectacles, threw them on the platform, stamped on them, and broke them. He then handed the elderly gentleman a large-print Bible, which, under the lights necessary for television in those days, enabled the gentleman to read John 3:16 out loud, to the astonishment and applause of the audience.

The elderly gentleman praised God, the healer praised God, the audience praised God, and the old man went back to his dimly lit cabin and could not find his Bible, because his glasses were destroyed. The man went back to the healer but was told the most discouraging thing a godly man like that could possibly hear: “You didn’t have enough faith, or the healing would have stuck.”

Tragically, all of the above examples involve people who are noncessionists. Neither their theology nor their ministries harmonize with what Scripture teaches in general about miraculous sign gifts designed to authenticate Christ and the apostles or what it teaches in particular about healing.

GIFTS OF HEALINGS

“Gifts of healings” is the most enigmatic phrase that deals with healing in the entire Bible. Why? Because that phrase occurs only three times in the NT, and all three instances appear in 1 Corinthians 12. The verses provide no further explanation of what the manifestations involved. Nor does the gift appear in other NT gift lists. That means there is very little biblical evidence to draw from.

However, several biblical observations may help. First, both words in the expression are plural—“gifts of healings.” The plural surely does not require the gift to be manifest on more than one occasion by the same person, for that would mean “word of wisdom” in 1 Cor 12:8 was a one-time occurrence only. One must think further.

It could be that “gifts” refers to: (1) various methods of healing; (2) various occasions of healing; or (3) various bestowals of the gift. Because there are no other NT texts or contexts, no one knows for sure. “Healings” most likely refers to various

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19See Robert L. Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts 40-42, 82-83 for a complete discussion.
afflictions.

The parallel plurals, “effectings of miracles,” “distinguishing of spirits,” and “kinds of tongues,” could very well indicate that the manifestations were temporary (one-time only) and had to be renewed by God at His will.20 For instance, Paul healed multitudes (Acts 19:11-12), but couldn’t heal himself (Gal 4:13), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30), or Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20). That would also explain why Paul did not direct Timothy (1 Tim 5:23) to a person with this gift. Someone who had exercised it on one occasion would have no reason to suspect that it would be manifested again. James 5:13-18 can be similarly understood; this early epistle (about A.D. 50) exhorted sick individuals to call for the elders rather than for a person who manifested “gifts of healings.”

Other than their association with the apostles, the “gifts of healings” appear rarely. Only Philip is mentioned specifically (Acts 8:6-7). Stephen (Acts 6:8) and Barnabas (Acts 14:3) might also have exercised this sign gift. That would explain why Barnabas, who may have healed others with Paul in Iconium (Acts 14:3), did not himself heal Paul when he was nearly stoned to death in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20).

The “gifts of healings” seems to be a sign that was given to authenticate the apostles (Heb 2:4). Therefore, it is not surprising to discover its absence from the gifts list of Romans 12, which was written later than 1 Corinthians. Once the apostles were authenticated and the early church established, the apostolic signs gradually disappeared, for they had served their God-intended purpose.

Neither are we surprised to see the absence of sign gifts from the Pastoral Epistles written by Paul to Timothy and Titus. If those gifts were to be perpetuated, certainly Paul would have mentioned it, especially since Timothy suffered from stomach problems and other frequent afflictions (1 Tim 5:23).

If God intended “gifts of healings” to function as something other than a miraculous sign gift, we would expect to see it manifested in the lives of Paul’s numerous associates. But there is not the slightest hint of its appearance after A.D. 59. An argument from silence alone is not conclusive, but it is one more piece of evidence that needs to be seriously considered, because it is consistent with the other indications mentioned above.

Most likely, “gifts of healings” involved a temporary sign gift which was used by God to authenticate the apostles, was evidenced sparingly apart from Peter and Paul, was bestowed on a one-time-only basis, and was to be renewed by God’s sovereign will. Therefore, the “gifts of healings” in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 were not intended by God to be operative today.

The temporary nature of the “gifts of healings” does not mean that God is not healing today. This essay distinguishes between the actual human “divine healing” of the OT and the NT, as compared to the possibility of God’s direct

“divine healing” today. Because the sparse number of healings in the OT and the innumerable healings of Christ did not depend on the “gifts of healings,” neither would divine healing be dependent on that sign gift today.

Because the term “gifts of healings” and its context remain so ambiguous, a person should not build a theological superstructure on this paper-thin foundation. Those who develop their healing theology for the church today from this passage do so by reading their conclusions into the text rather than by finding any clear direction from other NT letters.

First Corinthians 12 appears to be a haven of rescue for healing advocates who understand how perilous their case would be if it rested alone on the healing pattern of Christ and the apostles. J. Sidlow Baxter correctly concludes that the healing miracles of neither Christ nor the apostles continued past the apostolic age.

Neither from our Lord’s miracle healings nor from those of the apostles can we safely deduce that such are meant to continue today, nor should we presume so. If such healings were divinely intended to continue in the same way today, then all who come for healing today would be healed without exception, as was the case in the days of our Lord and the apostles. But thousands who come for healing today are not healed. Therefore, by that simple, practical text we know that healings today are not on the same basis as in those days of long ago.21

However, Baxter then turns to the NT epistles and develops the idea—primarily from Rom 8:11, 1 Corinthians 12, and Jas 5:13-16—that bodily healing has been promised by Scripture for today.22 He does it, however, with this honest caveat:

Those seem to be all there is in the Epistles by way of clear promise or statement concerning divine healing or renewal of the human body in this present age. What is the first thought which leaps to mind? Is it not the very small space given to physical healing? In a way, it seems disappointingly small. Let it tell us the comparatively small importance which God puts upon it. Let it indicate its comparatively minor place over against the major emphases of the New Testament letters to Christian believers.23

Jack Deere also looks to 1 Corinthians 12 as a major biblical text to explain healing for today.24 He reasons that since (1) the apostles were the most gifted of all people in the church, (2) spiritual gifts range in strength and intensity, and (3) miraculous gifts were not limited to the apostles but distributed throughout the church, then (1) there is a distinction between signs/wonders and “gifts of healings,” and (2) it is wrong to insist that apostolic miracles set the standard by which to
measure today’s healings. He concludes: (1) that healings today will not be as spectacular as Paul’s or Peter’s, (2) that healings might not be as abundant as in the apostolic era, and (3) that this allows for some failure in attempted healings.

My response would be that Dr. Deere has developed a theory more from what Scripture doesn’t say than what it clearly says. His theory fails, in my opinion, for several reasons.

1. The phrase “gifts of healings” is so ambiguous in its contexts that no one can really know for sure what it means. Certainly something as important as a theology of physical healing should not be built on such a shallow foundation.
2. His theory does not explain the decline in quality and quantity of even the apostolic healings as the apostolic age drew to a conclusion.
3. His theory does not adequately account for “gifts of healings” appearing only in the 1 Corinthians 12 gift list.
4. His theory does not anticipate the total lack of instruction in the epistles on the matter of healing (with the exception of what is found in James 5). I would suggest that James 5 and 1 Corinthians 12 are not connected.
5. His theory assumes throughout that if Scripture does not prohibit healing or does not speak directly about the cessation of apostolic healing, then implicitly the Scriptures teach healing for today.25
6. Dr. Deere seems to contradict his own theory when he writes, “I believe that God is doing NT-quality miracles in the church today, and I believe He has done them throughout the history of the church.”26 The only quality of miracles we know of from Acts are those done by the apostles. Yet Dr. Deere elsewhere theorized that the miracles of the church were substandard compared to those of the apostles. Both cannot be true.

THE BIBLICAL RECORD

Since “gifts of healing” are not operative today, as they were in NT times, how is the church to distinguish between the true and the false of alleged divine healing? What follows is an inductive study of healings in both the OT and NT, which will help to answer the above question. What characterized divine healing then would validate divine healing today, if the nature of the healing was of the same biblical quality.

The Christian community must come to grips with the fact that it is extremely rare when a reported healing begins to match up with the biblical model. When God miraculously healed through the prophets, Christ, or the apostles, these qualities, among others, characterized the healing:

26Ibid., 58.
1. It was immediate.
2. It was public.
3. It took place on ordinary, unplanned occasions.
4. It included illnesses that were untreatable by the medical community.
5. It was complete and irreversible.
6. It was undeniable, even to detractors.

Taking contemporary healing a step further, most of today’s reported healings look little different than reported healings from the cults and other world religions. The following biblical pattern separates the true from the false.27

**THE OLD TESTAMENT’S HEALING RECORD**

The OT bridges time from creation to Christ. It would be naïve to assume that every instance of illness or healing has been recorded. However, it does seem reasonable that God included the majority of special cases in the divine record. Moses wrote the central statement on divine healing in Deut 32:39 (cf. Job 5:18):

> See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded, and it is I who heal; and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

The testimony rings clear: God shoulders ultimate responsibility for life or death and health or sickness.

**God Afflicted**

God physically afflicted more people, more often than He physically healed. For example,
- Gen 12:17 – The household of Pharaoh
- Gen 16:2 – Sarah
- Gen 20:18 – The household of Abimelech
- Gen 30:2 – Rachel
- Gen 32:22-32 – Jacob
- Exod 4:6-7 – Moses
- Exod 12:29-30 – Firstborn of Egypt
- Lev 10:1-2 – Abihu and Nadab
- Num 12:1-15 – Miriam
- Num 16:41-50 –Israel
- Num 21:4-9 – Israel
- Num 25:1-9 – Israel

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27The following data has been taken from Richard L. Mayhue, The Biblical Pattern for Divine Healing (Sun Valley, Calif.: Grace Books Int’l., 2002).
1 Sam 1:5-6 – Hannah
1 Sam 5:6,9,12 – Philistines
2 Sam 12:1-23 – Infant son of David
2 Sam 24:1-17 – Israel
1 Kgs 13:4 – Jeroboam
1 Kgs 14:12,17 – Jeroboam’s son
2 Kgs 5:20-27 – Gehazi
2 Kgs 19:35 – Sennacherib’s army
2 Chr 21:16-20 – Jehoram
2 Chr 26:16-21 – Uzziah
Ezek 24:16 – Ezekiel’s wife
Dan 4:28-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

Healing Methods Varied

God honored and, at times, personally used various techniques to heal physically.

1. **Prayer**
   - Gen 20:1-18 – Abraham
   - Num 12:1-15 – Moses
   - 1 Sam 1:19-20 – Hannah
   - 1 Kgs 13:6 – A man of God
   - 1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Elijah

2. **Hand into his bosom**
   - Exod 4:6-7 – Moses

3. **God’s predetermined time limit**
   - Dan 4:28-37 – Seven years

4. **Dipping seven times in the Jordan River**
   - 2 Kgs 5:1-14 – Naaman

5. **Unexplained actions**
   - 1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Elijah
   - 2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Elisha

6. **Without anything**
   - Gen 21:1-2 – Sarah
   - Gen 29:31 – Leah
   - Gen 30:22 – Rachel

7. **Combination of events**
   - 1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Prayer and unexplained actions
   - 2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Prayer and unexplained actions
   - 2 Kgs 20:1-11 – Prayer and medicine

8. **Looking at an elevated serpent**
   - Num 21:4-9 – Israel

9. **Plague checked, but no physical healing**
   - Num 16:41-50 – Incense offered
Sin-related Sickness

God directly caused physical affliction at times because of personal sin, although the person physically affected was not always the sinner.

1. **The sinner went unpunished**
   - Exod 32:22-32 – Aaron
   - Num 12:1-15 – Aaron

2. **The sinner was punished**
   - Lev 10:1-2 – Nadab and Abihu
   - Num 12:1-15 – Miriam
   - Num 16:1-50 – Korah
   - 1 Kgs 13:4 – Jeroboam
   - Dan 4:28-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

3. **Someone other than the sinner was punished**
   - Gen 12:17 – Household of Pharaoh
   - Gen 20:1-18 – Household of Abimelech
   - 2 Sam 12:1-23 – Child of David and Bathsheba
   - 2 Sam 24:1-17 – House of Israel
   - 1 Kgs 14:12,17 – Jeroboam’s son

Unexplainable Sickness

- Gen 27:1 – Isaac
- Gen 32:22-32 – Jacob
- 2 Sam 4:4 – Mephibosheth
- 1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Widow’s son
- 2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Shunammite’s son
- Dan 7:28; 8:27 – Daniel

God Healed Unbelievers

- Gen 12:10-20 – Pharaoh’s household
- Gen 20:1-18 – Abimelech’s household
- 1 Kgs 13:6 – Jeroboam
- 2 Kgs 5:1-14 – Naaman
- 2 Chr 30:20 – Israel
- Dan 4:34-37 – Nebuchadnezzar

God Restored Life

In the OT, only three people experienced resuscitation.
1 Kgs 17:17-24 – Son of the Zarephath widow
2 Kgs 4:18-37 – Son of the Shunammite woman
2 Kgs 13:21 – Unnamed man whose body touched the bones of Elisha

Satan Caused Sickness

God used Satan as an agent for sickness only once.
Job 1–2

Saints Were Sick

Some of the greatest OT saints were ill, but not directly because of personal sin.
Gen 27:1 – Isaac (uncured)
Gen 32:25 – Jacob (uncured)
Gen 48:1 – Jacob (uncured)
Exod 4:6-7 – Moses (cured)
1 Kgs 14:4 – Ahijah (uncured)
2 Kgs 13:14 – Elisha (uncured)
Job 1–2; 42:10 – Job (cured)
Dan 8:27 – Daniel (cured)

Though this might seem like a large number of healing incidents, remember that they occurred over a period of time that exceeds two thousand years. Significantly, far fewer healings occurred over thousands of years in the OT than were experienced during just a few decades in the NT.

THE GOSPELS’ HEALING RECORD

Never in human history have so many people been healed from such a multitude of diseases in so short a time as during Christ’s three-year public ministry. This outburst of healings has never been repeated. Christ’s healing ministry stands truly unique because it remains unequaled.

Purposes For Healing

Christ’s healing ministry served various purposes; all of them primarily contributed to authenticate the person of Jesus as the true Messiah. The healing miracles were never performed merely for their physical benefit.
Matt 8:17 – A fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isa 53:4
Matt 9:6 (also Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24) – So people would know that Christ had the authority to forgive sins
Matt 11:2-19 (also Luke 7:18-23) – To authenticate the messianic ministry for the imprisoned John
Matt 12:15-21 – To fulfill the messianic prophecy in Isa 42:1-4
John 9:3 – That the works of God might be displayed in Christ
John 20:30-31 – That men might believe that Jesus is Christ
Acts 2:22 – God’s authentication of Christ

Healing Had Direction

Although Jesus’ miracles abounded, He did not perform them indiscriminately, nor did He always heal everyone who needed healing (see John 5:3-5); neither did He perform signs upon request (see Matt 12:38-40); nor would He use His powers to avoid the cross (see Matt 26:52-53). God always directed miracles toward the purposes previously documented.

|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|

Immediate Healing

With three exceptions, all of Jesus’ healings occurred instantaneously. They required absolutely no recuperative period because the afflicted immediately returned to complete health. No relapses or misunderstandings about being healed marked Christ’s healings.

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Several Healings Time-Delayed

The only three delays in total healing involved mere minutes and no longer. The men involved received total healing.

|--------------|---------------|------------|

Abundant Healings

Jesus’ miracles abounded; He healed in unlimited number and scope.

|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
Healing In Absentia
Healing occurred without Jesus’ physical presence.

Healing Methods Varied
As with OT healings, Jesus used a variety of methods to heal. Remember, the power of God healed! Nothing magical or cure-producing in the method caused the healing.

1. Christ touched

2. Christ spoke
Matt 9:6-7    Mark 10:52    John 5:8-9

3. The afflicted touched Christ’s cloak

4. Christ used spittle
Mark 8:22-26

5. Christ plugged a man’s ears with His fingers and placed spittle on his tongue.
Mark 7:33-35

6. Christ anointed with clay
John 9:6

Christ Approved Doctors
Jesus recognized the normal means of physical healing—a doctor and medicine.
Matt 9:12 – “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are ill.”
Healing For God’s Glory

Although sickness can result directly from personal sin, as evidenced in the OT, nowhere in the Gospel accounts does Jesus attribute sickness directly to personal sin. However, Scripture states twice that sickness occurred in order that God could be glorified.

John 9:1-41 – Man with congenital blindness
John 11:1-53 – Lazarus

Christ’s Healing Ministry Is Unique

Another healing ministry like Christ’s ministry has never happened.


Christ Shunned Acclaim

Jesus went out of His way to avoid public approval or reward for His healing miracles. In Luke 10:20, Jesus explicitly told the disciples not to rejoice in the power they had been given, but rather to rejoice over the fact that their names were recorded in heaven.

Matt 8:4 | Mark 1:44 | Mark 8:26
Matt 12:16 | Mark 7:36 | Luke 8:56

Undeniable Healings

Christ’s healings generated phenomenal spectator reaction. Everyone, including His enemies, walked away amazed, astounded, and unable to deny or discredit the miracles.

Matt 9:33 | Mark 3:10 | John 9:1-41
Matt 12:23 | Mark 5:20 | John 11:47-48
Matt 15:31 | Mark 7:37

National Reactions

The geographic range of personal reaction reached nationwide proportions. Mark 1:45 describes the fact that the news of Christ’s healing ministry spread to such an extent that He could no longer enter a city. Even though He remained in unpopulated areas, people came to Him from everywhere.
Healing Did Not Save
While Christ’s miracles could not be denied, they did not necessarily lead to faith.

1. They were undeniable

2. They did not lead to faith
Matt 12:38-45 | John 6:26-36

Christ Healed Unbelievers
Wherever He healed the multitudes, it can be assumed that most, if not all, were unbelievers.
Matt 8:1-4 – A leper
John 5:1-9 – A lame man by the pool

Faith Not Necessary
Jesus did not require personal faith to be healed. In addition to the following examples, it is obvious that Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, and the widow’s son were incapable of displaying faith. Yet, they all were resuscitated from the dead.


