

Cultists, Cultural Christians, and Charismatics

The Rise of American Heretics, Liberals, and Pentecostals¹

Cult Groups

- Mormons (Latter-Day Saints)

- Joseph Smith (1805–1844) claimed that in 1827, he had dug up a book of thin golden plates on a hill near Palmyra, N. Y.
- Translated and published the book in 1830 as *The Book of Mormon*.
- The Mormons located in Kirkland, Ohio, 1831-37, then to Independence, Missouri, and then Nauvoo, Illinois.
- Smith was killed at Nauvoo by a mob who hated his doctrine of polygamy.
- The Mormons then migrated to Utah, under the leadership of Brigham Young. Salt Lake City, then, became the center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- A second group repudiated polygamy, and led by Joseph Smith, Jr., built a strong organization with headquarters in Independence, Missouri: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Mormons accept the *Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *The Doctrines and Covenants* along with the Bible.
- Mormonism takes a low view of Christ; it is polytheistic; practiced polygamy until federally banned; believes in baptism for the dead.

- Seventh-Day Adventists

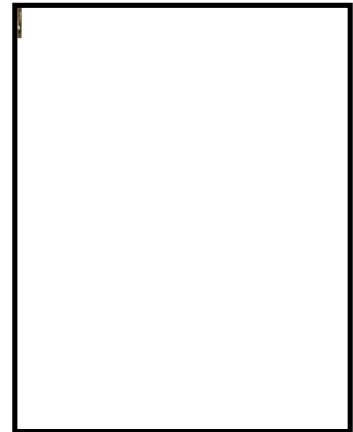
- Founded by William Miller (1782–1849)
 - A farmer, studied the Bible, especially Daniel and Revelation.
 - Concluded that Christ would return to earth in 2300 years after Ezra's return to Jerusalem in 457 (Dan. 8:14).

¹ Material for this lecture primarily comes from Dr. Michael Vlach's historical theology syllabus.

- Thus, 1843 was the year Christ would return: sold possessions, and waited. (The prophecies of Ellen G. White were instrumental in this.)
 - When that didn't happen, recalculated and decided it would be 1844. When that didn't happen, concluded that Christ came in 1844 to His heavenly sanctuary.
 - Beliefs include: Heavenly Sanctuary, soul sleep, annihilationism, worship on the seventh day.
- Spiritism
 - 1848, strange knocks and noises began occurring in the bedroom of six-year-old Kate, and eight-year-old Margaret Fox, in Hydesville, New York.
 - Overnight, they became a sensation and attracted numerous believers, who eventually organized themselves into a Spiritualist Church.
 - Spiritualist mediums purport to communicate with the dead.
 - Eventually the Fox girls confessed to a childish prank.
- Christian Science
 - Urban, rather than a frontier sect.
 - Founded by Mary Baker, Glover, Patterson, Eddy (d. 1910).
 - Became depressed and physically sick.
 - Met a P. P. Quimby in 1862, who emphasized healing by mental assent to truth that denied the reality of both illness and matter.
 - Eddy set up a practice and imparted this knowledge in a series of lessons.
 - 1875, she published *Science and Health*, on equal authority with the Bible.
 - Christian Scientist Association was formed in 1876.
 - Church of Christ (Scientist) was given a state charter in 1879.
 - First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Boston, became the mother church.
 - Beliefs included the denial of the reality of matter, evil, sickness—these only a delusion of the senses.

- One has but to realize one’s identity with God or good to be freed from both evil and sickness.
- Emphasis upon healing made the movement appealing to sick people.
- Sometimes called, “Cult of American Women.”

- Jehovah’s Witnesses – Watchtower Society
 - Came out the of the Bible Student Movement founded by Charles Taze Russell (1852–1916)
 - In 1879, Russell began publishing a magazine called *Zion’s Watch Tower and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom*
 - In 1881, he started Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society; he was a prolific writer and authored numerous books, articles, and tracts
 - Part of a Restorationist Movement, which believed that the creeds of church history were full of error and the church needed to be “restored” to its true, primitive teachings
 - Taught that there would be a heavenly resurrection of 144,000, but that most of the dead existed in a state of “soul sleep” awaiting earthly resurrection
 - Taught that Jesus received his “divinity” after His resurrection; and that the Holy Spirit is not a Person, but a force or manifestation of God’s power
 - Taught that Christ had returned in 1874, though invisibly (similar to Miller). Saw World War I as the outbreak of Armageddon.
 - After Russell died, the Bible Student Movement was split and most of those previously associated with Russell left; however, those who remained became known as the *Jehovah’s Witnesses*
 - They officially adopted the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in 1931.
 - Today they report a membership of over 18 million adherents.



Cultural Christianity

- Social Reform

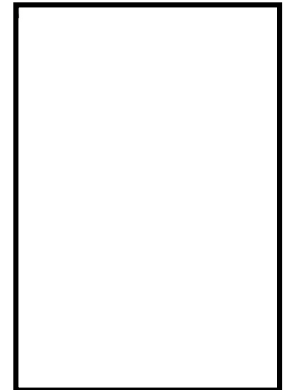
- The Temperance Movement among the churches
 - 1785, Dr. Benjamin Rush rejected the view that intoxicants were beneficial to the body.
 - Methodists, then Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists began to insist that their members neither sell nor use intoxicants.
 - Numerous temperance societies were formed to promote abstinence and to battle the liquor interests.
 - 1895, Anti-Saloon League, a federation of many smaller units, was formed.
 - The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution—1919–1933.

- The Anti-Slavery Movement among the churches
 - 1833, Lane Seminary in Cincinnati became the center of anti-slavery movement, led by a student, Theodore Weld.
 - When seminary officials attempted to ban the movement, the students migrated to Oberlin College.
 - Eventually, many denominations split between the North and the South
 - Southern Baptist Convention, 1845
 - Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1845
 - Southern Presbyterian churches formed the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1863.
 - The Civil War (1861–65) put an end to slavery in the United States; although civil rights issues would continue to play a major part in American life and politics through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

- Urbanization Problems
 - Great growth of the cities between the Civil War and World War I Influence of the church was largely dissipated.
 - Development of the public school system.
 - Well-established by 1850

- Freed education from religious teachings
- Led society in liberal/secular ideas.
- Immigration
 - Between 1865 and 1900, 13,500,000 immigrants arrived in America, and even more after 1900.
 - Great increase in Lutheran, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox denominations.
- Solutions
 - City Rescue Missions – Most famous, Water Street Mission of New York, 1872.
 - Institutional church
 - Tried to provide for the entire life of the individual
 - Gymnasiums, libraries, dispensaries, lecture rooms, sewing rooms, etc.
 - Goodwill Industries
 - Organized in Edgar J. Helms' church in Boston around 1900.
 - Employment for the poor and aged.
 - Religious and social activities also provided.
 - By 1953, over 100 factories supplying 350 retail stores.
 - Salvation Army
 - Began work in America shortly after its founding in England.
 - Street meetings, social settlements, homes, nurseries, etc.
 - YMCA (in 1851), YWCA (in 1866)
- The Rise of the Social Gospel (In particular an American phenomenon, though it grew out of the theology of Albrecht Ritschl).

- Causes in America Rough conditions in society: labor v. management, political corruption, ruthless means of the giant industrialists, violent unions, dirt, disease, crime, immorality.
- Philosophy of the Social Gospel
 - Stated: Society could and should be thoroughly reformed by Christianity.
 - Called on the churches to speak out against the major evils of the day, in particular against the excesses of the free-enterprise system.
 - Every aspect of social life was to be brought under the influence of Christian ethics.
 - Many social resolutions, most significant was the “Social Creed of the Churches,” published by the Federal Council of Churches in 1908.
- Leading proponents of the Social Gospel
 - Washington Gladden (1836–1918)
 - “Father of the Social Gospel”
 - Congregational pastor who had been influenced by Horace Bushnell and time spent in New York City.
 - In a series of books, he tried to apply Christian principles to the social and economic situation in the United States:
 - (1) *Working People and Their Employers* (1876)
 - (2) *Applied Christianity* (1887)
 - (3) *Social Salvation* (1902)
 - Taught that the competitive basis of laissez faire capitalism was unchristian.
 - There should be cooperation between labor and management brought about by the workers’ share in ownership of the business.
 - Above all else, they needed the “power of Christian love.”

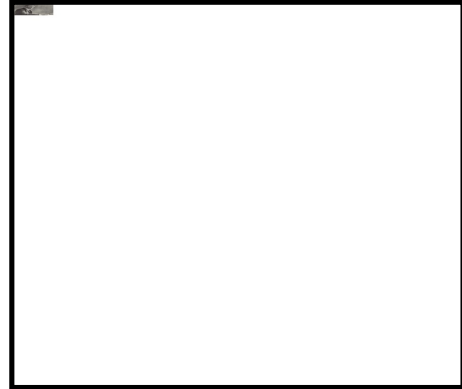


○ Charles M. Sheldon

- Main popularizer of the feelings of the Social Gospel to the common people.
- *In His Steps, What Would Jesus Do?*
- 100,000 copies sold within a few months.
- Olmstead: “It touched the hearts of the public and well night brought on a national movement for social reform.”

○ Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918)

- Most influential of all.
- German-American Baptist, professor of church history at Colgate Rochester Theological Seminary, beginning in 1903.
- In 1886, upon graduation from seminary (too liberal to be accepted as a missionary), he became pastor of a congregation of German immigrants in a poor section of New York City.
- Horrified by the terrible conditions there and began to accept the solutions of the socialists.
- Like Ritschl, his central concept was the Kingdom of god.
- Among other books, he wrote:
 - (1) *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)
 - (2) *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912)
 - (3) *A Theology of the Social Gospel* (1917)



- The Conquest of American Denominations by Theological Liberals

- What is theological liberalism? Theological liberalism is the doctrinal viewpoint that (a) rejects the full inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, (b) with the result that major doctrines of the Bible (Deity of Christ, virgin birth, etc.) are either denied or compromised.
- Liberalism has expressed itself in many different forms:
 - Unitarianism/Transcendentalism (1800-35)
 - Social Gospel/Modernism (1865-1925)
 - Neo-Orthodoxy (1930-1950)
 - Neo-Liberalism (1950-1960)
 - Radical/Secular Theology (1960-1970)
 - Process Theology (1970's on)
 - Liberation theology (1970's on)
- What were the Doctrinal beliefs of late nineteenth, early twentieth century liberalism?
 - God: Loving, Fatherly, Immanent
 - Man: All are children of God, dignified, and not depraved.
 - Christ: Ideal man
 - Atonement: Moral influence theory
 - Kingdom: A present social reality or possibility
 - Bible: An inspirational, non-authoritative book
 - Harry Emerson Fosdick: "Of course I do not believe in the virgin birth or in that old-fashioned substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, and I do not know any intelligent person who does."
 - Myron J. Hertel at his ordination: "The blood of Jesus Christ is of no more value in the salvation of a soul than the water in which Pilate washed his hands."
- Major leaders included William Newton Clark, William Adams Brown, Walter Rauschenbusch, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Shailer Matthews, Charles A. Briggs, A. C. McGiffert, and Henry Preserved Smith

- Where did it come from?
 - American theological deviation—Unitarianism, Taylorism, Progressive Orthodoxy, Finneyism, Social Gospel.
 - German liberalism and Higher Criticism
 - Evolution
 - Secularism in American society
- Why did conservatives allow it to exist in the denominations? (Why not make them start their own denominations, like the Unitarians?)
 - They had not realized what it was (used traditional terms) (Marsden, 106).
 - They were part of a religious climate in American religion that emphasized ministry and Christian living and deemphasized doctrine.
 - They viewed it as a passing fad that would never become a major problem.
 - Some enacted legislation against it and they assumed that this would correct the problem once and for all.
 - Some viewed it as a divergent form of Christianity with which they could work.
 - Some let the desire for unity in the denominations minimize their doctrinal concerns.
- What happened to theological liberalism?
 - It became dominant in the main-line denominations.
 - It organized along interdenominational lines to carry out its social projects (the ecumenical movement).
 - It modified its appearance theologically according to theological trends (especially in Europe).
 - In some forms it turned its attention to political and social themes.

Charismatics

Three Key Movements

- Classical Pentecostalism

- **Charles Parham** (1873–1929) – an American Pentecostal pioneer and author.



- He formulated classical Pentecostal theology in Topeka, Kansas in 1901. As a Methodist, Parham's theology was rooted in the Wesleyan Holiness movement of the nineteenth century, which taught that believers can experience a "second blessing" (connected with "baptism in the Holy Spirit") in which they enter a deeper, more holy phase of the Christian life.
- He is recognized as the founder of the Pentecostal Movement.
- He believed that evidence of the Holy Spirit's power in a person's life was evidenced by speaking in tongues.
- Parham believed that speaking in tongues was *xenolalia* (speaking a known foreign language).
- In the Fall 1900 he started a Bible institute near Topeka, Kansas.
- While gone for three days he required his students to research the question, "What is the Bible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost?"
- When he returned his students all concluded that the answer was "speaking in tongues."
- One student of Parham was **Agnes Ozman**. She requested that Parham lay hands on her head and pray for her that she might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and tongues.
- After midnight, Jan. 1, 1901, Ozman began to speak in Chinese while a halo surrounded her head. She was unable to speak English for three days. When she wrote, she did so in Chinese.
- Later Parham and the other students sought Baptism of the Holy Spirit (BHS) evidenced by speaking in tongues.
- This is viewed as the beginning of the modern tongues movement in the United States.

○ **Azusa Street Revival.** In 1906 tongues were spoken at Azusa Street in Los Angeles.

- Parham closed his school in Kansas and began to tour the Midwest spreading Pentecostal doctrine.
- One of Parham’s students was **W.J. Seymour**.
- Seymour was a black pastor who had been a Baptist minister.
- Learned that a person must seek speaking in tongues.
- Seymour arrived in Los Angeles on Feb. 22, 1906.
 - He became pastor of Nazarene Church in Los Angeles.
 - His first sermon was from Acts 2:4 and he declared that speaking in tongues was the initial evidence of baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - The church was not happy about this and padlocked the door to keep Seymour out.
 - Seymour found an old abandoned African Methodist Church building at 312 Azusa Street. It was located in the business section of Los Angeles but the old warehouse and stable was in shambles.
- It was here that the monumental revival broke out.
- Many people began to speak in tongues; and even the *L.A. Times* covered this event.



- By December 1906 many mission churches had been started in L.A. and others were beginning throughout the U.S.
- Parham’s reputation was permanently damaged among Pentecostals in 1907 when he was arrested on charges of “an unnatural offense” in San

Antonio. He was arrested for committing acts of sodomy with two young men. The charges were dropped when no one was willing to testify against him.

- Today the Azusa Street Mission does not exist. It was demolished in 1931. On its place today is the Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center.
- The events in Kansas and Los Angeles became the foundation for mainline Pentecostal denominations.

- New Pentecostalism or Charismatic Renewal

- In 1960 in Van Nuys, CA the modern Charismatic movement began.
- It started at an Episcopalian Church. St. Mark's church, Dennis Bennett as rector.
- There was an outburst of speaking in tongues in this church.
- Bennett faced opposition and he resigned from his duties at St. Marks. He then accepted a position St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington.
- Both *Time* and *Newsweek* covered the story.
- The movement spread within the Episcopalian denomination and eventually spread to Lutherans and Presbyterians.
- The movement then spread to universities.
- In October 1962 speaking in tongues broke out at Yale University among members of the Evangelical Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.
- The movement spread to Dartmouth College, Stanford, and Princeton Theological Seminary.
- In 1968 about 150 people who met for a Catholic Pentecostal conference.
- In 1973 22,000 Catholic Charismatics met at Notre Dame with participants from ten foreign countries.
- The Kansas City Charismatic Conference met in 1977. Three wings of the Pentecostal movement were present.
 - Classic Pentecostals.
 - Protestant Charismatics

- Catholic Charismatics
 - In 1977 the Associated Press reported that there were 10 million Charismatics in the United States.
- “Third Wave” and Signs and Wonders Movement (Vineyard Movement)
 - This is a movement that began in the 1980s that was closely associated with the ministry of **John Wimber** and the **Vineyard Movement**. Other key leaders include **C. Peter Wagner** and **Paul Cain**.
 - SWM believes that the Gospel cannot be effectively communicated to unbelievers without supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy and healing.
 - In SWM, tongues-speaking is found, but the gift of tongues is not stressed as much as it is in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Prophecy and healing also emphasized.
 - The SWM says you can believe that all the sign gifts are for today without being called a “Charismatic.”
 - The SWM rejects cessationism and dispensationalism.
 - In 1981, Wimber delivered a lecture at Fuller Theological Seminary entitled, “Signs, Wonders and Church Growth.”
 - From 1982-85 Wimber taught a course, “The Miraculous and Church Growth.”
 - Prior to Wimber most emphasis on healing ministry was tied to particular Christian leaders who had healing ministries. But Wimber wanted to teach lay people how to minister the power of the Holy Spirit in supernatural ways.
 - Peter Wagner coined the phrase “third wave”: “I see historically that we’re now in the third wave. The first wave of the moving of the Holy Spirit began at the beginning of the century with the Pentecostal movement. The second wave was the charismatic movement which began in the fifties in the major denominations. Both of those waves continue today.... “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.”
 - John Wimber (see Ken Sarles, “An Appraisal of the Signs and Wonders Movement,” *BibSac*, 1988)
 - In 1970 Wimber joined the staff of the Yorba Linda Friends Church. Though he had a successful ministry, all was not well.

- “After encountering what he considered to be miraculous divine healings, he began to question his previous conviction. His experience led him in a new direction. “Frustrated as a pastor of a fast-growing evangelical Friends church, Wimber left to join Wagner in doing church-growth consultations for the Fuller Evangelistic Association.” The turning point for Wimber came in 1977 when his wife Carol was dramatically healed of what she called a ‘personality meltdown.’ While asleep she dreamed that she was filled with the Holy Spirit and then woke up speaking in tongues! This produced a change in Wimber’s attitude from skepticism to openness concerning divine healing.”
- Wimber’s new perspective led to the formation of a new kind of church in 1977—a “noncharismatic” church that focused on miraculous healings and other supernatural gifts. The church became known as the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, located in an industrial area of Anaheim, California.”
- In 1981 the church began to preach “power evangelism”—the use of signs and wonders in the evangelism process. In less than 10 years the church grew from a home Bible study of 17 to a church of over 6,000 people.
- Basic beliefs of SWM
 - The permanency of all spiritual gifts.
 - The miracles of the kingdom of God (George Ladd’s already/not yet kingdom concept was important to leaders in the SWM.). Since the kingdom of God is present we should expect the miracles of the kingdom to be present as well.
 - Rejection of the western worldview
 - Secularism—the universe is closed off from divine intervention.
 - Rationalism—there must be a rational explanation for everything.
 - Materialism—nothing exists except matter and its movement and modifications.
 - Mechanism—everything explained by cause and effect. No room for divine supernatural intervention.
 - Belief in the concept of the “excluded middle”
 - The first level is the material world.
 - The third level deals with transcendent realities like heaven and hell.
 - But there is a second level of reality in which there are things like spirits, ghosts, ancestors, demons, etc.. that are inhabitants of this world and time. This realm is recognized by the Eastern Worldview

and was recognized by people in the West during the Middle Ages. But today, this second level is a ‘blind spot’ for today’s Western worldview.