Another’s Faith Honored
At times, Christ healed when faith was displayed by someone other than the one afflicted. Note especially Matt 17:19-20. The disciples had been unable to cast out a demon and came to Jesus privately for further instruction. He informed them that it was because of their lack of faith. The parallel passage in Mark adds that prayer would have provided success (9:29). Those who claim that a person is not healed because of his or her own lack of faith need to be alerted and corrected.
Matt 9:2  Mark 2:1-5  Luke 8:50

**Faith Of The Afflicted Honored**
Occasionally, Christ commended the faith of the afflicted one.
Matt 9:22  Matt 9:29  Mark 10:52

**Healings Were Not Prearranged**
1. He healed from the beginning of His ministry (Matt 4:23-25) to the end.
   John 11:1-44
2. Often Jesus approached the person.
3. Jesus always healed during the normal course of His ministry.

**Satan And Demons Caused Sickness**
Not all sickness is directly caused by Satan or demons, but people possessed by demons were liable to have physical infirmities. Luke 13:10-17 serves as the classic example—where a lady bound by Satan (most likely through a demon) had been doubled over for eighteen years.

**Heavenly Healing Power**
Because Christ had temporarily and voluntarily set aside the *independent* exercise of His divine attributes, His healing power came from God the Father.
Matt 12:28 – He cast out demons by the Spirit of God.
Luke 5:17 – “And the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.”
Luke 11:20 – He cast out demons by the finger of God.
John 5:19 – “...the Son can do nothing of Himself...”
Acts 2:22 – “…signs which God performed through Him...”
Acts 10:38 – Christ healed because God was with Him.
Healing By The Disciples

People other than Christ healed in the Gospel accounts.
Matt 10:1-15 – Going only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (see 10:6), all the disciples’ needs were to be met supernaturally by God. They were to take nothing on their preaching and healing excursions.
Luke 10:1-16 – Seventy others were commissioned similarly to the twelve.

As spectacular as the early chapters in Acts read with regard to healing, they seem like nothing when compared to the endless healings by Jesus. The Gospel healing record unquestionably stands in a league all its own. Christ’s healings far outdistanced, in quantity, all the other healings in the Bible put together.

THE ACTS’ HEALING RECORD

The healing ministry in Acts reads with far less intensity when compared to that of Christ, although Acts covers about thirty years. However, on a time comparison basis, Acts had far more healings than the entire OT. The NT epistles seem almost barren of healing when compared to Acts.

Healing Techniques Varied

The healing techniques varied in Acts, as they also did in the OT and the Gospels.

1. By command

2. By being in the healer’s shadow
   Acts 5:15

3. By touching a cloth from the healer’s body
   Acts 19:11-12

4. By prayer and laying on of hands
   Acts 28:8-9

5. By speaking
   Acts 9:17-18
Immediate Healing
All the healings in Acts occurred instantaneously; they required no recuperative period. The afflicted experienced immediate restoration to full health.

Unbelievers Healed

Faith Of The Afflicted Honored
At times the faith of the afflicted was commended.
Acts 3:16 | Acts 14:8-10

Faith Not Necessary
Apostolic healers did not necessarily require personal faith of the afflicted.
Acts 9:36-43 | Acts 20:9-12

Healings Undeniable
The miracles of healing could not be denied—even by the Sanhedrin.

Demons Caused Sickness
Acts 8:7 | Acts 10:38

Sin-Related Sickness
Sometimes God afflicted because of personal sin.

Life Restored
Two resuscitations occurred.
Acts 9:36-43 – Dorcas (by Peter) | Acts 20:9-12 – Eutychus (by Paul)

Illness Prevented
Acts 28:1-6
Heavenly Healing Power
Acts 4:30

Saints Were Ill

Healing In Absentia
Acts 19:11-12

Everyone Was Healed
Acts 28:9

As expected, the quality characteristics of these healings matched those of Christ. However, the quantity did not even begin to approximate the too-numerous-to-count healings by Jesus.

THE EPISTLES’ HEALING RECORD

God used signs, miracles, and wonders to authenticate the apostles and their ministry (Rom 15:18-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4). Certification of the apostles primarily explains the miraculous actions of men, not the mere healing of the saints. Spectacular supernatural healings were among the signs displayed by the apostles and those with whom they personally ministered. Whether the apostles themselves or those with whom they ministered did the signs, the signs were designed to attest the authority of the apostles as revealers of truth (see Acts 2:42-43).

If all Christians are supposed to perform such deeds, those deeds could not have served as signs of apostleship (see 2 Cor 12:12). The signs attested the apostles’ words as of equal authority with those of Jesus Himself, for He had chosen them as His spokesmen (see Matt 10:11-15, 20, 40; 1 Cor 14:37).

Medicine Approved
Paul recognized and recommended medicine.
1 Tim 5:23

Sin-Related Sickness
James 5:14-20 outlines the biblical response to severe or untimely physical infirmities that probably, but not necessarily, have their source in God’s chastisement for personal sin.
Healing Declined

Paul’s frequency of healing declined with the passing of time.
- Gal 4:13-15 – Paul was ill
- Phil 2:25-30 – Epaphroditus was ill
- 1 Tim 5:23 – Timothy was ill
- 2 Tim 4:20 – Trophimus was ill

Neither John nor Peter mention historical instances of first-century healing in their epistles and Revelation.

Healing is noticeable in the OT (over 4,000 years), overwhelming in the Gospels (about three years), occasional in Acts (about thirty years), and negligible in the epistles (about forty years). The apostolic age ended, and miraculous healing by direct human intervention ceased. The subsequent alleged healings recorded by early church historians do not match the biblical record in regard to the miraculous quality of instant, total, and undeniable healing.

PROPHETIC EXPECTATIONS OF HEALING

When John the Baptist questioned whether Jesus truly was the Messiah or whether he should look to someone else, John sent his disciples to Jesus for an answer (Matt 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-23). In reply, Christ first healed, and then he told John’s men to report these miraculous events back to John, remembering Isa 35:5-6.

On another occasion, Jesus healed in order to fulfill Isa 42:1-4 (Matt 12:15-21). Healing in Mark 7:31-37 alludes to Isa 35:5-6. On those occasions, Jesus healed to preview His kingdom power as an appropriate credential in order to be rightly recognized as the King of Israel.

These brief bursts of power in the Gospels pointed to something yet future which the OT (especially Isaiah) had predicted. The Bible anticipates two future periods when human health will be dramatically improved—The Millennium and Eternity Future.

The Millennium

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Eternity Future

| Isa 25:8 | 1 Cor 15:54 | Rev 21:4 | Rev 22:2 |
GOD’S HEALING PROMISE

While this study might not decide every issue conclusively, there is one thing for certain—the Bible does contain a healing promise. Many have misunderstood it. Look at 1 Pet 2:24 carefully:

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

Can you see it? “By His wounds you were healed.” What does Peter mean? How does this apply to you and me in this life? If it applies physically, then why aren’t all Christians healed? Has God’s Word failed? Has God lost His healing touch? Are the Scriptures mistaken?

Two foundational truths help get us off to a right start in understanding Peter and divine healing. First, every human being, when conceived, possesses a congenital spiritual defect—a sin disability that needs to be healed. Second, Peter addresses our need for spiritual restoration in 1 Pet 2:24 with his discussion of Christ’s provision of salvation’s healing.

With those two thoughts in mind, look closely at the parts of 1 Pet 2:24-25. Then, when reassembled, you will be able to understand the whole because the parts have been identified. Our text explains five elements of salvation:

1. The fact of salvation (verse 24a):
“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross….”

2. The purposes of salvation (verse 24b):
“…that we might die to sin and live to righteousness….”

3. The means of salvation (verse 24c):
“…for by His wounds you were healed.”

4. The need for salvation (verse 25a):
“For you were continually straying like sheep….”

5. The result of salvation (verse 25b):
“…but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

First Pet 2:24 has everything to do with spiritual healing, which the Bible calls salvation. In fact, 1 Pet 2:18-25 means just the opposite of what most healing advocates teach. Peter argues that since Christ physically and spiritually suffered for our spiritual healing (vv. 21-24), then we should be willing to suffer physically in this life at the hands of men (vv. 18-21), because we have already received God’s healing promise for eternal salvation (vv. 24-25). Peter actually validates the divine purpose in human suffering rather than eliminating it.

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Unless we begin with this eternal perspective, we will never understand biblically how God works in the physical affairs of mankind in this life. The good news is that true Christians are securely saved. The other important-to-know news is that not all of salvation’s benefits will be received until our bodies have been raised from the grave (1 Cor 15:42-44, 52-54). After God initiates our salvation, all Christians still sin, still suffer ill health, and eventually will die. However, in the end, divinely perfected believers will dwell forever in the presence of a holy God (Rev 21:1-8).

CONCLUSION

After all has been studied and written, I believe the Bible teaches that God can sovereignly choose to heal whomever and whenever, but it will not be a frequent occurrence nor will it be done through human healers because:

1. The gospel is good news about our sin problem, not our sicknesses (Rom 3:23; 6:23).
2. Christ’s atonement focuses primarily on our sins (iniquities), not our sicknesses (Lev 16:1-34; Isa 53:5-6, 11-12; 1 Pet 2:24).
3. Christ died for our sins, not our sicknesses (1 Cor 15:3).
4. Christ was made sin, not sickness (2 Cor 5:21).
5. Christ forgave our sins, not our sicknesses (1 John 2:12).
6. Christ gave Himself for our sins, not our sicknesses (Gal 1:4).
7. Our bodies are corruptible and, thus, subject to sickness (1 Cor 15:42-44).
8. We will all die physically (Heb 9:27).
9. The NT “healing promise” refers to salvation, not physical healing (1 Pet 2:24).
10. Our hope while on earth is heaven, not healing (Rom 8:24-25).

Though the NT sign/authenticating “gifts of healings” have ceased, the possibility of God healing without human healers is certainly possible today. However, when He does heal, it will be characterized in a manner similar to His healings recorded in Scripture.
THE HERMENEUTICS OF NONCESSIONISM

Robert L. Thomas
Professor of New Testament

The Master’s Seminary is noncessationist in regard to such gifts as teaching, helps, and administration, but is cessationist regarding revelatory and sign gifts. Recent changes in evangelical biblical hermeneutics that have accompanied comparable changes in evangelicalism as a whole have opened doors of opportunity for noncessationists to defend their position in a new way. The new hermeneutical subjectivism has given continuationists an opportunity that is nonexistant when following traditional grammatical-historical principles of interpretation. Four examples illustrate this use of revisionist hermeneutics. (1) Narrative-based interpretation takes its cue from evangelical redaction criticism and its theory that narrative literature can teach doctrine just as effectively as didactic type writings, a theory that has been successfully refuted. (2) Community-based interpretation sees a contemporary Christian community as playing an indispensable role in assigning meaning to a biblical text. This too contradicts traditional grammatical-historical principles. (3) Tradition-based interpretation allows for reading into a biblical passage an interpreter’s own background and beliefs, but differences in defining how to limit that tradition reflects the extreme subjectivism to which such a principle leads. (4) Mediating-based interpretation theorizes the existence of a common ground between cessationists and noncessationists and alters traditional hermeneutical principles in a way to accommodate that preunderstanding. All four approaches illustrate the growing sophistication of noncessationist hermeneutics and their continuing violations of grammatical-historical hermeneutics.

* * * *

To frame this discussion, the position of The Master’s Seminary on cessationism is a good startingpoint. The institutional “Statement of Faith” on that issue reads as follows:

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit
glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13, 14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Cor. 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Cor. 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:7-12; Heb. 2:1-4).

Those words indicate that as an institution TMS is noncessationist in regard to some of the gifts such as teaching, helps, and administration (1 Cor 12:28), but is cessationist in regard to other gifts such as miracles, healing, and tongues (1 Cor 12:28-30). The gift of apostleship (1 Cor 12:28, 29) lasted only as long as witnesses of Christ’s incarnation and resurrection remained alive. Then it ceased along with other revelatory gifts and sign gifts, whose purpose it was to confirm revelation through the revelatory gifts. The remainder of the gifts continue and contribute immeasurably to growth in the body of Christ.

Hermeneutical Changes and Their Effect on Noncessationism

In the last two or three decades, evangelicalism has undergone some dramatic changes that are not often noticed. David F. Wells has commented extensively on the changes in his “Foreword” to The Eclipse of the Reformation in the Evangelical Church, as has Iain H. Murray in his work Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000. Along with the changes in evangelicalism have come changes in evangelical biblical hermeneutics, whether as a result of or as a cause for the changes in evangelicalism remains to be determined. Whatever the relationship between the two spheres of alteration, the two have gone hand in hand in revamping the evangelical landscape substantially.

Noncessationism, of course, antedates the above-mentioned differences between the two stages of evangelicalism, but the continuationist perspective has not

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2 Iain H. Murray, Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000) 51.

3 For a further description of the changes, see Robert L. Thomas, Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002) 13-20.

4 Menzies and Horton trace the beginning of noncessationist Pentecostalism as follows:
The current Pentecostal movement traces its origin to a revival at Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas that began on January 1, 1901. Students, from their studies of the Bible concluded
been unaffected by the recent hermeneutical shift. In earlier days charismatics defended their alleged contemporary use of gifts like tongues and prophecy purely on the basis of experience, but today their defense in many cases has shifted to claims of biblical interpretation as the basis for their exercise of such gifts. The shift has come through implementing new evangelical principles of interpretation.

What is the hermeneutical switch that has made this possible? First and foremost, it is the incorporation of a new first step in the interpretative process, a step called preunderstanding. In a very subtle way, beginning the exegetical practice with a conscious embracing of the interpreter’s preunderstanding of what to expect from the passage under investigation has transformed evangelical hermeneutics from an objective exercise of letting a passage speak for itself into a subjective exercise of allowing an interpreter to read into a passage the meaning toward which he is inclined. Obviously, this transition moves away from letting the text speak for itself toward the practice of reader-response hermeneutics.

Noncessationists and other fringe evangelical subgroups who have been uneasy with trying to defend their systems from the Bible have taken advantage of the new hermeneutical subjectivism to present for the first time a biblical defense for what they believe. That is why so many new “isms” like noncessationism are cropping up among evangelicals. The new “isms” are difficult to deal with because evangelicals have as yet to isolate the root cause of the deviations: a change in principles of interpretation.

The Master’s Seminary advocates traditional grammatical-historical
hermeneutics as evidenced in its Statement of Faith:

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.7

Four illustrations of noncessationism’s use of the revisionist hermeneutics will help to specify the issues involved.

A Narrative-Based Interpretation

Pentecostal Awareness of a Hermeneutical Change8

According to an Academic Dean at Western Pentecostal Bible College in Clayburn, British Columbia, Pentecostal hermeneutics in earlier days since the movement began has been characterized as a “Pragmatic” hermeneutic.9 That charismatic dean admits that the governing principle in this approach is to interpret Scripture in light of contemporary charismatic experience, a principle established in 1901 when the father and fountainhead of Pentecostalism laid hands on one of his students and she began speaking in tongues.10 That has been the method of studying Scripture for noncessationists ever since. They have simply asserted the method, taking it to be “self-evident and self-authenticating.”11 Experiences in the early church as recorded in Acts are taken to be normative for the present day.

In 1992, Menzies confessed that earlier Pentecostals viewed the Bible as “a homogeneous whole and built our [Pentecostal’s] theology on texts arranged together with little regard for the author’s original intent.”12 That approach has in recent times become an embarrassment to noncessationists who desire to become a part of mainstream evangelicalism. Recently, in the work coauthored by William and Robert Menzies, Robert Menzies observed,

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10Ibid., 2-5.
11Ibid., 4.
Pentecostal Scholars have seized the opportunity afforded by the new hermeneutical context and raised important questions concerning the nature of Luke’s pneumatology (doctrine of the Holy Spirit) and its relationship to that of Paul. This in turn has stimulated discussions within the wider Evangelical world concerning the nature of fully-orbed biblical pneumatology and how this might impact contemporary church life.13

Cessationists can derive profit by looking first at how mainline Pentecostalism now claims a hermeneutical base in biblical interpretation, and then from a survey of how other charismatics, including third-wavers, have responded to this hermeneutical base.

Rationale for Using Narrative as a Basis for Doctrine

Pentecostal hermeneutics has learned a redaction-critical approach to the book of Acts from evangelical redaction-critical studies of the Synoptic Gospels. Robert Menzies has emphasized the lesson learned in the following words: “The tools of redaction criticism, aided by more wide-ranging developments in literary analysis, were employed with considerable success.”14 For the most part, they credit I. Howard Marshall, a non-Pentecostal, for this discovery:


On the basis of Marshall’s work, he also writes, “A revolution is taking place in

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13William W. and Robert P. Menzies. Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 43; William Menzies wrote chapter 1, the postscript of chapter 13, and the conclusion of this work; Robert Menzies wrote the rest (ibid., 11 n. 1). In commenting on the Pentecostal shift in focus, Dempster has commented, “Hermeneutics has been a hot topic for Pentecostals in recent years. In the annual meetings of the Society for Pentecostal Studies over the last decade, no topic has been investigated with greater frequency or intensity than the topic of hermeneutics” (Murray W. Dempster, “Paradigm Shifts and Hermeneutics: Confronting Issues Old and New,” Pneuma: The Journal for Pentecostal Studies 15/2 [Fall 1993]: 129).


15Menzies and Menzies, Spirit and Power 40-41.
Evangelical hermeneutics... I refer to the substantial change in Evangelical attitudes toward the theological significance of biblical narrative.\textsuperscript{16} He describes the effect of this revolution on the study of the Gospels in the following words:

\begin{quote}
[A] new generation of Evangelical scholars and seminary instructors, many of whom had studied under Marshall, began to reappropriate and utilize the tools of redaction criticism. These scholars—e.g., Grant Osborne, Robert Stein, Joel Green, Darrell Bock, Craig Blomberg—began to judiciously use the positive insights of this method of analysis while at the same time discarding some of the more radical presuppositions. This resulted in an impressive array of scholarly studies that showed the value of the method and its compatibility—if employed properly—with a high view of Scripture. The impact upon Evangelical hermeneutics was inevitable, if not immediate. Here were Evangelical scholars highlighting the distinctive theological perspectives of the various Gospel writers.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Menzies then transfers the redaction-critical method to the book of Acts and concludes that since Acts is narrative literature like the Gospels, one can derive doctrine from narrative literature just as well as he can from didactic literature such as the NT epistles:

\begin{quote}
These developments converged to produce what is today a clear consensus. There is now widespread recognition in the Evangelical world that biblical narratives, particularly those found in the Gospels and Acts, were shaped with theological concerns in mind and thus they convey a theological message. The crucial question is no longer whether Luke and the others were theologians; the central question now is what is the specific shape or content of their theology.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

He confirms such a conclusion by referring to two recent works on hermeneutics written by non-Pentecostals. One is by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard:

\begin{quote}
We have already stated that narrative often teaches more indirectly than didactic literature without becoming any less normative. Thus, we reject Fee and Stuart’s highlighted maxim that “unless Scripture explicitly tells us we must do something, what is merely narrated or described can never function in a normative way.”\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}
The other is by Grant Osborne:

Moreover, I also oppose the current tendency to deny the theological dimension on the grounds that narrative is indirect rather than direct. This ignores the results of redaction criticism, which has demonstrated that biblical narrative is indeed theological at the core and seeks to guide the reader to relive the truth encapsulated in the story. Narrative is not as direct as didactic material, but it does have a theological point and expects the reader to interact with that message. My argument is that biblical narrative is in some ways even better than the teaching applied to similar situations in the lives of the people.²⁰

With this encouragement from non-Pentecostal scholars, Pentecostals have plunged ahead with using historical precedent in Acts as a scriptural basis for their alleged continuing exercise of such sign gifts as tongues and prophecy.²¹ They justify this on the basis of the “quiet revolution” that has transpired in evangelical hermeneutics when writing,

Because Luke-Acts is so pivotal for Pentecostal theology and experience, the recent hermeneutical shift within the larger Evangelical world has had a special impact on Pentecostals. Pentecostals, often chided in the past for simplistic arguments from historical precedent, have entered into a new era of creative theological reflection.²²

Robert Menzies cites Stronstad as an early voice that noted the distinction between Lukan and Pauline theologies, but acknowledges that Stronstad’s experience probably played a part in his discovery.²³ He writes, “Stronstad will undoubtedly be criticized by some for reading his own Pentecostal experience into Luke-Acts . . . . Might it not be that Stronstad’s Pentecostal experience has actually enabled him to read Luke-Acts more accurately?”²⁴
Evaluation of the Doctrine-Based-on-Narrative Rationale

Three observations regarding the new Pentecostal hermeneutics are in order at this point.

(1) Even with the new sophistication that characterizes Pentecostalism’s post-“revolution” hermeneutics, the subjectivism of reading one’s experience into the biblical text still prevails. In other words, an experience-based preunderstanding of what meaning the text should yield is still the determining factor. They are doing the same as they always have, but have gained a new respect from other evangelicals, because new evangelical hermeneutics have opened the door for them to come to the text with a preconceived interpretation.

(2) To credit I. Howard Marshall with launching this revolution raises questions about the legitimacy of the revolution’s origin. Marshall’s stand on the issue of biblical inerrancy is at best questionable. One whose redaction-critical studies acknowledge unhistorical elements in the text of the Gospels can hardly furnish a suitable foundation for inerrantists to adopt new hermeneutical procedures. Neither do the disciples of Marshall listed by Robert Menzie supply suitable models of biblical inerrancy, because they all follow Marshall’s example of finding

25 Joseph Byrd, Senior Pastor of the Stewart Road Church of God in Monroe, Michigan, agrees with many others about the new trend among Pentecostals: “Recent publications demonstrate the transition of Pentecostalism from its oral theological origins to a new theological sophistication in the last two decades” (“Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutical Theory and Pentecostal Proclamation,” Pneuma: The Journal for Pentecostal Studies 15/2 [Fall 1993]:203). Archer concurs: “Pentecostal scholarship has reached new levels of sophistication as the Fall 1993 issue of Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies demonstrates” (Kenneth J. Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect” 70).

26 Noncessationists differ from one another regarding the exact role of experience with some holding that experience should not be the starting point for interpretation (Fee, Gospel and Spirit 85-86; Menzie, “Methdology” 12-13) and others that it is inevitably involved throughout the interpretive process (F. L. Arrington, “Hermeneutics, Historical Perspectives on Pentecostal and Charismatic,” in Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, eds Stanley M. Burgess, Gary B. McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993] 384). Whatever position a noncessationist may take on this issue, the fact remains that contemporary experience plays a role in interpretation, as Ellington readily admits: “Beliefs are not derived from understanding, but arise from intense individual and corporate experiences of the presence and action of God in the lives of Christian believers. Doctrine is descriptive of and, as such, arises out of experience. . . . This is not to say that, for Pentecostals, doctrine is unimportant, but it is to recognize that the basic fodder of the doctrinal process within Pentecostalism is the experience of the community of faith” (Scott A. Ellington, “Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture,” Journal of Pentecostal Theology 9 [1996]:18).

27 Noncessationist Arrington in essence admits this influence: “[T]he Pentecostal movement’s own theological presuppositions also impact the movement’s interpretative principles. . . . Interpretation, indeed, the very approach to the task of interpretation, is shaped by the theological presuppositions that the interpreter brings to the process” (Arrington, “Hermeneutics, Historical Perspectives” 378).

unhistorical elements in the Synoptic Gospels. If evangelical redaction-critical procedures allow for editorial embellishments leading to historical inaccuracies in the Gospels, they very well may allow that Luke embellished and altered historical accounts in Acts with a view to enhancing his own theological preferences. Evangelical redaction criticism has had detrimental effects by dehistoricizing the Synoptic Gospels, and if used in Acts, will do the same there.

(3) Using narrative literature as a basis for doctrine is precarious for a variety of reasons. For one thing, that policy fails to allow for the transitional nature of Acts. As Loder observes,

Acts 2—when understood in light of the unique historical setting of the event described—does not support the view that the ‘vocational’ work of the Spirit can only be experienced as one enters into a whole new realm of the Christian life through a post-conversion crisis event.

The delay between the Samaritans’ confession of faith and their reception of the Spirit is probably best understood within the context of the literary structure of Acts—which is apparently designed to reflect God’s programme of salvation-history.

Many events in Acts are unrepeatable because they are unique in God’s ongoing plan from the time of His original creation to the time of His new creation. Acts describes a period of transitions such as those from the law to grace, from Israel’s history to the church’s history, from an emphasis on the kingdom of Israel to an emphasis on the body of Christ.

Furthermore, to attribute to Luke a double intent of writing history and theology is an unrealistic approach to narrative literature. The goal must be to determine a historian’s primary intent. As Fee expresses it,

it [i.e., discovering the author’s and the Holy Spirit’s intent] is of crucial importance to the hermeneutics of the historical narratives, for it is one thing for the historian to include an event because it serves the greater purpose of his work, and yet another thing for the interpreter to take that incident as having didactic value apart from the historian’s larger intent... Whatever else one gleans from the story, whether it be the place of visions in Christian guidance(!) or the nature of Christian conversion, such gleanings are incidental to Luke’s intent.


31Ibid., 81.

By basing doctrine and Christian practice on incidental details, an interpreter commits grievous injustices against the narrative in particular and biblical doctrine in general. In so doing, he fails to allow for traditional grammatical-historical hermeneutics in its recognition of history as unembellished history.

A Community-Based Interpretation

Rationale for Using the Community as a Basis for Interpretation

Recently, Kenneth Archer, a professor at Church of God Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tennessee, presented another approach to Pentecostal hermeneutics. He proposed that the community is an indispensable partner in assigning meaning to a biblical text:

The Pentecostal hermeneutic being presented embraces a dialogical interdependent relationship between Scripture, Spirit and community as a necessary process in the making of meaning. This hermeneutic emphasizes the important contributions that the Pentecostal community brings to the interpretive process. The primary filter for interpretation will be the Pentecostal story.

Archer continues, “The Bible, the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal community are actively engaging each other in the conversation.”

In reflecting the influence of modern linguistics upon his thinking, the Pentecostal scholar writes, “This tridactic conversational approach to ‘meaning’ is necessary because all forms of communication are underdeterminate; that is a listener or reader is needed to complete the communicative event, hence producing meaning.” He dismisses the possibility that the individual hermeneut can arrive at a meaning through use of objective hermeneutical principles, and says that he needs the input of the community to assign meaning to a biblical text. Archer later adds, “Pentecostals take very serious [sic] Goldingay’s warning that ‘those who pretend to be objective and critical and then find their own concerns in the texts they study

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34Ibid., 1-2.

35Ibid., 2.


37Archer, “A Pentecostal Hermeneutic” 2, also 2 n. 6.
need to take a dose of self-suspicion.\textsuperscript{38}

Archer continues,

The biblical passage is at the mercy of the community. However, a Pentecostal community will give the biblical passage the opportunity to interact with the readers in such a way that the passage fulfills its dialogical role in the communicative event. This is so because the Pentecostal community recognizes the Bible as the penultimate authoritative written testimony of Divine revelation—the inspired word of God. Furthermore, the community believes that the Scripture can speak clearly and creatively as word of God to the contemporary Pentecostal community’s situations and needs. Hence the Pentecostal community will read the Bible as sacred Scripture that speaks to the community’s current needs thus enabling the community to live faithfully before and with the living God.\textsuperscript{39}

Further, he says,

Knowledge as meaningful understanding will be rooted in and related to human life because “the only sort of (theological and theoretical) knowledge that really counts is knowledge grounded in life.” ‘Meaning, therefore, is no longer seen in terms of an original “cause” or ultimate “effect” but in terms of relationship.’ This meaning is arrived at through a dialectical process based upon an interdependent dialogical relationship between Scripture, Spirit and community.\textsuperscript{40}

In clarification, he states, “Meaning is negotiated through the conversation between the text, community and Spirit with the world behind the text informing not controlling the conversation.”\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Evaluation of Using the Community as a Basis for Interpretation}

Several brief comments will compare Archer’s hermeneutic with the traditional grammatical-historical approach.

(1) Most conspicuous is this scholar’s concession to reader-response hermeneutics as relates to deconstructionism, postmodernism, and poststructural-

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 3-4; cf. also Kenneth J. Archer, “Early Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation,” \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 8 (2001):41, where he writes, “The Modernist attempt to to [sic] be a neutral interpreter by setting aside one’s ‘experience’ and/or presuppositions is a false illusion.”

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 3. Note Archer’s reference to the Bible as “the penultimate authoritative written testimony of Divine revelation.” If the Bible is the next to the last authority, is the community the ultimate authority? Archer is unclear on this point.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 6.
ism. He indicates that the text has no meaning in and of itself, but must be assigned a meaning by the Pentecostal community. In contrast, the goal of grammatical-historical hermeneutics is to exclude preunderstanding of any contemporary person or community and let the text speak for itself.

(2) Reader-response hermeneutics leads inevitably to allowing a single passage of Scripture to have multiple meanings. If the Pentecostal community controls the meaning in its community, and so does the Reformed community in its community and the dispensational community in its community and so on, that means a given passage has as many meanings as there are communities. That characteristic of community-facilitated hermeneutics directly violates the grammatical-historical principle of a single meaning for each passage of Scripture.

(3) Community-based interpretation stands against another grammatical-historical principle, that of keeping application separate from interpretation. When
Archer speaks of the Bible speaking to “the community’s current needs,” that is not interpretation; it is application. In a traditional approach to hermeneutics, the two must be kept separate. Failure to do so will distort the meaning of the passage in its original setting. To arrive at the one correct interpretation, application cannot be allowed to control interpretation.

A Tradition-Based Interpretation

Using Presuppositions as a Basis for Interpretation

Gordon D. Fee fits well into the philosophical zone created by Anthony Thiselton in his 1980 work. Thiselton endorsed Smart’s statement that “[the] claim of absolute scientific objectivity in interpreting scripture involved the interpreter in an illusion about himself that inhibits objectivity.” Thiselton then concluded, “The biblical scholar therefore needs the help of someone who has made it his life’s work to wrestle with the problem of how these two sides [i.e., the ideal of a “pure” description of the text’s meaning and the inability of the interpreter to escape the confines of his finite or ‘historic’ existence] of the situation can be held together, without either being lost to view.” By insisting on an interpreter’s inability to approach a text objectively, Thiselton represents an agnostic skepticism toward obtaining propositional truth from Scripture.

Fee follows in this train. He writes,

In a now famous essay, Rudolf Bultmann once asked whether it was possible to do presuppositionless exegesis, in answer to which he gave a resounding No. We bring too much of ourselves—our culture and our traditions—to make such exegesis possible. Although he was contending in particular against sterile historical positivism, his essay continues to be a byword in biblical studies.

Fee acknowledges his own Pentecostal upbringing and his current differences with Pentecostals in accepting the baptism of the Spirit as separate from and subsequent to conversion, but clings to the use of the gifts of faith, healings, miracles, wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues

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45 For more detailed information on this point, see Brian A. Shealy, “Redrawing the Line between Hermeneutics and Application,” in Evangelical Hermeneutics, ed. Robert L. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002) 165-94.


47 Ibid.

48 Fee, Gospel and Spirit 70.

49 Ibid., 105-19.
in the contemporary church.\textsuperscript{50} Because of the combination of his differences from traditional Pentecostalism and his Pentecostal lineage, it is difficult to know whether to classify him as a Pentecostal, a charismatic, or a Third-Wave noncessationist.

One of Fee’s peculiarities lies in the area of definitions. The following reflects his unusual definition of hermeneutics:

\textit{Exegesis is in fact concerned with what the text meant in its historical context. Hermeneutics has to do with the science of interpretation in all its ramifications. But since the term has to do especially with what a text means (which includes what is meant), I will use the term to refer to what the biblical text means for us in terms of our understanding and obedience.}\textsuperscript{51}

Earlier he commented, “Because I am an exegete committed to the canon of Scripture as God’s word, I can neither reject exegesis (what it meant then) nor neglect hermeneutics (what does it say today).”\textsuperscript{52} In so defining hermeneutics, he is equating hermeneutics with a contemporary application of the text rather than using it in its traditional sense of the rules governing exegesis or interpretation.\textsuperscript{53}

By this novel definition of hermeneutics, this author has put present-day application into the driver’s seat in obtaining the meaning of a biblical text.\textsuperscript{54} In essence, that puts the focus on the interpreter’s subjective opinion of the meaning as viewed through the filter of his own personal circumstances. Such a step distances him from the meaning the original author intended for his immediate readers to comprehend.

That definition also goes hand-in-hand with the prominence that Fee gives


\textsuperscript{51}Fee, \textit{Gospel and Spirit} 4 n. 5.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 4.

\textsuperscript{53}For further discussion of the meanings of exegesis and hermeneutics, see Thomas, \textit{Evangelical Hermeneutics} 20-27. Some sources refer to application as significance and interpretation as meaning (cf. E. D. Hirsch, Jr., \textit{Validity in Interpretation} [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 1967] 8).

\textsuperscript{54}Pinnock is in essential agreement with Fee in equating application with interpretation: “The Spirit is active in the life of the whole church to interpret the biblical message in languages of today. He actualizes the word of God by helping us to restate the message in contemporary terminology and apply it to fresh situations” (Clark H. Pinnock, “The Word of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics,” \textit{Journal of Pentecostal Theology} 2 [April 1993]:16). He justifies such applications in “fresh situations” by comparing use made of the promise given to Abraham in Gen 12:1-3 by Isa 51:1-3 and Ezek 33:23-29. “The original text was a dynamic one and capable of being used in new ways by subsequent interpreters in the Spirit,” he writes (ibid., 13). Similarly, he notes, “Peter changes the direction of Amos 9.11-12 . . . in a speech recorded in Acts 15” (ibid.). Reasoning in this manner, he concludes, “God’s revelation is not a closed conceptual system. It is a word of life which becomes ever new” (ibid., 19). Pinnock fails, however, to distinguish between writers of inspired Scripture and present-day interpreters. The former received direct inspiration from God; the latter have no such direct revelation (see Thomas, \textit{Evangelical Hermeneutics} 252-53).
to presuppositions in his interpretation of the text. After citing several examples of interpretations with which he disagrees, Fee says,

Let me finally conclude this critique of others, with the candid admission that I do not with all of these illustrations suggest that I come to the text with a clean slate . . . But I am also illustrating in part how much easier it is to see this problem in others than in oneself. And that is precisely the great hermeneutical danger—that the biases of others are so clear.55

But after soundly rebuffing others for allowing their presuppositions to rule, he adds,

Having set the reader up with all of this, let me now seem to reverse myself and say that coming to the text with our tradition(s) in hand is not in itself a bad thing. Indeed, it is impossible to do otherwise. But what I want to stress here is that in itself this is neither good nor bad, and that in fact, it may often serve to the good.56

He then describes how traditions can be beneficial. Citing 2 Pet 1:20—“‘no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation’ (NRSV)”—he concludes, “Exegesis and hermeneutics, even when worked on or worked out in the privacy of one’s own study, must finally be the product of the Christian community at large.”57

At this point, Fee appears to agree with Kenneth Archer regarding the involvement of the community in the interpretive process, but he guards himself against placing as much weight on the community by proposing several levels of tradition: (1) a level that has been a consensus of the church for centuries such as the Trinity and the person of Christ; (2) a level that has not been the focus of much theological reflection such as the traditional role of male leadership; (3) a level of interpretation dealing with single verses where no reflective consensus exists; (4) the level related to our personal traditions; and (5) the level related to the personal traditions of others.58 He implies that level one can be a good thing, but that levels two through five are less beneficial.