- For SWM people, signs and wonders can be done to show people of pagan tribes that the God of the Bible is supreme over all beings.
- Power evangelism is an encounter between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. According to Wimber, “A system or force that must be overcome for the gospel to be believed is cause for a power encounter.” Elijah’s confrontation with the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel is the prime example of a power encounter.

Addendum: Answering Common Objections to Cessationism (By Nathan Busenitz – Shepherds’ Conference Seminar)

I. BEFORE WE BEGIN...

At the outset of a discussion like this, it is always important to state a few preliminary clarifications. With that in mind, here’s a list of eight things I believe are worth considering:

1. This is an important issue, but it is not a first-level doctrine.

- The charismatic debate is not a first-level doctrinal issue. After all, it is possible to be *charismatic, non-charismatic, or even undecided* and still be a *Christian*. One's position regarding the continuation or discontinuation of the sign gifts is not determinative of his or her standing before God.
- This does not mean that this issue is not important. It is very important because it has significant implications for both one's private devotional life and the corporate body life of the local assembly. But it is not a first-level doctrine, and it's good to remember that when voicing our disagreements.
- I should add that my seminar here is intentionally directed toward the conservative evangelical continuationist, the "Reformed Charismatic." Extreme charismatic and pentecostal groups, which in many cases actually *do* violate first-level doctrines — and thus should be confronted with boldness and directness — are outside the scope of what I am hoping to accomplish here.

2. The point of 1 Corinthians 12–14 is love, and a major purpose of the gifts is edification (1 Cor. 12:7).

- It seems ironic that a passage in which Paul is emphasizing love for fellow Christians and unity within the body of Christ would itself become a primary point of division among believers. As Richard Gaffin writes: "Consider this disconcerting situation: Especially in recent decades the work of the one Spirit, given to unify the church (e.g., 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:3), has become the occasion (notice I did not say, the source!) of disunity and even divisions in the church" (Gaffin, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, 334).
- To be sure, I am not asserting that we simply dismiss our differences as though they do not exist. But I am suggesting that, specifically with those who affirm the first-level doctrines of the gospel, we approach the issue in the spirit of Paul's overarching instruction to the Corinthians. We go awry, I believe, if we interpret 1 Cor. 12-14 correctly (regarding the gifts) but subsequently miss Paul's entire point in those chapters (regarding love).

3. It is possible to be confused about spiritual gifts.

- The Corinthian situation highlights the fact that, even in apostolic times (when all agree the gifts were in operation), it was possible to be confused about the miraculous gifts. Our contemporary situation underscores this point.
- As we noted yesterday, the Scriptures must be our authority in sorting through any such confusion. And we must be willing to reconsider our position (and the presuppositions that undergird our position) if the Scripture shows us areas in which our thinking needs to change.

4. Not every continuationist is the same.

- In fact, there are over 20,000 distinct continuationist groups in the world — ranging from Pentecostal to Charismatic to Third Wave. Because of this vast spectrum, it is impossible to address the theological nuances of each group. The common link that these groups share is a belief in the continued operation of the miraculous sign gifts throughout the entire church age.
- As I noted earlier, my *target audience* is the “Reformed Charismatic,” though I hope my approach will be helpful for anyone thinking through issues related to the sign gifts.

5. Not every cessationist is the same.

- According to one online encyclopedia, there are at least four types of cessationists: Concentric, Classical, Full, and Consistent. (Personally, I wish “Full” would be renamed “Complete” so we could have them all alliterated.) Our ministry here at Grace Church would generally fall into the Classical category.

6. We’re not talking about miracles, we’re talking about miraculous gifts.

- My seminar today is not concerned with whether or not miracles (in the general sense) still occur today. Many cessationists believe that they do. The question is, rather, are the miraculous gifts of the New Testament still in operation in the church today?

Sam Waldron expresses his cessationist position this way:

I am not denying by all this that there are miracles in the world today in the broader sense of supernatural occurrences and extraordinary providences. I am only saying that there are no miracles in the stricter sense [of] miracle-workers performing miraculous signs to attest the redemptive revelation they bring from God. Though God has never locked Himself out of His world and is still at liberty to do as He pleases, when He pleases, how He pleases, and where He pleases, He has made it clear that the progress of redemptive revelation attested by miraculous signs done by miracle-workers has been brought to conclusion in the revelation embodied in our New Testaments. (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 102)

7. I have been greatly blessed by some continuationists.

- My list would not be complete without noting the profound positive impact that some continuationist authors and church leaders have had in my life. This would include men like Dr. John Piper, whose passion for the supremacy of God and the enjoyment of God has been infectious in my own heart; Dr. Wayne Grudem, whose *Systematic Theology* and other academic works have both instructed and inspired me; and C. J. Mahaney, whose humility and Christ-centeredness continues to convict me and to motivate me to greater godliness. I am deeply indebted to these men, as are many others. They are a treasure to the American church in the twenty-first century.

8. As a cessationist, I love the Holy Spirit.

- Though it should be an obvious characteristic of any true Christian, I feel the need, as a cessationist, to establish a simple point from the beginning: *I love the Holy Spirit*. I would never want to do anything to discredit His work, diminish His attributes, or downplay His ministry. Nor would I ever want to miss out on anything He is doing in the church today. And I know I'm not the only cessationist who feels this way.
- Because we love the Holy Spirit we are thankful to God for the Spirit's amazing and ongoing work in the body of Christ. His works of regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, sealing, assuring, illuminating, convicting, comforting, confirming, filling, and enabling are all indispensable aspects of His ministry.
- Because we love the Holy Spirit we are motivated to study the Scriptures that He inspired to learn how to walk in a manner worthy, being characterized by His fruit. We long to be filled by Him (Eph. 5:18), which begins by being indwelt with His Word, which is the Word of Christ (Col. 3:16–17), and being equipped with His sword, which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).
- Finally, it is because we love the Holy Spirit that we long to rightly represent Him, to understand and appreciate His purposes (as He has revealed them in His Word), and to align ourselves with what He is doing in this world. This more than anything else gives us reason to study the issue of charismatic gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7-11). Our goal in this study has to be more than mere doctrinal correctness. Our motivation must be to gain a more accurate understanding of the Spirit's work – such that we might better yield ourselves to Him in service to Christ for the glory of God.

II. BUILDING THE CESSATIONIST CASE

1. **The *What* Question:** The “miraculous” gifts of the Spirit as described in 1 Corinthians 12–14 are the same in kind as the miraculous phenomena displayed in the book of Acts

TONGUES

A. **The Charismatic Definition:** The gift of tongues primarily consists of a devotional prayer language which is available to every believer. This prayer language does not necessarily consist of an authentic foreign language (and in fact usually does not). Rather it consists of a heavenly, spiritual language which, by definition, does not need to conform to the linguistic structures of

earthly, human languages. As long as the tongues are used in private praise and prayer, they do not need to be interpreted.

→ While Acts 2 does explicitly say that speaking in tongues consists of foreign languages not previously known by the speaker, there is no reason why this text is necessarily the standard text on defining tongues. First Corinthians 12–14 seems to broaden tongues to include angelic and spiritual languages and not just human foreign languages. Thus 1 Cor. 12–14 provides the basis for our understanding of tongues, with Acts 2 providing one way in which the gift was manifested (specifically on the Day of Pentecost) (cf. Storms, *Four Views*, 220–21; Oss, *Four Views*, 280).

Adrian Warnock: One thing that most of us agree on is that there are different kinds of tongues.... I think it is fair to say that the tongues of 1 Corinthians are different from those of Acts 2. Paul himself speaks here of different kinds of tongues. It is at least possible that at different points in this passage [1 Cor. 12–14] Paul is talking about different forms of tongues. (<http://www.adrian.warnock.info/2006/11/blogging-gifts-tongues-and.htm>)

The Cessationist Response:

I want to take just a moment to respond to the idea that the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 14 is somehow qualitatively different than in Acts or even than in 1 Corinthians 12.

The Miraculous Sign of Tongues Described in Acts

Some Observations:

1. Acts – The Miraculous Tongues in Acts were directly related to the working of the Holy Spirit (2:4, 18; 10:44–46; 19:6). In fact, tongue-speaking is evidence of having received the "gift" (*dorea*) of the Holy Spirit (10:45).

1 Corinthians – As in Acts, the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians was directly related to the working of the Holy Spirit (12:1, 7, 11, etc.). Similarly, the gift of tongues is an evidence (or "manifestation") of having received the Holy Spirit (12:7).

2. Acts – Along those lines, in Acts 11:15–17, Peter implies that the tongue-speaking of Acts 10 was the same as that of Acts 2, even noting that Cornelius and his household had received the same gift (*dorea*) as the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. This indicates that the tongues of the Apostles (in Acts 2) was not limited just to the Apostles, but was also experienced (at least) by both Cornelius's household (Acts 10) and the disciples of Apollos (Acts 19).