If level one is the only helpful tradition—and sometimes there may be doubt about that—allowing tradition to govern interpretation cannot but harm rather than help interpret the Bible. By starting the interpretive process with one’s biases about what meaning a passage will yield, one violates the principles of single meaning and of not allowing application to control interpretation.

Fee criticizes Pentecostals for experience-based hermeneutics: “What I hope to show in the rest of this essay is that the Pentecostals are generally right on

55 Fee, Gospel and Spirit 77-78.
56 Ibid., 78.
57 Ibid., 80.
58 Ibid., 80-82.
target biblically as to their experience of the Spirit. Their difficulties arose from the attempt to defend it biblically at the wrong point.”

One other feature of Fee’s hermeneutical approach is worth mentioning. His view of the gift of tongues is that it was not an actual earthly language. Also, he is not sure whether “the speaking in tongues in contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic communities is the same in kind as that in the Pauline churches.” He says the issue is “probably irrelevant.” All that matters is that “[a]n experienced phenomenon, it is analogous to theirs” and that “for its practitioners [it] has the value similar to that described by Paul.” In other words, it is dynamically or functionally equivalent, but not necessarily formally equivalent.

In a similar vein, Fee thinks that the supernatural charismata named in 1 Cor 12:8-10 defy rational explanation. To try to explain them rationally, he says, is to impose standards of today’s Western culture on activities of the Holy Spirit. In speaking against assigning the meaning “mature” to τὸ τέλειον (to teleion) in 1 Cor 13:10, he writes,

It is perhaps an indictment of Western Christianity that we should consider ‘mature’ our rather totally cerebral and domesticated—but bland—brand of faith, with the concomitant absence of the Spirit in terms of his supernatural gifts! The Spirit, not Western rationalism, marks the turning of the ages, after all; and to deny the Spirit’s manifestations is to deny our present existence to be eschatological, as belonging to the beginning of the time of the End.

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59Ibid., 108.
60Fee, Paul, the Spirit 169.
61Ibid., 170.
62Ibid.
63Ibid.
64In this issue of The Master’s Seminary Journal, see Professor McDougall’s presentation of the overwhelming exegetical evidence for assigning the meaning “mature” in 1 Cor 13:10; see also Robert L. Thomas, Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Verse-by-Verse Study of 1 Corinthians 12–14, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999) 123-32.
65Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans1987) 644-45 n. 23. Pinnock concurs with Fee in contrasting a rational explanation of Scripture with the Spirit’s illumination of the text: “[T]here is the strong influence of rationalism in Western culture which fosters a neglect of the Spirit. There is a mystery when it comes to the Spirit which rationalism does not favour. It does not feel comfortable talking about God’s invisible wind. It prefers to draw up rules for interpretation which will deliver the meaning of any text by human effort. It does not want to drag mysticism into hermeneutics. Therefore, the only thing we leave for the Spirit to do in interpretation is to rubber-stamp what our scholarly exegesis concludes. This is an obstruction to effective biblical interpretation which grieves the Spirit of God” (Clark H. Pinnock, “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics” 8). Archer makes the same point: “This concern [i.e., that focus upon what
The outlook thus represented may explain why Fee has no explanation for speaking in tongues and why contemporary tongues need not match the biblical pattern. Both were and are a mysterious emotional experience that have no rational explanation. According to Fee, our Western culture misleads us into thinking that such an explanation should exist, but that is not necessarily true.

Pinnock carries irrationality a bit further than Fee when speaking of the perfections of God.

The problem of classical theism lies in the fact that it posits an ideal of the divine infinite perfection, which is often (not always) at odds with what the Bible says about God. It adopts a standard of what God must be like derived from human reason and used [sic, uses] it to interpret the Bible. Thus, for example, if God must (by that standard) be immutable, he cannot have changed, whatever the Bible says. Or, if God (by that standard) is all-powerful, he cannot be vulnerable or take risks, whatever the Bible says. Or, if God (by that standard) is timeless, he cannot have acted in time, whatever the Bible says. Or, if God is (by that standard) impassible, he cannot suffer, whatever the Bible says. Or, if God is (by that standard) omniscient, he cannot be surprised, whatever the Bible says. In effect, non-Christian philosophy trumps what the Bible may say; and this, ironically, what we usually call liberal theology.66

Interestingly, Pinnock credits the Bible with speaking of “an ideal of the divine infinite perfection” sometimes, but not always. He blames non-Christian philosophy for attributing such to God throughout the pages of Scripture. Is that the fault of non-Christian philosophy or of rational thinking? According to Pinnock, the mystery is so great that no one can ever know who God is. Sometimes He is who rational thinking says He is, but at other times He fits into an irrational pattern. If that is true, what good is the Bible in helping people to know God?

Evaluation of Tradition-Based Interpretation

Three observations regarding tradition-based interpretation are appropriate.

1. Fee’s agreement with Bultmann regarding the impossibility of presuppositionless exegesis repeats the same error as many evangelicals of recent years have committed. That position focuses its attention on the inability of humans to receive communication and turns aside from emphasizing God’s ability to communicate successfully.67 Human inability to attain absolute objectivity is no excuse for not striving to achieve the goal of objectivity. The Lord Jesus left as a

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the original inspired author meant and/or intended first readers to understand is inadequate as a Pentecostal hermeneutic] has led some scholars to articulate a hermeneutic that is more representative of the early tradition and ethos of Pentecostalism. These scholars desire to move away from a hermeneutical system that is heavily slanted toward rationalism which tends to downplay experience and/or the role of the Holy Spirit” (Archer, “Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect” 75).


67Cf. Thomas, Evangelical Hermeneutics 49-57, for further discussion of this point.
goal that His followers love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Failure to attain that absolute standard is inescapable, but is no excuse for not trying. Similarly, the interpreter’s goal should ever be objectivity in letting the biblical text speak for itself. Settling for his own biases as a starting point in studying Scripture has huge ramifications in distorting the meaning that God put there. Expecting the Bible to correct those biases is quite different from starting with a clean slate. If an interpreter approaches a text with noncessationist expectations, the chances are very great that he will arrive at noncessationist conclusions regarding the meaning. Fee criticizes other Pentecostals for their experienced-based hermeneutics, yet admits that preunderstanding has helped forge his own position on the noncessationist issue.

(2) Fee’s equation of hermeneutics with contemporary applications of the text reflects his inclinations to allow current significances of a passage to have their part in interpretation. He cites 2 Pet 1:20 as support for allowing the Christian community at large to determine meaning—in itself a highly suspect interpretation of Peter’s words—demonstrating his opinion that the text has no meaning all its own, but depends on contemporary interpreters to assign a meaning. He proposes that tradition of a certain type can be a good thing for interpretation and assigns five levels of tradition, one of which is good, others bad. He fails to answer the question of how one distinguishes where one level ends and another begins. He honors the church’s longstanding tradition regarding the Trinity and the person of Christ by putting it at level one, but disparages the church’s longstanding tradition regarding male leadership in the church by putting it at level two. Subjectivism prevails in his placement of what belongs in each category.

(3) Fee’s characterization of Western Christianity as a “cerebral and domesticated—but bland—brand of faith” reflects a basic inconsistency. Here is an authority in Western Christianity writing about and using hermeneutical principles based on logic and reasoning, but issuing a pronouncement that no rationality exists in the biblical text. Western culture in its rational approach to Scripture is dead wrong; the interpreter must throw reason out the window and proceed purely on the basis of emotion. That position flies in the face of God’s rationality and His ability to communicate rational truth. It denies fallen man’s opportunity to receive illumination by the Holy Spirit in receiving God’s reasoned revelation. The ability

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68 The only bias that is inevitable relates to biblical inspiration. An interpreter must approach the text with either a favorable or an unfavorable disposition toward biblical inerrancy. Neutrality on that issue is impossible.

69 Fee, Gospel and Spirit 81.

70 Cf. Thomas, Evangelical Hermeneutics 50-53. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979] 75-76) observes the contemporary tendency to set in contrast the cognitive and preconceptual sides of man as a reaction against a secularized use of reason. Yet he concludes that as bad as the dehumanizing use of reason is, it does not warrant an overreaction against reason in biblical
to think logically in Western culture derives from the impact of Christianity and the Bible—a very rational book—upon that culture. In instances where logical reasoning does not prevail, the Bible has not yet had its full effect.

The position of Max Turner—another noncessationist—regarding rationality closely resembles that of Fee. Turner criticizes B. B. Warfield’s stand for cessationism as being based on Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, which he labels as a product of the Enlightenment because it shifted the focus of knowledge away from revealed truth to the knowing subject, the inquiring critical mind. According to Turner, Scottish Common Sense Philosophy contended that “God had set in the intellectual constitution of humankind a set of self-evident principles and logical abilities that enabled objective knowledge and true understanding of the real world.” Warfield reasoned that “[t]he divine origin and nature of the miracles of Christ and the apostles are transparent to ‘common sense’ by their great quantity and utter perfection” in contrast to occasional miracles that may have occurred at other times.

In attributing Warfield’s position to Scottish Common Sense Philosophy and the Enlightenment, however, Turner forfeits his own position, because he admits that “the prototypical gifts gradually became marginalized” in the subapostolic era. In essence, the early church fathers, who could not have been affected by Scottish Common Sense Realism and the Enlightenment, agreed with Warfield’s cessationist interpretation. He acknowledges that characteristics of an infinite God are beyond human logic, but an allegedly deeper aspect of personality than the mind (with its language capacities) is not where man copes with them. He observes, “Man is more than his mind; he is not an intellectualistic machine. But this ‘more’ is not inevitably in tension with the mind, nor does language necessarily distort or obscure the wholeness of experience” (76). Gaffin’s answer to the proposal that the gift of tongues consisted of some type of ecstatic utterances rather than foreign languages closely parallels an effective response to the proposal that logical consistency should not be required in interpreting the Bible.

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72 Ibid., 288.

73 Ibid., 301.
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A Mediating-Based Interpretation

The principal theme of this article has been preunderstanding and how incorporating that in the first step of exegesis skews other grammatical-historical principles. Preunderstandings vary from interpreter to interpreter, ranging from narrative-based interpretation to community-based interpretation to tradition-based interpretation to any one of many other possible beginning points for studying a text. One preunderstanding that appears to characterize most if not all noncessationist writers is what may be called a mediating-based interpretation. Such an approach is searching for common ground acceptable to both cessationists and noncessationists.

Pentecostalist Turner furnishes an example of this when he writes,

[A]s a member of the Evangelical Alliance’s Committee on Unity and Truth . . ., I would wish to support any attempt to find unity between the Pentecostal/Charismatic and the more traditional forms of Evangelicalism. In that respect, Part 2 of this work is intended to be bridge-building, not polemical; many of its assertions should be heard as tentative questions rather than as dogmatic statements.

In the same vein, Pentecostalist Robert Menzies speaks:

My vision of the future . . . [sees] the assimilation of the modern Pentecostal movement into the broader Evangelical world as an exciting and positive event . . . . Twenty years ago, who would have thought that today we would find such openness concerning gifts of the Spirit? Looking forward, I see the potential for additional theological contributions to the larger body . . . . [T]he hermeneutical climate within Evangelicalism is more conducive now than ever before to our theological contributions.

Wayne Grudem, who is not a lifelong Pentecostal, reflects the same preunderstanding as he has approached the biblical text. In discussing the NT gift of prophecy, after alluding to the charismatic and noncharismatic positions, he writes, “Can a fresh examination of the New Testament give us a resolution of these views? Does the text of Scripture itself indicate a ‘middle ground’ or a ‘third position’ which preserves what is really important to both sides and yet is faithful to the teaching of

76Turner, The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts x-xi.
77Menzies and Menzies, Spirit and Power 67.
the New Testament? I think the answer to these questions is yes.”

At another point he adds, “I wonder if there may be room for more joint theological reflection on this area.”

Grudem sought to present a concept of prophecy that is not so restrictive (i.e., authoritative) as to exclude charismatically inclined people or so loose (i.e., nonrevelatory) as to repel the noncharismatic. His presupposition that a mediating position exists and the presupposition’s consequences for other hermeneutical principles warrant further investigation.

Grudem’s presupposition forces him into some strange hermeneutical problems. For example, to curry favor with noncharismatics and cessationists, he acknowledges that the gift of apostleship ceased at the end of the apostolic era, at about the end of the first century A.D. But to curry favor with the charismatics and noncessationists, he must hypothesize two gifts of prophecy—an apostolic-prophetic gift and a local-church prophetic gift—with the local-church prophetic gift continuing until Christ’s second coming. His case leans heavily on his questionable treatment of “the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (τῶν ἁπαστόλων καὶ ἡμεῖς ὧν ἀποστολὴν καὶ προφητείαν ἡ ἡμεῖς ἐποιήσαμεν) in Eph 2:20. One of his main arguments for distinguishing apostle-prophets from local-church prophets is a grammatical one in this passage, the single article governing two nouns connected by kai (“and”). He commits two hermeneutical errors in interpreting Paul’s language here. One is a grammatical error. The construction article-noun-kai-noun does not combine the two nouns into a single entity unless both nouns are singular, which they are not in Eph 2:20. To disregard a basic grammatical principle on an important point like this is a serious breach of grammatical-historical hermeneutics.

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79 Grudem sought to present a concept of prophecy that is not so restrictive (i.e., authoritative) as to exclude charismatically inclined people or so loose (i.e., nonrevelatory) as to repel the noncharismatic. His presupposition that a mediating position exists and the presupposition’s consequences for other hermeneutical principles warrant further investigation.

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80 For a refutation of Grudem’s interpretation of Eph 2:20 from a grammatical perspective, see F. David Farnell’s excellent discussion in “Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets?,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 2 (Fall 1991):162-69, and that in Thomas R. Edgar, Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996) 76-79. As his dissertation supervisor on this subject, Grudem had the advantage of expert guidance by a widely recognized grammatical authority, C. F. D. Moule (referred to in Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, xvi), but apparently he chose to disregard Moule’s counsel on this grammatical point (cf. C. F. D. Moule, An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1960] 110).
A second area where Grudem has skewed traditional hermeneutical principles in deference to his preunderstanding of what he presumes Eph 2:20 should teach is his disregard for the double occurrence of a term in a given context. Evidence contradicting his treatment of the verse goes unnoticed when he fails to acknowledge the clear distinguishing of prophets from apostles in Eph 4:11. Grudem’s later rebuttal of the evidence in Eph 4:11 acknowledges that prophets are separate from apostles, but he says these prophets were different from the ones in 2:20. That conclusion is arbitrary and exegetically invalid, for nothing in the intervening verses reflects a shift in meaning to a second kind of prophets. The revelatory foundation of the church was laid by two groups, not one—apostles and prophets, not apostle-prophets. If the revelatory gift of apostleship ceased around A.D. 100, so did the revelatory gift of prophecy.

In regard to this second area of skewing, Grudem has violated another principle, that of *usus loquendi* or current usage of a word as employed by a particular writer. As Terry describes the principle, “It often happens . . . that a writer uses a common word in some special and peculiar sense, and then his own definitions must be taken, or the context and scope must be consulted, in order to determine the precise meaning intended.” Since Paul clearly distinguishes prophets from apostles in Eph 4:11, it is irresponsible for an interpreter to identify prophets with apostles in Eph 2:20.

That is Grudem’s way of erecting a concept of prophecy that is not so restrictive (i.e., authoritative) as to exclude charismatically inclined people or so loose (i.e., nonrevealing) as to repel the noncharismatic, but his hermeneutics in so doing clearly violate grammatical-historical standards. His violation is the product of a preunderstanding of what he thinks Scripture should teach, a preunderstanding that reads back into Scripture a contemporary application he wants to make. As noted above, allowing application to influence interpretation crosses over the line between interpretation and application.

Ephesians 2:20 has been the “thorn in the flesh” for all noncessationists. No one has successfully countered the verse’s support for cessationism. Since the gift of prophecy is paired with the gift of apostleship as the foundation for the “holy temple”—the church—and since apostleship is a temporary gift, prophecy is obviously a temporary revelatory gift just like apostleship. Noncessationist Jon Ruthven acknowledges that “Pentecostal or charismatic scholars generally have

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87 Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 181.
failed to treat this cessationist argument [i.e., the support for cessationism from Eph 2:20] to any significant or adequate degree.” He agrees with cessationists that Grudem’s explanation is unconvincing, and offers his own rebuttal to the verse’s proof of cessationism. He rejects the idea that apostles and prophets were repositories for Scriptural revelation and contends that apostleship along with prophecy continues functioning until the second coming of Christ. Ruthven’s case falters, however, in light of the clearly delineated NT teaching about apostolic authority in the NT and early church and how that authority played a part in delivering and preserving the body of truth that is contained in the NT books.

**Practical Results of Noncessationism**

Without question, noncessationism’s influence among evangelicals is spreading rapidly. Literature supporting the position is multiplying almost faster than can be imagined. A noncessationist estimate places the number of Pentecostals and charismatics combined as second only to Roman Catholicism throughout the world. That may be an exaggeration, but major Christian publishers’ attention to noncessationists and their scholars who have veered toward the new evangelical hermeneutics have strongly influenced the evangelical church, resulting in the probability that the majority of evangelicals are in the “Open But Cautious” category regarding the issue of cessationism. This is the group that is unconvinced by the

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89 Ibid., 31-33.

90 Ibid., 41.

91 Ibid., 41-43. Deere joins Ruthven in holding to the possibility that apostles continue to be appointed throughout the church age (Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 248), but he hedges a bit in offering another suggestion, i.e., that apostleship was not a spiritual gift (ibid., 242). Neither proposal fulfills the biblical criteria of apostleship.


93 To illustrate, the “Introduction” to a recent work by Craig S. Keener (*Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001)) includes the following: “I have been miraculously healed, experienced supernatural gifts such as prophecy, followed by the Spirit’s leading in witnessing, and had deep experiences in the Spirit during prayer (including, regularly, prayer in tongues). I consider such experiences (and others mentioned later in the book) an advantage in writing a book on the Holy Spirit that includes controversial questions. . . . I could not deny that such works happen today any more than I could deny the existence of someone I know personally, because I have witnessed their reality firsthand.” Without examining Keener’s work further, it is not difficult to predict where that preunderstanding leads him in his handling Scripture, regardless of the hermeneutical distortions he must resort to.

94 Ibid., 92.

95 This is the opinion of Grudem (*Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* 12-13) and Keener (ibid., 91).
cessionist arguments, but are also cautious about the emphasis given to spiritual gifts by noncessionists.

I will not venture to estimate the size of the “Open But Cautious” category as have the noncessionist writers, but I do wish to issue a warning about the dangers of a “charismatic sympathy” position that remains open to the possibility of noncessionism. All it takes for a local church or a Christian college or seminary to become totally noncessionist is for the leadership to become “charismatic sympathizers.” Recent evangelical history has taught that. An institution does not have to be pro-noncessionist to move in that direction. All it has to do is to have “Open But Cautious” leaders, members, or students, and over time, noncessionism will leave its mark on that body.

A Last Word

This article has been a study of the growing sophistication of noncessionist hermeneutics in recent years. The noncessionist movement has changed from a simplistic approach of basing doctrine on experience to an appropriation of new hermeneutical principles that now characterize evangelical hermeneutics in general, principles ruled by preunderstanding that, in the examples cited, leads to subjectivism, dehistorizing tendencies, using narrative literature as a basis for theology, meanings assigned by readers, multiple meanings for a single passage, application that controls interpretation, and an intolerance for Spirit-led common sense. At the beginning of a new century cessationists face a different challenge, the challenge of responding to noncessionism’s principles of biblical interpretation.

Cessationists must meet the challenge by returning to traditional grammatical-historical rules and elaborating on those principles in areas where they have become obscured by advocates of a strong subjective element in understanding the Bible. Let the Bible speak for itself without forcing it into patterns molded by human opinions. Approach the text with a “clean slate,” a *tabula rasa,* and do away with preunderstanding as a starting point in exegesis. That is the only way to counter the noncessionist error and deliver evangelicalism from its impending hermeneutical emergency.

*Cf. R. C. Sproul, Knowing Scripture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1977) 105.
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS ON CESSATIONISM

Compiled by Dennis M. Swanson
Seminary Librarian

The voluminous literature in the field of spiritual gifts has grown even more in recent years, especially in the area of new hermeneutical models proposed by charismatic scholars. This bibliography represents the collected research of contributors to this issue of TMSJ as well as some additional material not cited in those articles. It is not exhaustive but rather suggestive for those wishing to do additional study. Particular attention should be paid to the two extensive bibliographies by Charles Edwin Jones in the section on “Reference Works.”

The bibliography is divided into five sections for easier reference. The sections are (1) Reference Works, (2) Systematic Theologies and Biblical Commentaries, (3) Monographs and Multi-Author Works, (4) Journal and Periodical Articles, and (5) Theses, Dissertations, and Unpublished Materials.

Reference Works (including lexical entries)


**Systematic Theologies and Biblical Commentaries**


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**Journal and Periodical Articles**


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Theses, Dissertations and Other Unpublished Materials

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BOOK REVIEWS


For the last several years, InterVarsity Press has been establishing itself as a leading publisher of scholarly reference works. After the completion of the four-volume *Dictionary of the New Testament* series, they have embarked on a matching four-volume set on the OT. The editors have assembled an impressive list of nearly one hundred individual contributors who represent a full spectrum of evangelical scholars. The work includes a helpful list of the contributors with a listing of the articles they authored. The editors have a useful section on “How to Use this Dictionary” that details the structural features of the work (xi-xii). A list of abbreviations which duplicates the *Society of Biblical Literature* guidelines is a useful part of this volume. The work has a helpful two-column format with each article outlined at the beginning. All articles have rather extensive bibliographic support.

It is impossible to discuss even a small portion of the nearly 200 articles in this massive volume. Some are worthy of special note, however. The article by B. T. Arnold on “History of Pentateuchal Criticism” (622-31) is an excellent survey of the major issues and personalities in OT historical criticism. The articles on the “Date of the Exodus” (258-72) by John H. Walton and the “Exodus Route and Wilderness Itinerary” (272-80) by Peter Enns are exceptionally detailed with excellent charts. A thought-provoking article on “Preaching from the Pentateuch” is included (637-43).

The publisher is to be commended for commissioning and the editors for producing this new addition to biblical reference. The volume should serve as the standard reference work on the Pentateuch for many years.

Bill T. Arnold, professor of Old Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Bryan E. Beyer, dean and professor of Old Testament at Columbia International University, have combined to produce these two volumes in the “Encountering Biblical Studies” series of textbooks. The two books are companion works to Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey and Readings from the First-Century World: Primary Sources for New Testament Study by Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough in the same series [see TMSJ 10 (1999):291-93]. As their NT predecessors, these OT textbooks target an undergraduate audience, especially freshmen, and seek to provide a foundation for further college and graduate OT study.

The authors have designed the basic textbook, Encountering the Old Testament, to make a student’s first encounter with the OT systematic and a little less daunting since “it can be overwhelming because there is so much to learn” (17). The student needs to master the content of the OT and a good deal about the ancient Near Eastern world. This textbook seeks to meet those needs in an understandably written, pedagogically sound, and visually oriented volume geared to collegians rather than lay people, pastors, or seminarians (13). To ensure that this goal was met, as this textbook was conceived, written, and produced, the publisher obtained extensive input from professors who teach OT survey courses in approximately fifty colleges (15).

The work follows the standard Encountering format. Each chapter begins with a brief outline of that chapter’s content and a list of objectives that present the tasks the student should be able to perform after reading the chapter. The body of each chapter includes the main content, supplemented with sidebars, presenting primary source quotes in blue boxes and contemporary concerns in yellow boxes, charts, and maps. Throughout the text the authors identify key terms by the use of boldface type; the definitions of these key terms are found on the interactive CD-ROM rather than in a concluding glossary as in the NT volume. A chapter concludes with a summary, lists of key terms and key people/places, study questions, and suggestions for further reading.

The format of the text is well designed and the content presentation is suitable for a beginning student of the OT. Two introductory chapters begin the book. The first has an overview of OT canonicity and textual transmission, with an affirmation of plenary verbal inspiration and grammatical-historical interpretation (21-33). The second gives a concise introduction to OT geography and Israel’s history within the context of the major periods of ancient Near Eastern (ANE) history (35-59). The following thirty-two chapters survey the OT following the order of the English Bible. Those chapters are are in four parts: “Encountering the Pentateuch” (61-154), “Encountering the Historical Books” (155-277), “Encountering the Poetic Books” (279-335), and “Encountering the Prophets” (337-473). Each
part begins with a chapter to introduce the student to key issues associated with that section of the OT. The content and themes of the OT books themselves constitute the major portion of the following chapters in each part of the text. An epilogue discussing the relationship of the OT to the NT concludes the narrative of the text (475-76). End notes (477-87) and three indexes—subject (488-99), Scripture (500-509), and name (510-12)—bring the volume to an end.

The authors’ aim is to give a broad evangelical understanding of the OT. But they note, “At the same time, we recognize that people from many Christian denominations will use this book. Consequently, when we discuss issues on which evangelicals agree to disagree, we have often chosen to survey the basic interpretations and let the particular emphasis lie with the professor” (16). However, the authors do not always practice this principle. For example, Arnold surveys the evangelical positions on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, but then states his conclusion, “In some cases Moses may have initiated a literary tradition that he later simply monitored. . . . The priests may have preserved and expanded the material, but Moses was its source” (73). Also, Beyer notes that Joel has been dated anywhere from 900 B.C. to 400 B.C., but then gives three reasons supporting 500-450 B.C. as being the correct date. On the debate concerning the date of the Exodus, Arnold concludes, “Singling out a definitive date for the exodus is currently impossible because of a lack of more complete information” (108). But Beyer’s chart (23) and comment that 591 B.C. was almost a thousand years after Israel left Egypt (414) assume the early date, while Arnold’s statements that the period of the Judges was approximately 200 years (50, 189) imply the later date. Nevertheless, for the most part, the authors do a solid work in guiding the beginning student through the OT.

Each book includes an interactive CD-ROM designed by Chris Miller and Phil Bassett of Cederville College. As with all of the CD-ROM products in the Encountering series, they are compatible on multiple platforms (Windows and Macintosh OS). The CD was tested on a range of hardware configurations from a Macintosh G4 (1.25ghz dual processor) to an older Power Mac 6100 and Pentium IV (2.65ghz) to an older Pentium II (250mhz), all utilizing CD-ROM drives from 4x to 24x. All in all, the performance was excellent on the higher-end machines, but less than adequate on the older models.

The CD supplements the text with movie clips and hypertext formatted pages that contain roughly the same material as the text in an easily navigable manner. None of the significant technical problems that plagued the NT version of the CD were present in these tests. Overall, the CD product will prove helpful to students as they attempt to work their way through the text and material; however, for optimal benefit they should have Pentium 4 or Macintosh G4 CPU’s or better.

In the supplementary text, Readings from the Ancient Near East, the authors have endeavored to present a “basic collection of the ancient Near Eastern texts that most closely parallel or complement the biblical text” (9). In this sense the supplement is something of an undergraduate version of James Pritchard’s Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

While the readings are helpful for illustrative and background information, the authors’ tend to muddle the picture with their explanations. For example, in the section on “Creation and the Flood” (13-70), the authors state,

The Bible’s accounts of the creation of the world, the creation of humankind, and the flood were not borrowed from these [extra-biblical accounts], but neither are they unique in every respect. These parallel myths and epics from the ancient Near East illustrate that Israel was part of a larger world community and offered an alternative perspective on reality (13).

Those statements, of course, are self-contradictory and leaves the unmistakable impression that Moses and other biblical authors did “borrow” from the other texts in writing the Bible. Also to call the ANE accounts “parallel myths and epics” leaves the impression that the biblical text itself is “myth and epic.” In other sections, such as “Wisdom Literature” (175-91), the explanations are so anemic that no real distinction is drawn between the ANE material and the biblical text. The entire work could be significantly strengthened with a more thorough discussion on the true nature of and proper relationship between Scripture and ANE literature.

Despite the above criticisms, the two volumes will undoubtedly serve undergraduate and Bible institute students well.


This volume is the second edition of Brueggmann’s earlier work by the same title. As part of the Overtures to Biblical Theology series by the publisher, it is a thoroughly revised and updated work, with an additional chapter and updated references.

The author is the well-known professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and the author of numerous other works on OT themes. In this work he contends that the “land is a central, if not the central theme of biblical faith” (3, emphasis in the original). He builds a case that Israel’s entire experience was centered on a “promised land,” that while they were outside the land (as a nation), they were a homeless and helpless people (5). He attempts to demonstrate that the narrative of the OT is to be understood “in terms of that hope and in response to that promise” (ibid.), that is, the promise of God to provide Israel a land for themselves. He makes the remarkable claim that “Israel never had a desire for a relation with Yahweh in a vacuum, but only in land” (200).

The author, however, approaches the subject of the land in the OT from a theological, not an exegetical approach. He has no close examination of the relevant
passages related to the land and no attempt to deal with the prophetic passages related to the boundaries; in fact the major passages related to the boundaries of the Promised Land (e.g., Exod 23:31; Num 34:1-12; Joshua 15) receive no mention at all. He makes no attempt to examine the promises of restoration and expanded boundaries, such as in Jer 31:38-40. The remarkable passage of Ezek 47:13–48:35 is called a “powerful typology” (134), and nothing more than the refreshing of the old traditions of the land division under Joshua, which the Davidic house had “ignored and destroyed” (192).

In reading this wholly unsatisfying book, one is left with the impression that the land of the Bible, for the author, is not a real place. It is an idealistic locale, not dissimilar to C. S. Lewis’ land of Narnia or J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth, wherein some surrealistic drama was played out and recorded in the text of the OT. It presents yet another vacuous hermeneutical scheme, which robs the Scripture of its reality and the reader of its power.


Joseph A. Fitzmyer, a Jesuit priest, is a prolific writer in biblical studies who has served as president of both the Catholic Biblical Association (1970-71) and the Society of Biblical Literature (1979-80). He has earned degrees in Semitics and Greek. Although his teaching has been predominately in NT, he has also taught Aramaic and Hebrew. Among his many writings are works dealing with NT background, especially Palestinian Aramaic and the Dead Sea Scrolls [for biographical details, see *CBQ* 48 (1986):375-78]. During the past quarter century, Fitzmyer has contributed several volumes to the Anchor Bible [AB]: Luke (1981, 1985), Romans (1993), Philémon (2000), published in his eightieth year, and, the focus of this review, Acts (1998). Fitzmyer’s commentary on Acts replaces the previous 1967 AB volume by Johannes Munch.

Within the AB format, Fitzmyer attempts to present a modern commentary on the book of Acts in the classic style. “It has been written from the standpoint of the historical-critical method, seeking to expound not only the literal meaning of the Lucan text with a view to setting forth the religious and theological message that the author sought to convey, but also that message in actualized form” (xiv). The volume begins with the commentator’s translation of Acts (1-43). This translation reappears at the beginning of each section of commentary and is the basis of Fitzmyer’s comments and notes concerning the biblical text. The translation incorporates the interpretive decisions made by Fitzmyer as spelled out in his notes. For example, the translation of Acts 4:12b reads, “for there is no other name in the whole world given to human beings through which we are to be saved” (7, 294). In
his notes on the text, the author states that the text literally translated would read, “there is no other name under heaven given among humans by which we must be saved” (302). He interprets “under heaven” as here meaning “in the whole world.” Further, “we must be saved” is softened to “we are to be saved.” The reader must always go to the author’s notes to discover a more literal translation.

Following the initial translation, Fitzmyer provides the reader with a lengthy introduction to Acts (45-152). He takes “Acts” to mean “historical monograph” (49), regards the Luke of church tradition as the best candidate for author (50-51), and thinks that the date and place of composition has little impact on the interpretation of the book (55). Luke’s purpose in Acts is “to pass on to a postapostolic age of Christians an account of the Jesus-tradition, which is intimately related to the biblical history of Israel of old, and to insist that it is only within the stream of apostolic tradition, represented by Peter and by Paul, that one finds this divinely destined salvation” (60). The Western text is not considered the original text-form of Acts, but Fitzmyer does give its translation, after his translation which is based on NA27, in each section of commentary (72). Although the commentator admits that finding sources in Acts is largely a speculative question (80), this does not stop him from stating the sources Luke used for every section of the book (85-88). He concedes that Luke has imposed his own style and language on the sources so that Acts is a “thoroughly Lucan composition” (85). Based on his source material, Luke has composed the speeches that make up about a third of the narrative of Acts (103-8).

Fitzmyer provides valuable discussions of the use of the OT in Acts (90-95) and the language and style of Acts (114-18). Concerning the historical character of Acts, the author concludes that while every statement or episode is not necessarily historical, “what is recounted in Acts is substantially more trustworthy from a historical point of view than not” (127). The historical value of every episode has to be carefully checked. Fitzmyer states categorically that Luke had not read the letters of Paul (88); thus in minor details Acts does not correspond to the picture of Paul seen in his letters (129). When there is a discrepancy, the Pauline information is to be preferred (133). Five differences between the Pauline and Lucan data are discussed, but the correlation of much more of the data is significant to show the general trustworthiness of Luke’s record (136-38).

An extensive general bibliography (153-87) precedes the commentary and notes (189-799). The general bibliography is in addition to the supplemental bibliographies that Fitzmyer appends to his discussions throughout the volume. In the commentary proper, the author progresses through the book of Acts narrative by narrative. Each section begins with the author’s translation. Then comes the “Comment” in which a discussion of the passage’s sources, structure, theological perspective, and essential message are presented. The “Notes” come next and discuss specific items of historical background and grammatical analysis. The Greek references in the notes are transliterated. A “Bibliography” for the passage concludes the section. The commentary is written from the critical perspective.
Indexes of subjects (801-9) and commentators (810-30) conclude the volume.

The release of the AB volume on Acts shortly after the completion of C. K. Barrett’s two-volumes in the ICC invites comparison between the two [see TMSJ 13/1 (2002):101-3]. The AB has definite advantages for the beginning student and expositor of Acts. First, the material is more simply presented. Second, an outline of the book of Acts guides the commentary. Third, all of the foreign language material is translated for the English reader. Fourth, the bibliographies contain evangelical works and all the items are much more accessible in the American context than those listed in the ICC volume. However, the AB does not match the ICC in length and breadth of exegetical discussion. If one has the ICC, the AB does not add enough to make an investment in Fitzmyer prudent; if one does not have the ICC, its essential material is in the AB at a greatly reduced cost. However, the expositor does not need both; one historical-critical commentary is enough to discover how those who deny the inerrancy of Scripture interpret the book.


Hamilton has made another fine contribution to Old Testament studies with this volume. Alongside his earlier *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Baker, 1982) and Robert Chisholm’s *Handbook on the Prophets* (Baker, 2002), this volume introduces readers to a treatment of the OT historical books that will supplement a “history” textbook and will offer different emphases than a commentary on a given book or set of OT books.

Hamilton uses the principles of such disciplines as rhetorical criticism and inductive Bible study to get at and uncover the thrust and message of these OT books (14). He seeks to relate the structure of a given biblical book to its message. Like the rest of the series of which the work is a part, the volume’s target audience is the undergraduate college student just beginning advanced biblical studies (14).