1 Corinthians – Paul, as an Apostle, possessed the gift of tongues (14:18). Yet he recognized that there were those in the Corinthian church who also possessed the gift.

3. Acts – The miraculous ability, as it is described in Acts 2, is the supernatural ability to speak in other tongues (meaning foreign languages) (2:4, 9–11).

1 Corinthians – As in Acts, the gift of tongues is described as a speaking gift (12:30; 14:2, 5). The fact that it can be interpreted (12:10; 14:5, 13) indicates that it consisted of an authentic foreign language, similar to the tongues of Acts 2. (Paul's direct association of tongue-speaking with foreign languages in 14:10–11 and also his reference to Isaiah 28:11, 12 strengthens this claim.)

4. Acts – The primary word for tongues in Acts is "glossa" (2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6), although it is also described with the word "dialekto" on two occasions (2:6, 8).

1 Corinthians –As in Acts, the primary word for tongues in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is "glossa" (12:10, 28; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39), though Paul also uses the term "phoneo" twice (in 14:10–11).

5. Acts – It was a sign for unbelieving Jews (2:5, 12, 14, 19).

1 Corinthians – As in Acts, the gift of tongues was a sign for unbelieving Jews (14:21–22; cf. Is. 28:11). Note that the gift is even called a "sign" in 14:22 (the word "sign" is from the same Greek word as "sign" in Acts 2:22). Thus, the Corinthian use of tongues was a sign just as the Apostles use of tongues was a sign.

6. Acts – It is closely connected with prophecy (2:16–18; 19:6) and with other signs that the Apostles were performing (2:43)

1 Corinthians – As in Acts, the gift of tongues is closely connected with prophecy (all throughout 12–14).

7. Acts – Some of the unbelieving Jews at Pentecost accused the apostles of being drunk when they heard them speaking in other tongues (languages which those Jews did not understand).

1 Corinthians – Similar to Acts, Paul says that unbelievers will accuse the Corinthians of being mad [not unlike "drunk"] if their tongues go uninterpreted (14:23), and are therefore not understood by the hearer.

The biblical evidence (from the correlating observations above) supports the conclusion that the gift of tongues described in 1-2 Corinthians consists of the same phenomenon as the miraculous sign of tongues depicted in Acts.

Added to this is the fact that Luke (the author of Acts) was a close associate of Paul (the writer of 1 Corinthians). Moreover, the book of Acts was probably written after the epistle to the 1 Corinthians. It is unlikely, then, that Luke would have used the exact same terminology as Paul if he understood there to be an essential difference between the two (especially since such could lead to even greater confusion about the gifts--a confusion which plagued the Corinthian church).

But what about 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 ... are there two different gifts discussed in these chapters?

1. 1 Corinthians 12 – In 12:7, 14–26, Paul emphasizes that the intended purpose of all the spiritual gifts (including tongues) is the edification of the church. (This is reemphasized in chapter 13, where Paul notes that even the most magnificent display of any gift is useless unless it is marked by selfless love.)

1 Corinthians 14 – As in chapter 12, Paul emphasizes that the intended purpose of tongues (that which is ideal and should be pursued) is the edification of the church (14:5, 6, 12, 13, 17, 26).

2. 1 Corinthians 12 – In 12:1, in order to introduce the topic of “spiritual gifts,” Paul uses a form of the Greek word *pneumatikos*.

1 Corinthians 14 – In 14:1, as Paul returns to the topic of “spiritual gifts,” he again uses a form of the Greek word *pneumatikos*. (This comes after his parenthetical comments in chapter 13 on the superiority of love to any gift.) By using the same term, Paul indicates that he is returning to the same topic (and the same set of gifts) that he left at the end of chapter 12.

3. 1 Corinthians 12 – In 12:31, Paul instructs the Corinthians to seek the greater gifts (“greater” from the Greek word *meizon*).

1 Corinthians 14 – In 14:5, Paul indicates that the gift of prophecy is greater (“meizon”) than the gift of tongues and therefore it is to be sought by the Corinthians. This builds off of Paul’s thought in 12:31, indicating that he is still speaking of the same set of gifts as those discussed in chapter 12.

4. 1 Corinthians 12 – In chapter 12, the word for *tongues* comes from the Greek word *glossa*. It’s the same word that is primarily used in Acts to describe the gift of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14 – As in chapter 12, the word for tongues (with the exception of vv. 10–11) comes from the Greek word *glossa*. Lexically, of course, *glossa* either refers to the physical organ (of the tongue) or an authentic foreign language. The context here points to the latter understanding.

5. 1 Corinthians 12 – To “speak” with tongues in 12:30 comes from the Greek verb *laleo*.

1 Corinthians 14 – To “speak” with tongues in 14:2, 4, 5, 6, 13, 18, 23 comes from the Greek verb *laleo*. Thus the combination of *laleo* with *glossa* (“to speak in tongues”) is lexically equivalent in both chapters.

6. 1 Corinthians 12 – In 12:28–30, as noted earlier, Paul is explicit that not everyone speaks in tongues.

1 Corinthians 14 – a) In 14:5 Paul says that he “wishes” (*thelo*) that all the Corinthians spoke in tongues. The implication, then, is that **not** all of them did. Moreover, Paul’s wish does not necessitate that such was a potential reality. (Paul earlier used the exact same construction in 1 Cor. 7:7 to “wish” that all Christian men were single [unmarried]. Yet, obviously, such was not a potential reality, since many of his readers were already married.) Also, Paul’s wish was not intended as a motivation for the Corinthian readers to pursue tongues. Instead, as the rest of verse 5 makes clear, Paul’s real point was that they pursue prophecy (the greater gift--cf. 14:39).

b) In 14:23, Paul’s use of “all” simply means “all who have the gift of tongues,” just as “all” in verse 24 refers to “all who have the gift of prophecy.” Nowhere, then, in chapter 14 does Paul undermine what he has already made clear in 12:8–11, 28–30 (that not every believer speaks in tongues).

7. 1 Corinthians 12 – Throughout chapter 12, the gift of tongues is closely associated with other gifts including the gift of prophecy and the gift of the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14 – The gift of prophecy in chapter 12 (vv. 10, 28–29) is the same as the gift of prophecy described in chapter 14 (vv. 1, 3–5, etc). Also the gift of interpretation of tongues in chapter 12 is the same as that in chapter 14. It follows, then, that the gift of tongues in chapter 12 is also the same as the gift of tongues in chapter 14.

Contextually, chapters 12–14 form one unit within the first epistle to the Corinthians. It is difficult to imagine that Paul would use the same terminology in the same context to refer to two categorically different phenomena.

What’s the point of all this?

Simply to make the case for the following:

- 1) The manifestation of tongues in Acts 2 was clearly the ability of the apostles to speak in authentic foreign languages which they previously had not learned.
- 2) The manifestation of tongues in Acts 10 (and by implication Acts 19) is said, by Peter, to have been the same as what occurred in Acts 2.
- 3) The exegetical and historical evidence indicates that the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians consisted of the same phenomena as that described in Acts. (As we will see.)
- 4) The exegetical and contextual evidence further indicates that, at least in its essence (or nature), there is only one gift of tongues being described in 1 Corinthians 12–14.
- 5) Thus, I conclude that the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians 12–14 was (as in Acts 2) the ability of select believers to speak in authentic foreign languages which they previously had not learned.

To assert that the gift in 1 Corinthians 14 is something categorically other than that (as in a non-rational spiritual prayer "language" which can be learned, and should be sought by every believer) is exegetically and contextually untenable.

6) Because the purpose was to edify the body—a purpose which, in order to be fulfilled, demanded that the foreign language be translated so that those in the congregation could understand it, Paul emphasizes the importance of interpretation (translation) in 1 Corinthians 14.

Additional Thoughts Regarding Tongues:

1. The gift of tongues is closely associated with evangelism. It authenticates the message of the evangelist (Mark 16:17, 20; Acts 2; 1 Cor. 14:20–22; cf. Heb. 2:2–3). According to Acts, the content of tongue-speech was “the mighty deeds of God.”
2. The gift of tongues consisted of authentic foreign languages which the speaker had not previously learned (Mark 16:17; Acts 2:4, 8–11). According to Acts 10:47 and 11:17, the tongues of Acts 10 were the same as the tongues of Acts 2. By implication, the tongues of Acts 19 are also the same.

(This sets the precedent for seeing tongues as authentic foreign languages in 1 Corinthians 14—especially when one considers that Luke, who was Paul’s close associate, probably finished Acts after 1 Corinthians was written. In light of the Corinthian controversy, it is unlikely that Luke would have used identical terminology in Acts for something that he realized was intrinsically different than what was taking place in Corinth.)

3. 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 and 27–31 make it unmistakably clear that not everyone is given the gift of tongues (cf. 14:26). (Note that there is no contextual or grammatical warrant for seeing 1 Cor. 12 as one type of tongues [that only a few receive] and 1 Cor. 14 as a different type [that everyone is to receive]. Paul’s statement in 14:5 [“Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues”] is almost identical to his earlier statement in 7:7 regarding singleness [“Yet I wish that all men were even as myself”]. Thus, Paul’s wish does not indicate that which is possible, and in fact makes it clear that not everyone in the Corinthian congregation actually did speak in tongues. Moreover, in the verse, Paul is actually emphasizing the priority of prophecy over tongues. He is not promoting tongues, in the context, but rather prophecy.)
4. The “tongues of angels” in 1 Corinthians 13:1 is probably hyperbolic in keeping with the context. Paul seems to be using hyperbole here (as his subsequent examples make clear)... It may even be a figure of speech meaning, “to speak very eloquently.” Even if it is taken literally, there are two things to consider... (1) It is the exception and not the rule (as evidenced by the rest of the NT teaching on tongues and as evidenced by Paul’s hyperbolic list) (2) Every time angels spoke in the Bible they spoke in a real language that people could understand (cf. Gen. 19; Exod. 33; Josh. 5; Judg. 13) (cf. Geisler, *Signs and Wonders*, 166).