Hamilton divides the historical literature into 10 sections, treating Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, and Esther with a chapter apiece, combining 1-2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah in a chapter each, and dividing 1-2 Kings between 2 chapters (1 Kings 1–11, 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25). He begins each chapter with brief introductory comments and an outline for the book. The rest of the chapter deals with key interpretive, rhetorical, and historical issues in accordance with that analytical outline. Although Hamilton avoids footnotes, he provides a helpful bibliography at the end of each chapter, divided into sections (commentaries-major studies and shorter studies). He has intentionally limited his bibliography to more recent books and those in English. He divides the longer bibliographies according to the section of the biblical book to which a set of references relates. He does refer
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to certain key resources in the body of the chapter (within parentheses, by name, date, and page number [with full information at the end of the chapter or with full information to those sources not referenced elsewhere]). The volume ends with a brief subject index (7 pages).

This volume has several interesting features. Hamilton provides a helpful overview of \textit{kh-r-m} (Hamilton’s designation) or “to devote to destruction” (33-37), a good overview chart of judges (114), a nice chart for the structure of Ruth (189), and a helpful overview of oaths (“oaths of purgation” and “promissory oaths”; 246-47). He provides a clear and concise overview of the debate over the historicity of the Conquest (58-66). In the end, he accepts it as a historical event. According to Hamilton, Joshua’s conquest represents an initial sweep throughout the land of Canaan with the subsequent occupation of the land left to the individual tribes. He also includes a number of beneficial charts. For example, he gives several that show inner-biblical thematic/content parallels (e.g., within Samuel; 110-11, 217-18) as well as a chart comparing Chronicles with Samuel–Kings (480-81; cf. 406-7). At several points he provides charts comparing four dating systems for the Divided Monarchy (Bright, Galil, Hayes/Hooker, and Thiele) with reference to a certain set of kings (417, 426, 448-49, 456-57, 463). As examples of some specific conclusions, he identifies Thutmose III as the pharaoh of the Exodus (62), contends that Jephthah sacrificed/killed his daughter (144-46), and suggests that the Egyptian ruler So is to be regarded as Tefnakht I (740-718 B.C.) (454-55).

Hamilton provides a helpful overview on several issues, but never takes a clear position. After discussing various proposals concerning Joshua’s long day, he contends that the language favors the stoppage of the sun rather than an eclipse, but does not affirm whether it actually happened or whether the passage represents a poetical description (52-55). With regard to the textual questions about Goliath’s height (257) and about 1 Samuel 17 (259-61), Hamilton provides a concise overview of the options, but does not make a case for any position. He asks key questions about David’s demands of Solomon when the rule over Israel was changing hands, but gives no answers (356). He offers primary positions concerning the chronological priority of Ezra and Nehemiah, but ends the discussion on an ambiguous note. A number of these issues are not “iron-clad” (i.e., they have no simple answer); however, they merit at least a general answer since the author raised the question in the first place.

Oddly, Hamilton places significant emphasis on the judges who do not receive the Spirit of God. He highlights this reality and presents it as something significant, but does not make an ultimate point (116, 119), leaving the reader somewhat confused. Contra Hamilton, the expression “whose young woman is that” is a common Hebrew idiom for “belonging,” but it may not mean that Boaz viewed a young woman as a man’s possession (194). By identifying the location of the “Mount Sinai” to which Elijah fled as Arabia (435), Hamilton implies that he might regard the “Mount Sinai” of the Pentateuch as a location on the Arabian peninsula as well. Unfortunately, he uses the casual phrase “goes to church” to describe
Hezekiah’s visit to the Israelite Temple to pray (459).

The volume, as most written works do, has a few errors that escaped the editorial process. On page 15, a space is needed before “[see Num. 13:8….,” an incorrect year is given for a work (72, the book by Schaeffer), Jehosheba hid her nephew Joash, not her brother (449), and David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah, not of “Ornan” (487).

In spite of the concerns cited above, Hamilton’s volume makes a significant contribution to the “big picture” of historical literature. He is to be commended for his many charts, attention to inner-biblical coherence, and sensitivity to rhetorical structure. The volume could use an index for the various charts Hamilton includes throughout the book. Hamilton does an admirable job of introducing his readers to the flow of OT historical literature, pursuing certain specific issues along the way.


One of the twentieth century’s famous national and international prayer leaders, Gesswein (1907—2000) was a key figure behind the scenes in Billy Graham’s crucial 1949 Los Angeles evangelistic campaign. Tributes from men like Bill Bright and A. W. Tozer to Gesswein’s strategic modeling of prayer appear (2-5, 8).

Ten chapters review topics such as prayer’s strategic role in the upper room (Acts 1), Gesswein’s leadership in prayer, Jesus’ teaching and example, prayer in evangelism, pleading God’s promises, prayer in sync with the Holy Spirit, prayer’s vital place for the church, prayer and sovereignty, and prayer permeating the inner life. All of this is in Hartley’s engaging style. He is Senior Pastor of the Lilburn Alliance Church, Lilburn, Georgia. The book’s many truths can ignite momentum in prayer whether read alone or in a study group. Each chapter closes with study-guide questions for meditation and interaction.

This reviewer led seminars at a youth retreat in which Gesswein gave the keynote messages in the 1960s. For this reviewer, Hartley’s book brought fresh motivation as did the memory of that occasion. Gesswein’s messages were provocative. It was clear as the older Gesswein challenged the group that he exemplified the way prayer can permeate everything (cf. Phil 4:6). One phrase that he often pressed home was “plead the promises of God,” i.e., let Scripture on God’s will shape all of prayer and life. Those who realize Gesswein’s example as a humble, focused prayer warrior will treasure even the 6 pp. of pictures on him (between 85-87).

Further sayings that can grip the heart appear. Gesswein said, “I was born for thanksgiving” (33), “Prayer is so major we dare not minor on it . . .” (52), and
“True prayer doesn’t start with us; it starts with God. The only prayer that reaches the throne, started there” [actually, even selfish prayers “reach” Him] (55). One is touched by the tribute to Pearl Goode, intercessor to whom Billy Graham’s wife Ruth attributed much of the human secret behind her husband’s ministry (85).

This book offers further sayings of this stalwart believer. “Prayer must be frontal, not peripheral” (3). “We will one day be surprised to learn the invisible interplay between the private little prayer meetings and the great big public results” (3). “If the Holy Spirit doesn’t do it, there is nothing to it” (9). Some sayings mislead. “When Christ ascended into heaven all he left behind was a prayer meeting. The early church didn’t have a prayer meeting; the early church was the prayer meeting” (12). Though allowing prayer its great role, those fair to God’s Word should recognize many other things that Christ left on earth—such as His work of redemption, His resurrection, His teaching true to but building on the OT, all His miracles as evidence of who He is and how He cares, His followers to pray and spread His Word, the expectation of His future coming to consummate His program. And the early church, while often in prayer, was many more things than just prayer. Christians ought not to push some rating system that their own man-made opinion arbitrarily exalts.

Still, the often refreshing book rightly claims that the book of Acts “shows the intimate and unfailing connection between prayer and every work of God” in ministry now (25). Gesswein wrote several books, but said he did not write one on prayer because God already had given this. In one place he speaks of “the Bible, my real Prayer Book” (33); on another page he inconsistently says it is the book of Acts (88). Gesswein did write a book on prayer: With One Accord in One Place (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1978). One Gesswein book, How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit? (100), has much that is in Hartley’s book, Chapter 7.

Even when citing some opinions with which many will differ, the book is a valuable stimulus for pastors, students, and lay people. It has a good focus on Bible promises that tell Christians what to expect, shape motivation, sharpen direction, and spark more and better prayer (cf. examples in Chap. 6, especially 89, 92).


When the first edition of A Survey of the Old Testament was published in 1991, it was intended as a textbook to complement the 1981 revised edition of A Survey of the New Testament by Robert H. Gundry. The authors, Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, both professors of OT at Wheaton College and Graduate School, sought to follow Gundry’s lead “to bring together the most significant data
from Old Testament historical and literary backgrounds, critical or technical introduction, biblical commentary, and Old Testament theology” (14). In 1994, a third edition of Gundry’s NT textbook was issued in an expanded and more visually attractive format [see TMSJ 6 (1995):101-2]. This second edition of A Survey of the Old Testament follows the updated format of its NT counterpart.

Very little of the actual text of the first edition has changed in this edition. Most of the previous material is repeated verbatim in this new work. Five basic changes mark the new edition. First, topics previously introduced in five introductory chapters are now scattered throughout the major chapters and appendices of the book. Before working through the OT books in the order of the English canon, the authors introduce the reader to OT theological themes and geography, though these are no longer referred to as chapters (19-44). The discussions of ANE history (146-66), archeology (289-303), OT canon (383-99), and the basic methodology of higher criticism (571-75) are interspersed throughout the text. Though most of the changes pose no major problems for the reader, the presentation of the historical background of the Pentateuch (147-53) after the discussion of the Pentateuch itself [which interacts with the historical background] (45-143) is a weakness, particularly for the beginning student.

Second, significant terms that appear in bold face within the text are defined in a glossary (588-92). This is a very helpful feature for the first-time OT student. Third, the suggestions for further reading have added volumes written from 1990-2000. Fourth, the visual presentation has been enhanced. New maps have been included (116, 186, 241, 260, 270, 277, 422, 445); the quality of the pictures and time lines have been sharpened; ‘boxed’ material further explains the main text (50, 93, 127, 175, 185, 244-47, 278, 376, 413, 470, 539); and wider margins are provided for student notations. Fifth, the chapters devoted to a discussion of the biblical books now begin with a statement of the key ideas of the chapter. Also, some chapters have added questions for further study and discussion at the conclusion of the authors’ presentations.

The viewpoint of the authors on major OT issues remains constant from the original text to this second edition. The historical reliability of the Pentateuch, including an early date for the patriarchal era and the Exodus, is affirmed (53-58, 65, 83-86). Further, the unity and early dating of the books of Isaiah (415-17) and Daniel (452-54) are supported. Late dates for Joel, post-exilic [the authors’ do not hyphenate pre-exilic, post-exilic, pre-classical, and pre-monarchic in this second edition] (473-74), and Obadiah, shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. (488-89), are preferred. The one major rewritten section of the revised text is the discussion of the “rhythm of thought” in Hebrew poetry (314-15). The older work used the traditional examples of synonymous, antithetical, synthetic, emblematic, and chiasmatic parallelism, based primarily on thoughts or ideas. The newer edition uses the categories semantic parallelism [based on word usage], progressive parallelism [based on logical sequence], and grammatical parallelism [based on choice of grammatical forms].
The release of the second edition of *A Survey of the Old Testament* shortly after the publication of *Encountering the Old Testament* [see the review above] invites a comparison of the two works. In the opinion of this reviewer, this textbook by Hill and Walton is more detailed, more reliable, and more consistent, and it is less costly than Arnold and Beyer. If the teacher and student can live with black and white in the place of color, *A Survey of the Old Testament* is the better choice. However, a new colored (and more expensive) edition of Gundry has been released [Spring, 2003]; can a new colored (and more expensive) edition of Hill and Walton be far behind?


Stephen Holmes is a minister in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, a lecturer in Christian Doctrine at King’s College, London, and associate lecturer at Spurgeon’s College. His book deals with theological method, and particularly, as the subtitle of the book indicates, “the place of tradition in theology.” Holmes admits that Baptist theology and tradition are not often allies. But he tries to make the case that, handled properly, historical theology is vital to understanding doctrine correctly.

The book consists of a series of independent essays. Actually, only chapters 1, 2, and 10 deal specifically with the theme. Chapter 1, for example, is entitled, “Why Can’t We Just Read the Bible?” Holmes responds, “but the Bible we have, if it is a translation, is shaped by a tradition of Bible translation, and by its translator(s)” (6). In fact, “the standard editions of the Greek New Testament bear witness on nearly every page to the textual criticism that has come up with this text . . . and so we cannot even find a text of Scripture that has not been ‘handed on’ to us by those who came before” (6-7). Holmes then explains how John Calvin and the Anabaptists differed on the place of tradition in theology.

Other chapters are case studies of how tradition helps understand doctrine. As in any book of essays, some of these chapters are more useful than others, depending to some extent on the reader’s knowledge and interest. For those interested in historical theology, Holmes’ chapters on Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*, the tradition of the doctrine of divine simplicity, and Karl Barth’s doctrine of reprobation (as contrasted with the Reformers) will be instructive. In one notable chapter entitled “Calvin Against the Calvinists?,” Holmes takes up the issue of whether later scholastic Calvinists actually disagreed with Calvin in theological method or in the content of theology. His answer is no, though some will not be convinced by his explanation. Those who enjoy reading and thinking about the theology of Jonathan Edwards will appreciate Holmes’ insightful explanation of Edwards’ doctrine of the will.
Some essays may not be as helpful. In one chapter, Holmes examines the views of Cyprian and Augustine to suggest that Baptists, in the spirit of ecumenical unity and charity, ought to consider various methods of baptism to be acceptable. And perhaps only a few will be interested in his chapter on how Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s neoplatonism impacted his view of the state.

This book is not for everyone, of course. It deals with fairly complex theological issues. But if one is interested in any of the individual essays, historical theology, or in the overall topic of how tradition should impact theological method, the book is worth one’s time.


A “concise” history of Israel is a great idea to enable students of the Scriptures to gain a “panoramic” understanding of God’s dealings with his people. Matthews, a professor of religious studies at Southwest Missouri State University, authored this volume to serve as supplemental for courses dealing with the OT in general or Israel’s history in particular. He attempts to deal with the most important events in Israelite history, the most important characters and places, overview a basic chronology, consider significant extra-biblical documents that relate to Israel’s history, and examine archaeology’s contribution to the “recreation” of Israel’s history (xi-xii). He has sought to be “student oriented” (xii) by avoiding lengthy recitation of scholarly arguments and by providing inset boxes, keyword cues, and parenthetical documentation. Words in bold print throughout the text receive fuller definition in a glossary at the end of the book. After the body of the text, Matthews provides a brief listing of key events from Israel’s monarchy period (2 pp.), a glossary (4 pp.), bibliography (17 pp.), and indices (ancient sources, author, and subject). Matthews has provided numerous useful charts, translations of relevant ANE parallel accounts, and helpful glimpses into key parts of ANE history and rulers.

Besides these helpful features, Matthews’ volume represents a mixture of good and bad features. In his introduction, he indicates his general approach to the subject when he says the writers of Israelite history use “exaggerated, propagandistic, or theological reasoning” (xiii). Although Matthews does not disregard OT historical narratives altogether, he views them as potential sources of information that are not necessarily accurate.

A few examples will illustrate Matthews’ approach to OT history. Any historical reconstruction based only on the biblical text must be viewed as tentative. As an example, Matthews’ contends that the Solomonic Temple must have been smaller than the structure described in the biblical text in light of scholarly
conclusions about Solomon’s wealth (46). In several places the biblical historians inserted information about later events into accounts of Israel’s early history (56). The Septuagint text, in certain portions, is superior to the Hebrew Bible’s presentation of Solomon’s reign (57). The author introduces a statement about Solomon’s redistricting of Israel with “if there is any historical character to Solomon’s ‘district list’” (58), implying that it may not have historical validity. He suggests that the accounts describing Israel’s and Judah’s conquest of Moab (2 Kgs 3:4-27; 2 Chronicles 20) were edited long after the events they describe and contain erroneous information (67).

Although Matthews does provide helpful overviews of the interrelationship between Israelite and ANE history and a sketch of recent discussions on key issues, his view of the composition of the OT historical books diminishes the value of a number of his discussions. His work provides an enlightening (and brief) introduction to current critical discussions in the realm of Israel’s history, but it will provide little of value for the preacher of God’s Word.


Twenty lucid chapters divide into three main parts, five on the theme in the OT, six in the Gospels, and nine in the rest of the NT. Then Milne, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Vancouver, British Columbia, gives nineteen pages as a study guide of review questions that can help users firm up ideas. He attempts to guide readers from Genesis to Revelation on some key passages. He reasons for destinies of bliss in heaven that endures eternally, and punishment in hell that also is without end. He reasons that biblical passages unite with or directly claim such destinies, rather than arguing on a philosophical and speculative basis (12-13). In his claim, the God of the Bible “assures us unambiguously, and repeatedly, that he will meet us in eternity” (13). Individuals dare not become engrossed in materialistic complacency, satisfied only with a present existence, and fail to prepare to meet God in a destiny after this life (13).


Though missing these works—just as no author has read or uses everything—Milne writes in a carefully informed, very readable manner. He begins where the Bible does, in Genesis, later gets to Jesus in the Gospels, and still later to the rest of the NT. He argues capably against theories that Abraham, Moses, and David reflect no hope of a life beyond death (27–31). Even in Genesis 1 and 2:14, the God of the Bible is, in Milne’s conception, personal, powerful, and present, holding men to an account (32–52). Sin has wages as in Genesis 2–3 (53–72). Milne views Psalm 16 as the seed, context, and flowering of a heavenly hope with pleasures at God’s right hand (73–82). Daniel 7:9–14 in his interpretation argues for a future kingdom and an accounting of the life before God who judges men’s works, and Dan 12:1–3 refers to consequences after resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous (96–106).

Once in the NT, Milne sees Jesus’ insistence on a future kingdom beyond the present age, with the righteous received into it and the unrighteous headed for another destiny. He cites Matt 13:24–30, 36–43 and 25:31–46 (109–29). He sees an eternal hell in Mark 9:42–48, where the fire of punishment “never goes out” (v. 44), “their worm never dies” (v. 48), and the “fire is not quenched” (vv. 48, 144–61).

The author presents arguments fairly for the view that the unsaved will be annihilated, not suffer eternally in enduring, conscious punishment (151–54), but thinks that an eternal duration fits the issues more naturally. In his development, good chapters appear on the hope of resurrection and its relation to eternal destinies (chap. 15), ministering hope in view of heaven (chap. 16), viewing sufferings in light of future reward (chap. 17), being godly in light of a real hope, as in 2 Peter 3 (chap. 19), and what Rev 20:11–15 shows. One of several emphases in the latter passage is that works are not the basis of being safe, of being in the “book of [eternal] life”; rather the way of acceptance is God’s gift in grace. Milne’s Chapter 20 on the New Jerusalem articulates well the features of blessing for those God admits to the eternal city.