5. Paul makes it clear that the gift of tongues was never intended to be the hallmark of the church or its most prestigious spiritual gift. Rather, the gift of prophecy is preferable because it does not require interpretation or translation in order to edify the church (1 Cor. 14:1–5)
6. Paul defines what he means by *speaking to God and not to men* when he says that “no one understands” (v. 2). This would be true of a foreign language which someone spoke but no one else in the congregation knew. They would not be edified because they would not understand what was being said.
7. Geisler, *Signs and Wonders*, 167: “The fact that the tongues of which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians could be ‘interpreted’ shows that it was a meaningful language. Otherwise it would not be an ‘interpretation’ but a creation of the meaning. So the gift of ‘interpretation’ (1 Corinthians 12:30; 14:5, 13) supports the fact that tongues were a real language that could be translated for the benefit of all by this special gift of interpretation.”
8. The purpose of the gifts (within the church) is to edify the body (12:7; the whole point of “love” overrides the gifts in chp. 13; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10–11). The intended use of tongues occurs when the gift is interpreted (translated) so that fellow believers are edified. Tongues (languages) that are not translated do not profit the body because the message cannot be understood (14:6–11). The intended use of the gifts is the edification of the church (v. 12). Tongues that are not interpreted do not edify the church (and are therefore do not fulfill their intended purpose). A “private use” of tongues is therefore not ideal—cf. 14:12–19.
9. The context implies that Paul’s prayer in 14:14–15 is a public prayer, not a private prayer, since the entire discussion regards the use of the gift in the church, and since verse 16 mentions that the ungifted person (who does not understand the language being spoken) will not be able to affirm a public prayer which he does not understand.

Again, verses 14–15 do not mitigate against the view that tongues are authentic foreign languages. The person who prays in a foreign language should also pray that he will be able to interpret the foreign language so that all who are present will be blessed by the translation.

10. The madness of 14:23 seems to be similar to the supposed drunkenness of Acts 2:13. This, of course, would be a fitting response from those who heard others speaking in an authentic foreign language that they did not know.
11. Paul defines what he means by “let him speak to himself and to God” in verse 28 with the preceding phrase, “he must keep silent in the church.” This again does not preclude authentic foreign languages as the essence of tongue-speech.
12. Verses 10–11 directly mention foreign languages. Paul’s reference to Isaiah 28:11, 12 is a reference to foreign languages. These bolster the interpretation that tongues are languages, as the normal interpretation of *glossa* would suggest.
13. The gift of tongues was to be used in an orderly manner in the church (14:27–28, 39–40).

Note: There are no other passages that specifically teach about the gift of tongues. Some charismatics try to find tongues in Romans 8:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:13...but the context in those passages makes it clear that the gift of tongues is not in view.

Viewing tongues as authentic foreign languages best fits the clearer passage (of Acts 2) and has the least number of problems in interpreting 1 Cor. 14.

Edgar, *Satisfied*, 147: “There are verses in 1 Corinthians 14 where foreign language makes sense but where unintelligible ecstatic utterance does not (e.g. v. 22). However, the reverse cannot be said. A foreign language not understood by the hearer is no different from unintelligible speech in his sight. Therefore, in any passage where such ecstatic speech may be considered possible, it is also possible to substitute a language not familiar to the hearers. In this passage there are no reasons, much less the very strong reasons necessary, to depart from the normal meaning of *glossa* and to flee to a completely unsupported usage.”

Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues*, 55: “There is but one clear and definitive passage in the New Testament which unambiguously defines ‘speaking in tongues’ and that is Acts 2. If Acts 2 is allowed to stand as it reads, then ‘tongues’ are known, intelligible languages, spoken by those who received the gift of the Holy Spirit and understood by people who came from the various areas of the ancient world to Jerusalem.

We may raise a question of sound interpretation. Would it not be sound methodologically to go from the known definition and the clear passage in the New Testament to the less clear and more difficult passage in interpretation? Should an interpreter in this situation attempt to interpret the more difficult passage of 1 Cor 12–14 in light of the clearer passage of Acts 2? Is this not a sound approach?”

THE CHURCH FATHERS (REGARDING THE NATURE OF TONGUES)

- **Regarding the cessation of the gifts in general**

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407): This whole place [speaking about 1 Corinthians 12] is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.

Augustine (354–430): In the earliest times, “the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues,” which they had not learned, “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away.

Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–c. 466): In former times those who accepted the divine preaching and who were baptized for their salvation were given visible signs of the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in them. Some spoke in tongues which they did not know and which nobody had taught them, while others performed miracles or prophesied. The Corinthians also did these things, but they did not use the gifts as they should have done.

They were more interested in showing off than in using them for the edification of the church. . . . Even in our time grace is given to those who are deemed worthy of holy baptism, but it may not take the same form as it did in those days.

- **The gift of tongues was closely associated with evangelism. It authenticates the message of the evangelist (cf. Heb. 2:2–3)**

Hippolytus (c. 170–c. 236): It is not therefore necessary that every one of the faithful should cast out demons, or raise the dead, or speak with tongues; but such a one only who is vouchsafed this gift, for some cause which may be advantage to the salvation of the unbelievers, who are often put to shame, not with the demonstration of the world, but by the power of the signs; that is, such as are worthy of salvation: for all the ungodly are not affected by wonders; and hereof God Himself is a witness, as when He says in the law: "With other tongues will I speak to this people, and with other lips, and yet will they by no means believe."

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407): The Corinthians thought that speaking in tongues was a great gift because it was the one which the apostles received first, and with a great display. But this was no reason to think it was the greatest gift of all. The reason the apostles got it first was because it was a sign that they were to go everywhere, preaching the gospel.

Augustine (354–430): In the earliest times, "the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues," which they had not learned, "as the Spirit gave them utterance." These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth.

Others agree including Ambrosiaster (mid-fourth century), Hegemonius (before 350), Gregory of Nazianzen (c. 329–390), and Leo the Great (d. 461).

- **The gift of tongues consisted of authentic foreign languages which the speaker had not previously learned. (Again the gift is closely associated with evangelism.) The content of tongues-speech was "the mighty deeds of God," specifically with regard to the Gospel.**

Gregory of Nazianzen (c. 329–390): They spoke with strange tongues, and not those of their native land; and the wonder was great, a language spoken by those who had not learnt it. And the sign is to them that believe not, and not to them that believe, that it may be an accusation of the unbelievers, as it is written, With other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people, and not even so will they listen to Me saith the Lord.

Chrysostom (c. 344–407), commenting on 1 Cor. 14:1–2: And as in the time of building the tower [of Babel] the one tongue was divided into many; so then the many tongues

frequently met in one man, and the same person used to discourse both in the Persian, and the Roman, and the Indian, and many other tongues, the Spirit sounding within him: and the gift was called the gift of tongues because he could all at once speak divers languages.

Chrysostom: "The Corinthians thought that speaking in tongues was a great gift because it was the one which the apostles received first, and with a great display. But this was no reason to think it was the greatest gift of all. The reason the apostles got it first was because it was a sign that they were to go everywhere, preaching the gospel." (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 35.1. Cited from 1–2 Corinthians, *ACCS*, 138 in reference to 1 Cor 14:2.)

Chrysostom (again): "For as the Apostles themselves had received this sign first, so also the faithful went on receiving it, I mean, the gift of tongues; yet not this only but also many others: inasmuch as many used even to raise the dead and to cast out devils and to perform many other such wonders: and they had gifts too, some less, and some more. But more abundant than all was the gift of tongues among them: and this became to them a cause of division; not from its own nature but from the perverseness of them that had received it." (Ibid., 29.1. Cited from Schaff, *NPNF*, First Series, 12:168 in reference to 1 Cor 12:1–2.)

This is agreed on by Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202), Hippolytus (c. 170–c. 236), Hegemonius (before 350), Ambrosiaster (mid-fourth century), Augustine (354–430), Leo the Great (d. 461), and implied by others (such as Tertullian [c. 160–c. 220] and Origen [c. 185–c. 254]).

The fathers equated the gift in Mark and Acts with the gift in 1 Corinthians 12–14. They did not see two types of the gift—one public and one private. They saw only one type of tongues—that as described in Acts 2.

- **The gift of tongues is given to select individuals by the Holy Spirit. Not everyone is expected to speak in tongues.**

Regarding the fact that not everyone is expected to speak in tongues.

Hippolytus (c. 170–c. 236): It is not necessary that every one of the faithful should cast out demons, raise the dead, or speak with tongues. But only such a one who has been graciously given this gift—for the purpose that it may be advantageous to the salvation of unbelievers.

Ambrose (c. 340–c. 397): Not all, says he, have the gift of healings, nor do all, says he, speak with tongues. For the whole of the divine gifts cannot exist in each several man.

Others agree including Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215), John Chrysostom (c. 344–407), Jerome (c. 345–420), Augustine (354–430), and Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–c. 466).

- **The gift of tongues was never intended to be the hallmark of the church or its most prestigious spiritual gift. Rather, the gift of prophecy is preferable because it does not require interpretation or translation in order to edify the church.**

Ambrosiaster (mid-fourth century): The pursuit of prophecy is more acceptable [than the pursuit of tongues] because it is more useful.

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407): The Corinthians thought that speaking in tongues was a great gift because it was the one which the apostles received first, and with a great display. But this was no reason to think it was the greatest gift of all. The reason the apostles got it first was because it was a sign that they were to go everywhere, preaching the gospel. [Chrysostom taught that tongues is only equal to prophecy if it can be interpreted.]

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407): Paul does not forbid speaking in tongues, however much he may belittle the gift, but he insists that it be kept under control and used for the edification of the whole church.

- **The purpose of the gifts (within the church) is to edify the body (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10–11). The ideal use of tongues, therefore, is when the gift is interpreted (translated) so that fellow believers are edified.**

First Epistle of Clement Regarding Virginity (from third or fourth century): With the gift, therefore, which thou hast received from our Lord, serve *thy* spiritual brethren... and declare the gift which thou hast received in the Church for the edification of the brethren in Christ (for good and excellent are those things which help the men of God), if so be that they are truly with thee.

Basil (c. 239–379): Since no one has the capacity to receive all spiritual gifts, but the grace of the Spirit is given proportionately to the faith of each, when one is living in community with others, the grace privately bestowed on each individual becomes the common possession of the others.... One who receives any of these gifts does not possess it for his own sake but rather for the sake of others.

Others agree including Irenaeus (c. 140–c. 202), Tertullian (c. 160–c. 220), Origen (c. 185–c. 254), Novatian (d. c. 258), Hilary (c. 291–371), Ambrosiaster (mid-fourth century), John Chrysostom (c. 344–407), Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–c. 466), and John Cassian (360–435).

- **The gift of tongues, if used in church, was to be used in an orderly manner.**

Severian of Gabala (d. c. 408): The person who speaks in the Holy Spirit speaks when he chooses to do so and then can be silent, like the prophets. But those who are possessed by an unclean spirit speak even when they do not want to. They say things that they do not understand.

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407), commenting on 1 Cor. 14:40: Again giving a blow to them who chose to behave themselves unseemly without cause, and to incur the imputation of madness; and who keep not their proper rank. For nothing doth so build up as good order, as peace, as love; even as their contraries tend to pull down. (Schaff, 224).

A BIBLICAL / HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TONGUES

Summary: The gift of tongues was a supernaturally endowed ability, given by the Holy Spirit to select Christians, enabling those believers to speak in previously unlearned human languages. The ideal use of the gift involved the translation of the message for the general edification of fellow believers or evangelism of unbelievers. This ability was not given to all Christians nor were they commanded to seek it. It was not considered the hallmark of the early church, nor is it ever highlighted as a normal part of the Christian experience.

Hasel, *The Gift of Tongues*: “The contemporary phenomenon of ‘speaking in tongues,’ which is practiced by millions of Christians around the world at present, is of recent origin in Christianity. Even though there have been attempts by the score to demonstrate that the phenomenon of glossolalia in modern times has roots going back for centuries in Christian practice, it remains certain that it is of recent origin.”

Geisler, *Signs and Wonders*: “Even those who believe in tongues acknowledge that unsaved people have tongues experiences. There is nothing supernatural about them. But there is something unique about speaking complete and meaningful sentences and discourses in a knowable language to which one has never been exposed. This is what the real New Testament gift of tongues entailed. Anything short of this, as ‘private tongues’ are, should not be considered the biblical gift of tongues.”

PROPHECY

The Continuationist Definition: The gift of prophecy is generally defined as a non-authoritative, often-incorrect, human report of true, error-free revelation from God. It is fundamentally different than OT prophecy, which had to be 100% accurate (cf. Deut. 13:1–5; 18:15–22). It is not canonical and does not replace the all-sufficient Scripture, but rather gives specific information regarding the application of Scripture in daily living (cf. Grudem, *Kingdom and the Power*, 81).

- Prophecy is “the human *report* of divine *revelation*. It is this that distinguishes prophecy from teaching. Teaching is always based on an inscripturated text; prophecy is always based on spontaneous revelation” (Storms, *Four Views*, 207).
- Yet, “prophecy is occasionally fallible” because of the human agency involved. Every prophecy involves (1) divine revelation, (2) human reception and perception, (3) human interpretation, and (4) human application. It is in these human aspects where fallibility enters in. Thus, “in terms of *revelation* alone, the New Testament prophetic gift does not differ from the Old Testament prophetic gift” (Storms, *Four Views*, 207).
- Biblical examples of human error in NT prophecy include the disciples at Tyre (Acts 21:4) and the prophet Agabus (Acts 21:11) (cf. Storms, *Four Views*, 208).
- Although NT prophecy does not carry with it intrinsic divine authority (like OT prophecy) it is still edifying to the church, just as the gift of teaching does not carry intrinsic divine authority yet is edifying to the church (insofar as it is accurate) (cf. Storms, *Four Views*, 209).
- The accuracy of a prophecy varies in accordance with the measure of the gift and the faith of the one who is prophesying (Rom. 12:6) (cf. Storms, *Four Views*, 209). Romans 12:6 teaches that prophesy takes place “in proportion to [one’s] faith” meaning that the accuracy and frequency of prophecy can vary depending on how much faith one has been given (cf. Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, 65).
- “Finally, one should avoid looking to or depending on the gift of prophecy for making routine daily decisions in life. God does not intend for the gift of prophecy to be used as the *usual* way we make decisions regarding his will” (Storms, *Four Views*, 211).
- Continuationists admit that people can rely too much on the subjective guidance of prophecy. “Usually this has been because they did not realize that prophecy in the Church age is *not* the word of God, and can frequently contain errors” (Grudem, *Kingdom and Power*, 84).
- “There is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements which are not to be obeyed or trusted” (Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 110).

The Cessationist Response

- The Bible never explicitly or overtly distinguishes New Testament prophecy from Old Testament prophecy. “If New Testament prophecy in distinction from Old Testament prophecy was not infallible in its pronouncements, this would have constituted an absolutely fundamental contrast between the Old Testament institution and the New Testament institution. To suppose that a difference as important as this would be passed over without explicit comment is unthinkable” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 65).

- Continuationists “attempt to *imply* the fallibility of New Testament prophecy by showing that it was to be evaluated (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19 – 21) on the basis of Scripture. The problem is that Old Testament prophecy was also evaluated on the basis of Scripture (previous revelation). Deuteronomy 13:1–5 makes this patent. Clearly, this fact did not mean true, Old Testament prophecy was less than fallible” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 66).
- “Continuationists note that the prophets were subordinate to the Apostles of Christ. This is said in order to *imply* their fallibility. It is certainly true that the New Testament prophets were inferior in rank to the Apostles. This is suggested, for instance, by the consistent New Testament order in which apostles are mentioned first and prophets second (1 Cor. 12:29; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). This subordinate position does not, however, imply their fallibility. As we have seen, the Old Testament prophets were distinctly inferior to Moses in the place they held in the nation of Israel (Num. 12:1–8). This, however, did not imply their fallibility” (cf. Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 66).
- “It may be argued that the New Testament prophets were of a different order than the Theocratic prophets designated by the phrase, ‘Samuel and all the prophets’ (Acts 3:24; 13:20; Heb. 11:32). But then so also were Abel, Enoch, Moses, and Jesus—all of whom the Bible describes as infallible prophets (Luke 11:51; Jude 1:14; Acts 3:20–23). Not just the Theocratic prophets, but all other true, biblical prophets were regarded as infallible in their pronouncements. Indeed, as we have seen, such infallibility was basic, indispensable, and necessary to being a true prophet (Deut. 18:15–22)” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 66).
- To say that Agabus erred in his prophecy is to apply undue woodenness to Agabus’s words. If such were applied to other parts of the Bible, such would uncover errors in many places where conservative Continuationists would not want to find them. Moreover, neither Luke nor Paul nor anyone else criticizes Agabus’s prophecy (cf. Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 67).
- “Continuationists argue that contemporary prophets receive a revelation or vision from God, but are not preserved from garbling the message when they utter it. Strictly speaking, this would mean they are seers and not prophets, a distinction nowhere made in the Bible. It would also mean they are false prophets (Deut. 18:15–22). Nowhere does the Bible make a provision for a well-meaning seer who garbles his message” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 67).
- “None of the attempts to find a distinction between Old and New Testament prophecy are viable. It is undeniable that the key distinction at which the defender of Continuationism is aiming is simply absent from the New Testament” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 68).
- On the positive side, the New Testament uses identical terminology (side-by-side) to refer to both Old and New Testament prophets and prophecy. OT prophets are mentioned in Acts 2:16; 3:24, 25; 10:43; 13:27, 40; 15:15; 24:14; 26:22, 27; and 28:23. References

to NT prophets and prophecy are interspersed without any distinction or comment (Acts 2:17–18; 7:37; 11:27, 28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9–11) (cf. Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 68).