For premillennialists, one drawback is Milne’s doubt about a millennial state before the ultimate state. But he accepts the New Jerusalem as an actual, literal city on an order we cannot now adequately visualize (310).

Overall, this is a lucid, well-reasoned evangelical case for heaven and hell, taking these seriously in believing and living with genuine faith that prepares to be in heaven so as to avoid the awfulness of hell. Details on NT passages are not as helpful as Peterson’s first book above, but are often valuable. The work needs a Scripture index. Its OT section could show the relevancy of God taking Enoch (Gen 5:24), the passage about Saul and the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28), and Pss 49:15; 73:24-26, to name a few passages related to a life beyond the present existence.

One of the welcome consequences of breaking the scholastic monopoly on the Dead Sea Scrolls several years ago has been the resurgence of studies related to Judaism and Judaic influences in the NT world and text. Literature in this field has literally exploded in the last five years with at least a dozen notable works and many more of less notoriety.

The author of this work is professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Holy Cross. This work is a completely revised version of his 1991 *The Religious World of Jesus: An Introduction to Second Temple Palestinian Judaism* (Abingdon, 1991). Written to supply a text for his courses, the author purposes to “balance the effort to appreciate Judaism for its own sake, on the one hand, and the desire to shed light on Jesus and the early Christians on the other” (xiii).

The work is an amazing resource of factual information, well written and well conceived structurally. It has beneficial indexes and two helpful glossaries (of terms and of persons) and several useful charts, and the author often places explanatory boxes within the text. The chapters progress clearly and logically, covering the history of Israel in survey form, from Abraham to the Babylonian captivity and then with a little more detail from the Restoration to the NT era. Murphy dedicates separate chapters to Apocalypticism, the Dead Sea Scrolls, various Jewish sects, the Roman rule over Israel, the Jewish revolt, and the interesting subject, “Jewish Foundations of New Testament View of Christ.”

However, the potential of this book is not realized because of what this reviewer would call a “conservative minimalist” view of Scripture and a resultant misunderstanding of the text. “Conservative minimalist” means one who takes the text of Scripture as only one of many texts to be examined in constructing a theology or reconstructing a history of the biblical world. Scripture is important, but no more or less important than other texts. The author says this in his introduction:

> The canon of Judaism or Christianity is that body of writings accepted as authoritative and normative. Belief and practice are measured and judged by these writings. By choosing to include some writings in the canon and exclude others from it, each religion has defined its contours. The normativity of the included texts is expressed through the notion that they are inspired—that is, that God is responsible for them in some way (1).

He further states, “When we limit our study to the canon of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament, certain viewpoints and prejudices are reinforced that are supported by the principles of selection that led to the formation of the canon in the first place” (6-7). For the author, canonization is merely a human effort to collect religious writings that support a group’s preconceived ideas of how they wanted their theology and worldview to be formed. Inspiration becomes nothing more than a “label” placed on texts by groups to validate their views or manipulate
followers into acquiescence. Such biblical constructs as inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, are explicitly and implicitly denied throughout this book.

In the view of the author, the NT distorts the Judaism of the era, saying that the “treatment of Judaism is, on the whole, biased” (ibid.). A key purpose of the author is to present a “more balanced portrait of Jewish society” (ibid.) than one receives from simply “analyzing the apostle Paul or the Gospel of Mark.”

The author’s view of the OT text does not attain to a high level either. He affirms his belief in the compilation JEP theory for the Pentateuch (22) and the Deuteronomistic History theory to the remainder of the historic books (23). The Old Testament, in his view, was the product of redactors and editors and the final version of the majority of OT books was not finalized until late in the Judean monarchy or after the Babylonian captivity through the Hasmonean era. As a result, different sections of the OT are contradictory to each other or express entirely different worldviews (26).

Theologically, the author misunderstands the entire concept of the sacrificial system, stating, “[T]he basic idea of much of the Israelite sacrifice seems to have been that of a gift in thanksgiving for a favor or in hopes of getting God’s favor” (48). Prophecy is not predictive in any way; it is simply men writing words of encouragement to an oppressed people by utilizing “literary fiction” (163) to display an illusion of prediction, strengthening the encouraging words. Most important, Jesus is not the divine Second Person of the Trinity (407). He is simply a man on a mission to purify Judaism and speak out against the oppressors of His era, whose followers later ascribe to Him deity (349).

Stylistically the reader is struck by the fact that with all the author’s rather dogmatic pronouncements about history, culture, and interpretation of biblical and extra-biblical texts, the work has no footnotes or endnotes. Only a few in-text citations appear in the book. The end of each chapter has a bibliography that would be much more useful if collected as a whole, but no one is quoted and almost no references are given for additional study or to check on the author’s work. This being the case, it is no surprise that the bibliography is bereft of works from conservative or evangelical scholarship.

In the short space of this review it is impossible to list all the interpretative and theological errors. Though the author calls himself a Christian (xii), it is impossible to understand what he means by that since he denies or modifies every cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith. This book is an excellent example of a genre of material coming forth from the failed and heretical “Historical Jesus” movement.

A renowned and sometimes controversial expert in Judaism and rabbinic studies, Jacob Neusner has published more than 800 books. He is currently research professor of Religion and Theology at Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y.).

Judaism, according to Neusner, is the faith of the community that calls itself “Israel” as a supernatural social entity, because they identify themselves with the divine redemption out of Egypt (2). It is monotheistic, but set apart from Christianity and Islam in that it “recognizes no other revelation than the Torah, the Teaching, set forth by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, and encompassing the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures” (3). Supernatural Judaism treats all other religions as nothing more than forms of idolatry. It is open to those who would convert from such religions and embrace the supernatural conviction set forth in the Torah. One example of such conversion is that “a cousin of Adolf Hitler has converted to Judaism, and today does teach Judaism at an Israeli university” (153).

Both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism were making their classical statements from the first to the sixth centuries (6). Judaism’s classical statements are embodied in a vast library of literature from the Mishnah through to the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. Within that literature the Torah of Sinai is defined as the “chain of tradition” which includes that which was passed on by Moses to his successors but not included within Scripture (7). In order to clarify this concept, the author sets forth the following definition:

Rabbinic Judaism is thus the Judaism that sets forth the whole Teaching of Sinai, written and oral, and that points to its sages, called “rabbis” (a general title of honor, ultimately made particular to the sages of Judaism), who in a process of discipleship acquired (“received”) and transmitted (“handed on”) that complete Torah, oral and written, that originates with God’s instruction to Moses. (8)

There were, however, forms of Judaism that conflicted with Rabbinic Judaism during this formative period. Among them were the Qumran sect that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, an Alexandrian sect represented by Philo, and the earliest disciples of Jesus (9). All three identified themselves as “Israel” and constructed their foundation on the Hebrew Scriptures. None of the three should be identified with Rabbinic Judaism since the latter is what emerged out of the initial period of conflicting Judaisms and prevailed as the statement of pure Judaism (10).

Throughout this volume the author reiterates his point that the Torah cannot be limited to either the written Torah or the revelation given to Moses at Sinai (27, 48, 187-88; esp. 103-17). Both “the Torah that is memorized” and “the Torah that is in writing” (103) persist in Judaism. The latter contains “ipsissima verba from Sinai” (111, cf. 108). In other words, “the Torah revealed at Sinai encompasses everything: Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, Aggadah—even what on the basis of reasoned inquiry the latest generations of disciples discern!” (111).

Christianity diverged from Judaism in Christ’s claim to be a new Moses rather than a prophet or sage (24). Judaism’s possession of the oral Torah also distinguished it from Christianity (112). Christianity’s representation of Christ as the last Adam was borrowed from Judaism’s view of Israel as the last Adam (57). As for the miracles performed by Christ, comparable claims have been made about various Rabbinic sages (119-20). Neusner implies that the Israel of Jesus’ day had not repented or subordinated itself to the will of God, since the Messiah will come only when Israel has done so (172-73).

This volume will be of interest to those who wish to understand the basic tenets of Rabbinic Judaism. It will not satisfy the reader in search of a clear description of what Judaism was like in the early Christian centuries. Neusner himself concludes that “we cannot construct in the first five centuries C.E. an account of a Judaic religious system comparable to Rabbinic Judaism. The sources do not permit” (9).


The back cover of this book lists nine evangelical writers or influential leaders who give it their enthusiastic endorsement. An eye-catching, heart-stirring sentence opens the preface: “My passion,” writes Piper, “is to see people, churches, mission agencies, and social ministries become God-centered, Christ-exalting, Spirit-powered, Bible-saturated, missions-mobilizing, soul-winning, and justice-pursuing” (9). His passion is much in evidence in the seven chapters to follow. The refrain, “Making God Supreme in Missions,” accompanies each of the headings of the book’s three parts. The second half of each heading identifies the content of the chapters involved: Part 1 (chaps. 1-3) is headed “The Purpose, the Power, and the Price,” Part 2 (chaps. 4-5) “The Necessity and the Nature of the Task,” and Part 3 (chaps. 6-7) “The Practical Outworking of Compassion and Worship.”

Gems of expression pop up often in these chapters and make the reader pause in reflection before moving on, e.g., “Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can’t commend what you don’t cherish” (17), “Prayer is the walkie-talkie of the church on the battlefield of the world in the service
of the Word” (67), “Persecution can have harmful effects on the church, but prosperity it seems is even more devastating to the mission God calls us to” (95), and “Missions exists because worship doesn’t” (206). The careful wording of some headings evokes interest, e.g., “The Belittling of God’s Glory and the Horrors of Hell” (28), “God’s Self-Exaltation: Signpost to Human Satisfaction” (32), and “The Nerve of Urgency” (115). Questions as headings also garner attention, e.g., “What is a People Group?” (188), “What is a Language?” (189), and “What do ‘Reached’ and ‘Unreached’ Mean?” (192). A judicious blend of commentary on selected biblical texts and the insertion of appropriate mission-field anecdotes and examples serves well in challenging the reader to think more seriously about missions than he has done before.

A footnote graciously directs attention to David Doran’s book, For the Sake of His Name: Challenging a New Generation for World Missions, because Piper wishes his readers to know that Doran has interacted with him on the Great Commission “and so may provide a perspective that I am neglecting” (234). Concise but adequate treatment of the singular and plural use of ethnōs (“nation”) and the use of Panta ta Ethne (“all the nations”) in the NT (161-67) leads Piper to conclude that this latter phrase is understood as “all the nations (people groups)” (167). Forthrightly and unabashedly he also asserts in full accord with the biblical data: (1) that the unsaved will experience eternal, conscious torment in hell, (2) that the work of Christ is the necessary, God-provided means for eternal salvation, and (3) that people must hear of Christ to be eternally saved (115-38). The extended, informative footnotes in this section provide additional resource material both negative and positive on these three crucial areas, unfortunately distorted by open theism. Piper’s evaluation of Cornelius (Acts 10) as representative of a kind of unsaved person in an unreached people group who is seeking God in some extraordinary way might very well be open to question, but the reader will have been forced to think exegetically about it—and that is always good.

God’s zeal for his own glory receives emphasis several times over and especially so in a four-page listing of selected texts (22-28). It would be a weightier theme were Piper to tie it in with the grand fulfillment of the biblical covenants, prophecies, and promises in the millennial kingdom. This would certainly underscore the title Let the Nations Be Glad! and aptly describe the international state of affairs at history’s end.

As a result of attentive and thoughtful reading, some may become missionaries and some may become world Christians (238), and some churches may find their members becoming senders or fellow-workers of the truth who directly participate in God’s purpose (236). Want to galvanize missions? Then, don’t delay, get this book and use it!

Oliver W. Price. The Power of Praying Together. Experiencing Christ Actively in

This stimulus for better church prayer meetings is by the General Director of Bible Prayer Fellowship in the Dallas, Texas area, and pastor of Metrocrest Bible Church there. The late John Walvoord, former President of Dallas Theological Seminary and author of many books, wrote the Foreword. The back cover has commendations by Tony Evans, Howard Hendricks, Irwin Lutzer, Sammy Tippit, Elmer Towns, and others. Chiefly, the 13 practical chapters seek to rekindle passion in believers to attend and have spiritual prayer meetings with a strong sense of Christ’s presence and control.

Price emphasizes four truths to help transform dull prayer gatherings: (1) claim Christ’s presence by His Spirit; (2) trust Him to take charge in each heart; (3) be willing for Him to change each participant as He desires; and (4) permit Him to bring all into harmony with the Father and with each other (12). The author concentrates on these because he sees the need of the hour as Christ’s obvious presence and active leadership (14). He recognizes the urgency of private prayer, but chiefly looks at prayer with others.

Readers will share Price’s alarm about many not wanting to attend a church prayer session, and will agree that it is unfortunate when a church is said to have prayer-meeting members and members of other kinds (20). Each chapter ends with review questions whose answers help readers reflect on true values. Also, exercises can help readers practice prayer with family members at home and others at church meetings.

Some distinctions are problematic. An example is the citing of Armin Gesswein’s idea (cf. the latter’s book, *With One Accord In One Place* [Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1978] 13) that in Acts one does not read of “the church prayer meeting,” because “The church was the prayer meeting” at the beginning. With great respect for prayer’s cruciality in the church, the church is far more than a prayer aspect; also, in Acts 12, the whole church gathered to pray for the imprisoned Peter. Another arbitrary opinion is seeing Acts 1 as the only chapter in Acts without “acts” or “action” episodes (39). The believers, even while waiting (trusting), were *acting* in prayer by applying Scripture as Peter took the lead in replacing Judas in accord with God’s will. Later, Price strikes a better note by saying that in Acts 1, “As they waited in prayer, they were acting [note the word] on the basic truth that without Christ they could do nothing” (40). Indeed, they were *doing* something, acting fruitfully and not in the spiritual nothingness of being unfruitful (cf. John 15:5).

Another problem appears amid good things in the book. Somehow the author restricts praying in Jesus’ name to ideal situations of knowing in advance that a request is “completely in harmony with His sovereign will” (75). So, praying in Jesus’ name is limited to cases where God answers “yes,” and cannot also include “wait” or “no” scenarios. A problem is that many mature Christians at times gain
“no” answers as screened by God’s wisdom and love, and can submit thankfully to God at such times realizing that His infinite mind knows better. They can err, God never can. Was not Paul praying in Jesus’ name, even three times (2 Cor 12:7-9), though God did not remove his “thorn” but taught Him a sufficient grace? Later (after p. 75), Price on p. 80 seems to take a different view; here, he says that those praying in Jesus’ name may need to “wait” for God’s timing. Also, in other prayers by those seeking God’s will for His glory, what name are they praying in as best they know at the time? Readers will need to wrestle with this.

Another puzzle is the troubling wording, “Worship is the highest form of prayer . . .” (145). All God-honoring prayer is in essence genuine worship in aspects such as praise, intercession, petition, and confession. So, does the author mean to say that “Worship is the spiritual essence present in any God-approved prayer”? Price later on acknowledges that “For the dedicated believer, all of life is elevated to the level of divine service” (182). All can be worshipful.

Among the book’s many good emphases are believers’ asking Christ to take charge (chap. 7), to change themselves and others (chap. 8), and offering a sacrifice of praise (chap. 11).

All in all, this work can be a catalyst for better praying alone or in groups. It is by a man long devoted sacrificially to all-out effort to honor Christ and help His people. Any who earnestly desire to improve times before God’s throne and assist the church can profit in some or even great measure by teachable receptivity to this book’s many good teachings.

Reviewed by Keith Essex, Assistant Professor of Bible Exposition.

This book is part of The Bible Speaks Today [BST] series, the OT works edited by J. A. Motyer and the NT by J. R. W. Stott. David Prior, a former pastor in South Africa and England who is presently involved in an outreach and training ministry to business people in London, previously contributed to the BST with the NT volume on 1 Corinthians (1985). His present exposition joins the BST works already in print on The Minor Prophets from the well-known English evangelical writers Derek Kidner (Hosea, 1981) and Motyer (Amos, 1974). The series editors in the General Preface to Prior’s recent contribution state, “The Bible Speaks Today describes a series of both OT and NT expositions, which are characterized by a threefold ideal: to expound the biblical text with accuracy, to relate it to contemporary life, and to be readable” (9). Prior has met the threefold goals of the BST in this work on Joel, Micah, and Habakkuk, the last two with excellence. He has provided an adequate exposition of the text with insightful contemporary application in a very readable style.
Prior bases his interpretation of these three prophetic books on previous evangelical commentaries. He references other volumes continually, particularly those in the EBC, NICOT, TOTC, WBC, WEC, and the exegetical and expository volumes on the Minor Prophets edited by T. E. McComiskey. While Prior is to be commended for selecting the best works available for the evangelical expositor, his own interpretive work is no more than a summarization of what is found in greater depth in these other volumes. The expositor would be well advised to follow Prior’s lead and use those commentaries himself, rather than use only the present author’s summaries. The writer does help the reader by repeatedly placing Micah and Habakkuk and their messages in their historical context and regularly relating the messages of all three prophets to their OT theological context. On the basis of this historical and theological context, Prior draws parallels between the prophets’ messages and contemporary life. He particularly shows how the religious and social issues confronted by the prophets are found in the present Western religious and business communities. His application of these prophetic messages is not a call for the church to reform Western society, but for Christians to live as God’s representatives in the secular culture. He states, “But when we fail to engage relevantly, truthfully and compassionately with the marketplace, the marketplace enters the holy place and begins to take it over. . . . God, meanwhile, wants to meet his people at depth as we gather in the holy place, and then propel us out into the marketplace—to make a difference by being different” (12). This he sees as the thrust of these three prophets, and the whole Bible, in their contemporary application.

A major weakness in Prior’s work is his unwillingness at times to state a preference for a preferred interpretation when there is disagreement among evangelical commentators. This is especially seen concerning the date of Joel. The book could have been written any time over a span of 600 years, from the ninth to the third centuries B.C. (19). Prior sees this uncertainty as helpful. “It is in many ways providential that the book cannot be dated or traced to a particular person in a particular setting. The events described in it are, at one and the same time, unprecedented and timeless” (21). However, later he admits the full significance of 2:17 cannot be known because of the uncertainty of the dating of Joel (60).