- Peter’s reference to Joel’s prophecy (in Acts 2:16 – 21) obliterates any distinction between OT prophecy and NT prophecy since the OT prophet Joel prophesied in the OT that in the New Covenant “your sons and daughters shall prophesy” with young men seeing visions and old men having dreams (cf. Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 68).
- The book of Revelation, which is clearly New Testament prophecy, brings a curse on any who add to what it has revealed (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19).
- The NT explains that the New Covenant is better than the Old (Heb. 8:1–13; 2 Cor. 3:1–6). But this would be strange if the prophecy associated with the New Covenant is actually inferior to that of the Old.
- “There is not a single passage in the New Testament where the biblical terminology related to prophecy or prophesying refers to anything but the inspired reception and utterance of direct revelation. There is not one reference that differs from the Old Testament identification of the prophet as the spokesman and mouth of God” (Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 69).
- “Based on the description of the prophet in the New Testament no one can demonstrate that they are a prophet apart from the ability to predict the future. The predictions are not vague, general statements, but rather quite specific predictions that may be verified within reasonable time. They must also receive direct, immediate revelation” (Edgar, *Satisfied*, 84).
- Grammatically, the “prophets” of Ephesians 2:20 can only refer to NT prophets. Like the apostles they were foundational to the establishment of the church. And, like the apostles, they are no longer on the scene (cf. Waldron, *To Be Continued?*, 76).
- New Testament prophets were, as seen from above, both infallible and authoritative in their prophecies. Thus, were NT prophecy still available today, it too would have to be both infallible and authoritative.
- Romans 12:6 is better understood as “corresponding to the faith” meaning that prophetic utterances must be tested by the truth of the faith (cf. 1 Thess. 5). Therefore, this verse could be saying ‘prophesy in accordance with the doctrine we believe.’ Such an instruction would fit well with other admonitions regarding prophecy. In addition, regarding the next several gifts listed in Romans 12, Paul instructs that they are to be exercised in the sphere of ministry corresponding to the respective gift. It is likely then that this is instruction to exercise prophecy in the sphere appropriate to prophecy: ‘the faith’ (Edgar, *Satisfied*, 111).
- “The New Testament offers no evidence anywhere of a qualitative difference in gifts given by the Spirit of God. This is as we might expect since God gives perfect gifts

(James 1:16–17). All are described in the same way. We have no example of any qualitatively inferior or fallible gift or of any failure by any Christian who attempted to exercise a gift” (Edgar, *Satisfied*, 114).

SUMMARY: New Testament prophets are to be held to the same standard as Old Testament prophets since the NT writers make no attempt to distinguish between the two. Thus, the content of their prophecy (whether foretelling or forth-telling) must accurately convey the true, error-free revelation they are receiving from God. If their prophecy is shown to be incorrect, it is also shown to not be from God. Moreover, now that we have the completed “prophetic Word,” additional revelation from God is no longer needed for the present age.

HEALING

The Continuationist argument: Gifts of healing are defined as the occasional ability to heal (as God so directs) primarily through the means of prayer (as in James 5). Such healings are not always effective or immediate in their intended results

The Cessationist Response:

- The Phrase “gifts of healings” occurs only in 1 Cor. 12 and is ambiguous in its context
- The continuationist understanding does not explain the decline in quality and quantity of even the apostolic healings as the apostolic age drew to its close.
- The continuationist understanding does not explain why “gifts of healings” appears only in 1 Cor. 12 and not in any of the other lists of NT gifts.
- The continuationist understanding does not explain why the NT epistles do not give further instruction regarding gifts of healing. (Note that cessationists do not see James 5 as connected to 1 Corinthians 12.)
- **Richard Mayhue:** 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.” 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.

If the nature of healing today is the same as that in the Scripture, then it follows that what characterized divine healing then would validate divine healing today.

“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:

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.” (Mayhue, *TMSJ*, 271–72)

The only biblical illustrations we have of these phenomena run contrary to the practices of contemporary charismatics. The labels are the same, but the phenomena themselves are very different.

Edgar: “The gift of working miracles means that a specific individual can directly perform miracles. The gift of healing means that a specific individual can heal other people directly. The same applies to casting out demons if it is considered a gift. The individual has the ability to perform the miracle or healing. Instances where people are healed in answer to prayer are not instances of the exercising of spiritual gifts but are the direct work of God in response to prayer. If believers gather and pray for a sick person and that person is healed miraculously, this is not evidence that the gift of healing exists today. This demonstrates that God answers prayer.

None of today’s claims of miracles or healings are of the magnitude or quality of those in the New Testament. Little correspondence exists between the biblical descriptions and today’s so-called miracles and healings to allow any credence to the allegation that they are the spiritual gifts of the New Testament. Very few people claim to perform miracles directly, and those who claim to do so fail frequently. But the Holy Spirit never fails. The incidents in the early church involved multitudes of healings without any failures.

The alleged evidence for ‘lesser’ gifts amounts to no evidence at all. We find nothing in Scripture that describes an instance of lesser gifts, nor does it suggest that such gifts ever existed. Without doubt the scriptural gifts were miraculous, but the modern-day charismatic gifts do not compare to those in Scripture. We must not miss the important fact that the very admission of ‘lesser’ gifts and the need for charismatic defenders to find them in the Bible is a direct admission that even the charismatics know their gifts do not conform to Scripture” (Edgar, *Satisfied*, 116–17).

SUMMARY: The NT gift (or gifts) of healing were of the same quality and kind as healings in the Old Testament, healings in the Gospels, and healings in the book of Acts. While cessationists appreciate answers to prayer in which God intervenes in healing a

sick person, they maintain that this does not fit the biblical description of miraculous healing by a Spirit-endowed healer. Since the healings of contemporary charismatics do not fit the biblical description, they cannot be construed as being the same thing.

Conclusion: When the summary of biblical evidence is considered, from both the OT and NT, the evidence does not support contemporary continuationist practice.

2. **The *When* Question:** The miraculous phenomena as displayed in the book of Acts was unique to the apostolic period
 - A. This question essentially becomes irrelevant if the *What* question can be demonstrated to be accurate ... since what is going on in charismatic circles, and what was going on in the early church, are not the same thing
 - B. Nonetheless, the cessationist can give a reasonable explanation for *when* and *why* the gifts ceased based on several passages.
 - **Acts 2:17–21** – In the same way that the cosmic signs do not characterize the entire church age, so the charismatic signs do not characterize the entire church age. One marked the end, the other marks the beginning.
 - **Eph. 2:20** – In the same way that the apostles were foundational for the church, so the prophets and the prophetic gift was for the foundation stage of the church.
 - **Heb. 2:3–4** – Here the author of Hebrews refers to all of the gifts in the past tense. This passage also underscores the point that one major reason the miraculous gifts were given was to authenticate the apostolic messengers.
 - **1 Corinthians 13:8–12; Ephesians 4:11–13** – These passages are interesting in that both sides appeal to them as supporting their case. First Corinthians 13:10, especially, is appealed to by both charismatics and cessationists. I think we need to be careful in both cases not to read more into the text than is actually there. (We will say more about these passages later.)
3. **Conclusion:** What was happening in the book of Acts is not happening in the church today. We conclude, then, that the gifts ceased at some point in church history... the exegetical evidence and also the testimony of church history bears this out.

Passages like Ephesians 2:20 and Hebrews 2:3–4 help us understand why the gifts would have ceased, because the apostolic age was unique, and a primary purpose of the gifts was to authenticate the apostolic messengers.

Therefore the miraculous “gifts” of the Spirit should not be expected in the church today—since the apostolic age is over.

RESPONDING TO TEN COMMON OBJECTIONS TO CESSATIONISM:

OBJECTION 1: Cessationism grieves and quenches the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 4:13; 1 Thess. 5:16–22).

Robert Ivy: It is a sin to quench the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 states very plainly, “Do not quench the Spirit.” ... if you believe as I do, that the gifts are here for us to use, then it is undeniable that the church squelches the Spirit every day as people gather together and no sick are prayed for with faith for healing, when no one is instructed so much as a word about the gifts, when prophecy is treated with contempt. I think any Christian can understand a burden to expose sin when it is hidden, and it is sad that so few think of our disbelief as sin.

Response:

- A. By redefining the gifts, I believe the charismatic position cheapens the remarkable nature of those gifts, lessening the glorious working of the Spirit in the earliest stages of the church.
- B. This is seen especially in less conservative charismatic groups where outrageous practices (like barking in, laughing in, or being slain in the Spirit) and doctrinal non-discernment run rampant
- C. In redefining healing, the charismatic position presents a bad testimony to the watching world, when the sick are not healed. In redefining tongues, the charismatic position promotes a type of mindless gibberish more in keeping with cult groups, than with anything we know of biblical history. In redefining prophecy, the charismatic position lends credence to those who would claim to speak the very words of God and yet speak error.

This, then, is the primary concern of cessationists... that the honor of God and the Word of God be exalted—and that it not be cheapened by watered-down substitutes.

In a real sense, we are trying to apply 1 Thessalonians 5:19 – 21 ... we are taking what some would consider “prophecy” and we are comparing it to the biblical definition of prophecy to see how it measures up.

The Scripture is the *word* of the Holy Spirit. We are going to Him, then, to ask Him about His gifts, when we go to the Scriptures to define the gifts.

Objection 2: There is no one text that explicitly demands the cessation of the gifts. The best cessationists can do is imply cessationism from a variety of texts.

Adrian Warnock: Most importantly of all, if the Bible never intended that we get the impression that gifts are for today, why are there not any real “killer verses” to make it clear to us that this is not the case? (<http://www.adrian.warnock.info/2006/07/sufficient-and-efficient-grace.htm>)

Jack Deere: If you were to lock a brand-new Christian in a room with a Bible and tell him to study what the Scriptures have to say about healing and miracles, he would never come out of the room a cessationist. ... No one ever just picked up the Bible, started reading, and then came to the conclusion that God was not doing signs and wonders anymore and that the gifts of the Holy Spirit had passed away. The doctrine of cessationism did not originate from a careful study of the Scriptures. The doctrine of cessationism originated in *experience*.