A further weakness is his handling of “The Day of the Lord.” Prior sees this day of the Lord as any time God steps into history to do a special work, either of judgment or blessing. Minor events of individual lives and major events in the nations can properly be called the day of the Lord. However, in a special way, “the day of the Lord, for Joel, applied to what was happening then, what would happen soon and what would eventually happen when God called the nations to account” (48). This triple perspective, according to Prior, is a key to understanding Joel in relationship to the rest of the Bible (48). The first stage of this day took place in Joel’s own time with the coming and the removal of the locusts according to 2:19-27 (64). Joel 2:28-29 looks ahead to the second stage, the pouring out of Holy Spirit that began on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and continues to come upon believers today as they become a part of the people of God (69-79). The final stage is the
eschatological day when the whole world will be summoned before God according to 3:1-21 (80-102). Prior is fuzzy concerning the outworking of the eschatological details, except that God will finally judge His enemies and reward His people. This same kind of fuzziness is evident in his eschatological discussions in Micah and Habakkuk. The author states concerning Micah 4, “[T]here is a temporal thickness to these prophecies, which prevents us from stating categorically when or how they find their fulfillment” (148).

In spite of these weaknesses, this volume in the BST, like its OT and NT counterparts, will aid the expositor, particularly as he thinks through the contemporary application of the biblical text.


The *IBR Bibliography* series has been an ongoing project since 1992. The purpose has been to produce 14 volumes of bibliographies designed to “guide students to works relevant to their research interests” (*Pentateuch*, 9). This reviewer has examined most of the previously released volumes (see *TMSJ* 7/1 [Spring 1996]:121-23; and *TMSJ* 12/1 [Spring 2001]:113-15).

Several changes in the series have occurred with the issuance of the latest two volumes. Craig A. Evans of the Acadia Divinity School has assumed the general editorship of the series from Tremper Longman III and the series preface has been re-written. The new preface no longer mentions the “five year updates” to the bibliographies previously promised, but never fulfilled. Interestingly also, the new preface mentions “rabbi’s” as a target audience (9 [both works]).

The structure of the bibliographies is unchanged from previous volumes. They arrange the source entries in clear and well-conceived categories, and give full bibliographic information. The majority of the entries have helpful annotations. Each has an index of authors who are cited in the bibliographic entries themselves.

Sparks work on *The Pentateuch* brings together over 700 entries of various thematic and interpretative issues related to the Books of Moses. The entries offer a great variety and pull together sources mainly from periodical material and multi-author works. There is a balance in the selected entries, which has not always been the case in the series. The entries reflect great currency, the overwhelming majority of the entries dating from 1990 to the present. Designed for M.Div., and Th.M. students, this work should be a front-line bibliography for several years.

Seifrid and Tan’s work on the *Pauline Writings* is an equally impressive
collection. It includes over 800 entries on all of the majority interpretative issues related to the Pauline corpus. It opens with two useful sections on additional “Bibliographic Tools and Surveys” and the “History of Modern Interpretation.” Decidedly different from previous volumes in this series, the authors have listed a significant number of commentaries under headings for each of the Pauline epistles, a helpful addition. As with Sparks’ work, this volume demonstrates both breadth and balance in the entries and will serve students well in initial stages of research.

This reviewer has been critical of several past entries in the IBR series because of bias toward a particular theological or methodological slant instead of providing a full spectrum of research literature. These most recent additions are refreshingly free of such and represent outstanding contributions to the field of bibliographic assistance for students and busy pastors.


Seeking to answer the question, “What can one, with the help of historically informed social-scientific models, know about the ‘historical’ Jesus from the New Testament that cannot be known by other approaches?” (vii), this volume is the compilation of papers presented at the Fourth International Meeting of the Context Group in Tutzing, Germany in 1999.

The group dedicates itself to interpreting the NT by means of historiography and utilizing social science research, once they find a “suitable model” (3) to facilitate such research. It advocates a minimalist-to-radical-minimalist approach to Scripture. In fact their view of Scripture is only assumed and never defended; the idea of an inspired, inerrant text as the source of propositional truth would be considered nonsensical. In fact, this reviewer could not find one mention of the word Scripture or discussion of any level of inspiration.

At the beginning of the book, this reviewer was struck by two things: (1) the disdain for any approach to NT studies that affirms absolutes in theological truth, and (2) the acrimony toward those who disagree with the contributors’ affirmations. One example is Malina’s statement:

For the most part, social-scientific research in New Testament studies has been concerned with interpreting written documents, not with the general storytelling of historians. In other words, its concerns have been exegetical, not historiographical. . . . This is perhaps why, so far, there has been no “life” of the historical Jesus based on social-scientific interpretations. . . . Nonetheless, what has been done with the social sciences is significant, much of it important enough to be plagiarized by John Dominic Crossan (4).
This is a technical work, not for the faint of heart. The authors assume a familiarity with various social-science constructs and make no effort to explain their models, except for why their selected model is chosen over another competing model (15). They use a great deal technical jargon from the social sciences, such as the so-called “forming,” “storming,” “norming,” “performing,” and “adjourning” phases of small group development that the authors ascribe to the ministry of Jesus (11-15). One author speaks of the “public self,” the “private self,” and the “in-group self” of Jesus (38), stating that if Jesus did think that He was the Messiah, no one would have heard about it in His lifetime because to assert such “private self” beliefs would be a shameful practice (39).

Other chapters discuss “Jesus as Fatherless Child” (65-84); Jesus’ baptism by John and His walking on water in terms of “altered states of consciousness” models (108-111); demon possession as a “socially accepted way to deal with tensions, because it allowed those possessed to do and say what they could not do or say as a sane person” (165). In a chapter entitled “The Jesus Movement and Network Analysis” (301-32), the travels of Jesus and His disciples are evaluated in terms of an “ego-centered network” (325).

All of this is simply what one might call the “Quest for the Historical Jesus” on steroids. It is the full-scale abandonment of Scripture as inspired and historical-grammatical hermeneutics as a viable methodology for interpreting the text. Paul’s warning about those who are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 3:7) is the best summation for this thoroughly useless book.


Books about decision-making and how to know the will of God are not rare. But Swavely, a TMS graduate, has written one of the most biblical and helpful. The book is somewhat in the line of Garry Friesen’s *Decision Making and the Will of God,* and John MacArthur’s little booklet, “Found: God’s Will.”

Swavely begins his work by focusing on some key spiritual qualities and motives that are foundational for a decision-making process that honors the Lord. In a later chapter he reemphasizes the importance of one’s own spiritual condition in decision-making with a consideration of walking in the Spirit, recognizing God’s sovereignty, and praying for wisdom and providence.

He graciously considers and rejects mystical methods that are often used in Christian circles for determining God’s will. These include special revelation outside the Bible, supernatural signs, and fleeces. Says Swavely, “Gideon is a profound example of how not to make a decision!” (37). Swavely’s conviction is
that God speaks to us today through the Word of God “made understandable in our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit of God, and that is the only way he speaks today” (18).

In chapter four, Swavely nicely differentiates between the different “wills” of God, such as the sovereign will, the secret will, and the moral will. “I am convinced,” writes Swavely, “that much of the confusion and frustration experienced by Christians who are ‘seeking the will of God’ comes from failing to distinguish between the sovereign and moral will” (51). What about such popular language as the “perfect will of God,” or the “individual will of God,” or the “center of God’s will”? Swavely deals with these phrases in a biblical manner.

Other chapters include biblical evaluations of the role of feelings, impressions, peace, circumstances, counsel, desires, and prayer in decision making. He concludes the book with chapters on the principles, the process, and the picture of biblical decision-making.

Decisions, Decisions is a book that above all honors God and His Word. It is a book that both church leaders and lay-people need to keep in mind for themselves as well as for friends and counselees who are in the process of decision-making.


This stimulating and articulate book is by a professor of Bible and theology at Moody Bible Graduate School. The thirty chapters relate prayer to such subjects as the Spirit, the Word, group times, discipline, fasting, waiting on God, praise. Two appendices are on selected Bible prayers and stimulants to prayer. Plaudits on the first page and back cover are by Lyle Dorsett (biographer on E. M. Bounds, 1990), Gary Bergel who heads up Intercessors for America, Warren Wiersbe, Stephen Olford, Howard Hendricks, R. Hughes, and others.

A driving concern is Christians’ desperate weakness, needing God. Thrasher articulates prayer as “helplessness plus faith” (19), “opening up our needy lives to Him [God]” to resolve human anxieties (19), as Paul does (Phil 4:6). Praying in Jesus’ name is seen as praying in line with His character, reputation, authority, and will, living for God’s name (24, cf. Ps 115:1). Chapter 4, “Turning Your Temptations into Victorious Prayer,” is one of several good chapters. Much as O. Hallesby said in his book Praying, believers should come to God in their weakness, defeat, need, and trust. Chapter 5 on help by praying in the Spirit profitably points to depending on God who can lead a life into Christlike fervency and compassion (43). The eighth chapter delves into help when one does not know how to pray, and Chapter 11 into Scripture’s help, as in George Mueller’s using the
Word to motivate prayer. Likewise, Chapter 14 counsels on praying Scripture, i.e., praying God’s thoughts and will, recognizing His authority at the throne.

Chapter 10 on “Understanding How God Works” cites Oswald Chambers’ words, “Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work” (131). With due respect, it seems more sensitively balanced with God’s Word to say that prayer and other acts of obedience to God’s Word in ministry are the greater works. Of course, prayer should saturate and help with other shaping factors; it is a valid part of a whole picture.

A focus on the role of fasting (chaps. 20-22) is a good contribution. An interesting observation from Philip Schaff’s church history is that early Christians of the first three centuries fasted Wednesday and Friday, not on Monday and Thursday as Pharisees had (cf. Luke 18:12) (145-46). Thrasher lists believers who fasted—Martin Luther, John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, David Brainerd, Henry Martyn, Andrew Bonar, and Hudson Taylor (147). And how many more! The praise emphasis (chap. 27) shows how God can, with the attendant reality of Christians’ praise, accomplish such things as transforming lives mentally and emotionally, giving spiritual health, enhancing human relations, fostering faith, increasing a sense of God’s presence, and sharpening perspectives.

Chapter 23 on “waiting” starts too slowly. One gets to the fourth page (160) before learning what Thrasher means. To him, waiting includes such things as listening to God’s Word, abiding, committing to fulfill God’s desires, and obeying in faith (166-67). This puts a lot into waiting. In OT word usage and context, waiting involves trust, patient confidence, and expecting help. Listening in Scripture, while closely coordinated with waiting in the concord of spiritual attitudes, is being alertly attentive to God’s Word in earnest readiness to obey. Trusting (i.e., waiting) is patient confidence that the Word engenders when one listens (among many “wait” texts, cf. Isa 40:29-31).

This book rates favorably for its many-faceted helps and clear writing in fostering refreshing prayer that seeks God. Digesting ideas from a few pages daily and steadily practicing them before God can improve prayer’s fervency, breadth, depth, and balance in sharpening Christian living as a whole.


The primary goal of The NIV Application Commentary is to provide the biblical expositor with a tool that will bring the message of Scripture into a modern context (7). To expedite that goal, the commentary is divided into three sections: “Original Meaning” (containing traditional exegetical material), “Bridging Contexts” (explaining the timeless truths of the text that move the reader closer to present-day
application), and “Contemporary Significance” (modern application). If the individual contributors scrupulously adhere to the aims of each section, this series will be widely and profitably utilized in this generation and those to come. The last two sections of each psalm study are the obvious focus of this volume and are extremely helpful as guides to application for the devotional reader as well as the preacher.

Throughout his 27 years of teaching Old Testament, Gerald Wilson has successfully guided his students and challenged them to apply the Scripture to their lives and ministries. He is Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew at Azusa Pacific University, an Evangelical Friends (Quaker) theological institution where he has been recognized for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. His Quaker context, with its adherence to pacifism, seems to have prompted some observations regarding early Jewish pacifism (29) and may have influenced his interpretation at a few points by at least making him more sensitive to interpretive issues surrounding military language in the Psalms (e.g., 135-39, “Bridging Contexts” and “Contemporary Significance” sections for Psalm 3; cf. 721 where the author briefly explains how his Quaker context relates to his treatment of war in the commentary).

In the “Introduction” (19-81), Wilson makes some general observations about the collection, authorship, and title of the book of Psalms, as well as its historical use, poetry (poetic conventions, art, and techniques), psalm types, and psalm headings. His treatments of meter (36-39) and parallelism (39-48) are on target and balanced in the discussion of the differing views. His caution regarding extended chiasms (52) is greatly needed in a day when some have run rampant with chiastic discoveries. Unfortunately, in his discussion of psalm titles (75-81) the author makes no mention of the work of James Thirtle (The Titles of the Psalms: Their Nature and Meaning Explained [Henry Frowde, 1904]). Thirtle’s theory deserves discussion in any serious commentary on Psalms.

Following certain psalms, the commentator inserts various excurses on psalm types (e.g., 119-26, royal psalms; 139-48, laments). These discussions are more extensive than the introductory comments made in the first part of the volume (57-75). Scripture (996-1013) and subject (1014-24) indexes are helpful, but the latter is inadequate.

In the “Bridging Contexts” section for Psalm 1, Wilson alerts the reader to the fact that he cannot expound exhaustively every facet of each psalm. As he explains, “One never reaches the bottom of the well from which God’s life-giving water flows” (99). What he shares in this section is a personal selection, not the last word on insights or issues pertinent to each psalm. Even though this section of the commentary is generally well written, an occasional set of applications seem a bit overdrawn (cf. 258-65 regarding Psalm 11). A weakness shows up in a text like Psalm 22 which would seem to provide an opportunity for greater instruction about the Messiah rather than multiplying more anthropocentric applications, but the work provides only a tantalizing messianic taste in its final paragraph (428-29).

Psalm 2 is certainly a crux in messianic studies, but Wilson has chosen to
stick with a past Davidic-dynasty interpretation (108). To do so, however, the author has to do some fancy footwork regarding the apparent world domination of the king (109) and ends up suggesting that the final admonition (v. 12) may have been “appended to the psalm at a later date when the messianic interpretation was already well established” (113). Wilson offers a scenario for a gradual messianization of Psalm 2 in his “Bridging Contexts” section (114-17). In his treatment of Psalm 45, he refers to “elements of ambiguity” that allow passages “to be exploited messianically” (703). His reluctance to accept a number of messianic references in the Psalms (cf. 313 regarding 16:10) carries over even in his handling of the Servant Songs of Isaiah (282 n. 16).

Throughout the commentary Wilson tackles selected NIV translational problems (e.g., 178 regarding Ps 6:2, 202 regarding 8:2, 268 regarding 12:2). His freedom to include translation critiques is a credit to the objectivity of the series’ editors. No translation is perfect. Respectable commentaries must deal forthrightly with such issues regardless of the translation chosen as the base for the series.

Every expositor of the Psalter should have this volume (and its yet unpublished companion for Psalms 73–150). This commentary has no equal. All others come up short in both quantity and quality of exegesis. Wilson does not shun difficult interpretive problems (e.g., 638-41 regarding 40:6-8) and repeatedly provides readers with a better understanding of the Hebrew text (e.g., 451 in regard to the meaning of nepēḫ in 24:4). He consistently invokes Hebrew poetic devices when they are pertinent to sound exegesis (e.g., chiasm, 361, 495; merism, 203, 941; inclusio, 345, 967; wordplay, 182, 252-53; repetition, 158, 502-3). In the realm of application, only the 3-volume work of James Montgomery Boice comes close in value (Psalms, Baker, 1998). Wilson also introduces readers to significant interpretive topics like the covenant lawsuit (766-68). Occasionally he treats the readers to a pertinent word study that helps clarify the meaning of the text (778-79). As with many commentaries on lengthy books, the earlier psalms are treated more fully than the later. Footnote references to previous discussions are a welcome convenience for expanding the commentary on the later psalms.

Recommending this commentary in such glowing terms does not mean, however, that it has no shortcomings. For example, discussion regarding the divine name YHWH lacks an adequate historical and theological explanation (199-200). Due consideration must be given to Louis F. Hartman’s article regarding the names of God in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (ed. Cecil Roth [Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971] 7:680-81). This venerable Jewish encyclopedia declares that non-pronunciation of YHWH is not consistent with ancient Jewish practice and actually resulted from an aberrant interpretation of the third commandment. Another unfortunate bit of misleading information regarding the divine name arises in the author’s discussion of Exod 3:14 when he writes, “this type of imperfect verb form [‘ehyeh] describes action that is not complete—either because it is continuing or because it still lies in the future” (210; see also, 349 n. 35). Neither incompleteness, continuousness, nor futurity are characteristic of the Hebrew imperfect (see Gary V.

In addition, Wilson’s treatment of divine hatred (Ps 11:5) reveals either a weakness in his bibliology or an unfortunate choice of wording. In an attempt to resolve the difficulty one might have with the concept of divine hatred, the author says, “[W]e need to acknowledge that these human words were transformed when they were recognized as the authoritative Word of God” (253). Such an approach seems to deny the Holy Spirit’s superintending the writer of this psalm as he wrote (cf. 2 Pet 1:21).

Although the author normally accepts the ascription of Davidic authorship to those psalms whose headings make the claim, sometimes he questions the accuracy of the heading as well as Davidic authorship. A prime example is Psalm 20, which he dates to a time following the building of Solomon’s temple (382-84). Furthermore, he places Psalm 23 in an exilic (637) and Psalm 26 in a post-exilic setting (476-77).

This volume is well worth the purchase price even with its imperfections and the need to read it with a critical eye. Wilson’s contributions far outweigh any of this volume’s shortcomings. There is still room for a solidly evangelical, exegetical commentary on the Psalms, but until such a commentary appears, this is the one to have.