Response:

- A. The primary problem here is that the *When* question is all that is being highlighted here. Is there a clear “killer” verse that tells us *when* the gifts will cease? Perhaps not. Nor would we necessarily expect it, since the New Testament is a collection of letters written to churches during the time in which the gifts were still active. But, are there clear “killer” verses that describe for us *what* the gifts were? Yes, I believe there are. A new Christian may not leave his study of the Bible thinking the gifts ceased early in church history, but he also will not leave his study thinking that prophecy is fallible Spirit-led advice or that tongues is non-sensible gibberish (at least in terms of human language).
- B. Depending on your interpretation of the “perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10, you may feel that there is a “killer verse” to make your case. Personally, I don’t believe that the “perfect” refers to the completed canon or the mature church. I believe it refers to the glorified state, and there are a growing number of cessationists who agree on that

point. It is important to realize, in entering this discussion, that the charismatic position points to 1 Cor. 13:10 to support their position just as much as traditional cessationists do. It is also helpful to note that, various commentators have taken up to six different interpretations of the “perfect” and still held to a cessationist viewpoint.

- C. First Cor. 13:10 notwithstanding, I don’t think either camp has a “killer verse.” Perhaps Eph. 2:20 or Heb. 2:3–4 would be the “killer verses” for the cessationist camp; and 1 Cor. 1:4–5 or Eph. 4:11–13 would be the “killer verses” for the charismatic camp. (We will look at those later.) But, by and large, most of what charismatics point to can be explained as a command or description that would be appropriate if given at a time when the gifts were still in operation.

Objection 3: There are texts that explicitly demand that we not prohibit or despise the gifts, but rather seek them (1 Cor. 14:5, 39)

John Ruthven: 1 Cor 12:21 says that no “member” (spiritual gift) of the body is allowed to say to another, “I have no need of you!” But cessationism says exactly that. Cessationism also denies clear commands of the Bible: “Desire earnestly the best gifts” (12:31). “Eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (14:1) “Try to excel in gifts that build up the church [especially prophecy in the context]” (14:12). “Be eager to prophesy and do not forbid to speak in tongues” (14:39). Cessationism *does* “quench the Spirit.” and *does* “despise prophecy” (1 Thes 5:19-20) by denying it even exists. In contrast to cessationism, Paul encourages Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God” (1 Tim 1:6). Many commentators feel this is the gift of prophecy.

- A. Cessationism does not deny that prophecy exists in the church today. Cessationism, rather, denies that there are currently prophets in the church today who give new revelation from God to His people. The prophetic Word, the Bible, is what we teach, study, and apply. We believe that the Spirit speaks through His Word.
- B. As noted above, these verses that Dr. Ruthven points to can be explained as a command or description that would be appropriate within its historical context since it was given at a time when the gifts were still in operation.
- C. Most of us do not greet one another with a holy kiss, command our wives to wear head coverings, or debate whether or not there is a baptism for the dead. Those examples (all from 1 Corinthians) may not quite be parallel with spiritual gifts, but they do make the point that historical context is a crucial part of our interpretation.

Objection 4: There are texts that imply that the gifts will last for the entire church age (Acts 2:17–21; Romans 11:29; 1 Cor. 1:4–5 ; 1 Cor. 13:10; Eph. 4:11–13)

John Ruthven: The New Testament teaches that since the ascension of Christ we are living in “the last days,” the time when the exalted Christ sends to the church *all* His spiritual gifts *until* His second coming. When Peter at Pentecost describes what is happening, he says essentially, “Joel’s prediction about the Spirit being poured out, being expressed in prophecies, dreams and visions (revelation experiences), is *now* being fulfilled *in these last days*.” If the promise of Spirit-caused revelation in dreams, visions and prophecies is for *the last days*, then are we, almost 2,000 years after this event, now *earlier* than the “last days” of Peter’s time— a time when this prediction no longer applies? No. We, too, must be in the “last days,” at least until Jesus comes, and therefore these revelatory gifts are still promised for our time.

Wayne Grudem: Doctrinal disputes should be settled by appeal to Scripture. Experience is not our final authority - Scripture is. But the Scripture talks about these spiritual gifts quite openly and honestly and frequently and talks about them in the context of the New Testament church and I think they're part of the church age.

D. Acts 2:17–29 – In the continuationist view, Peter applied Joel’s prophecy to the whole church age (which began at Pentecost and will end at Christ’s return), and not just to Pentecost itself. The church age will be an age that is marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the evidences of such an outpouring will include prophecies and visions. Thus, we should expect charismatic phenomena (like prophecies and visions) to mark the entire church age.

But there is a problem. Joel’s prophecy includes other elements that did not occur on the day of Pentecost, and in fact have not yet occurred in church history (“wonders in the sky,” “signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke,” “the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.”) These cosmic signs are clearly not a normative, continuing part of the church age. Douglass Oss (Pentecostal) recognizes this difficulty and responds by writing:

It is often pointed out in objection to this understanding of the text that the more cosmic events (Acts 2:19b–20) simply did not occur and therefore Acts 2 is not the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. But in light of Peter’s clear fulfillment language (e.g., ‘this is what is spoken’), it is better to understand the signs that occurred on the day of Pentecost as marking out *the beginning of the last days* and the more cosmic signs as belonging to *the end of the last days*, just prior to the day of the Lord. (Four Views, 266; emphasis added).

In other words, the miraculous signs of Pentecost were a fulfillment of the first part of Joel’s prophecy, and the miraculous signs of the Parousia (Christ’s return) will be a fulfillment of the second part of Joel’s prophecy. Thus, given Oss’s own reasoning, in the same way that the *cosmic signs* are limited to the end of the age, the *charismatic signs* would be limited to the beginning. If that which marks the end is only found at the end, then that which marked the beginning could reasonably be expected to be found only at the beginning.

- A. **Romans 11:29** – The context indicates that this is not about miraculous gifts given to the church. It is actually about Old Testament promises made to Israel.
- B. **1 Cor. 1:4–5** – The bottom line is that apostle does not explicitly say (in this text) that the gifts will last until the return of Christ. Rather, he urges the Corinthians (who were the blessed recipients of divine grace) to continue in their eager expectation for Christ’s return (when the grace that they enjoyed now, in part, would be realized in full.) The *implied* duration that charismatic commentators see in the text seems to be based more on a preceding theological presupposition (read in from 1 Cor. 13), than on conclusive exegetical data from this passage itself.

Ultimately, then, I do not believe the *when* question can be decisively or definitively answered from this text. The passage, which is an introductory word of thanksgiving (for the Corinthians’ salvation and state of spiritual blessing) and encouragement (that they would eagerly anticipate the return of Christ), leaves the *when* question open.

- C. **1 Cor. 13:10** – In this particular passage, if the emphasis is on partial knowledge versus complete knowledge (rather than the gifts themselves); and if Paul is writing in terms of his own personal experience (as verse 12 seems to indicate) rather than in terms of church history; then he leaves the question of *when* the gifts cease in church history unanswered in this passage.

Thus, I believe we must look to other passages to answer the *when* question. Having said that, I certainly recognize that there are some compelling arguments for the other views of the “perfect.” As I noted in the article, any of the six views of the “perfect” can be adopted and still fit within a cessationist framework.

- D. **Eph. 4:11–13** – If the charismatic agrees that there are no longer apostles in the church today (which most correctly do), then this passage loses its force for asserting that the prophetic office necessarily lasts until the return of Christ.

Objection 5: The charismatic gifts filled more purposes/needs than just authenticating the message/messenger. Those needs still exist in the church today. Therefore the gifts are also still needed.

Jon Ruthven: Before we begin, let us look at the central problem with the “cessationist” argument, above. It claims that *because* spiritual gifts can be used as *proof* of doctrine, then the gifts *must cease* when the need for that proof is fulfilled (that is, when the New Testament was written). ... It is highly doubtful that the New Testament ever intended spiritual gifts to be used as proof, but even if it did, the New Testament itself shows many *other, clearly-stated and necessary functions* for spiritual gifts, which, by the same logic, should demand their continuation!

...

Bottom line: cessationism teaches that since the function of the “miraculous” or “revelatory” spiritual gifts was to accredit the doctrine of the New Testament, then no more such gifts can now occur. But the New Testament itself nowhere says that spiritual gifts are to accredit New Testament doctrine or establish the canon of Scripture. The New Testament *is explicit*, however, about the gifts’ other functions: “for the common good,” to reveal secrets of the heart, to convict sinners, to cause worship of God, to exhort, encourage, and edify (1 Cor 14).

- A. The cessationist argument contends that the miraculous gifts were part of the apostolic age – the foundation age of the church.
- B. Why were they necessary during that age? Because (1) God was transitioning from Israel to the church (2) in so doing, God authenticated His messengers (including His Son) (3) thus, He provided a sign to unbelieving Israel (4) by vindicating His evangelists and (5) also strengthening His church.
- C. Does the church still need to be strengthened and edified today? Of course. But does the church still need to be established, founded, authenticated in the same way as it was in the first century? No.
- D. If it can be demonstrated that the gifts as practiced in the New Testament are no longer being practiced today, the cessationist paradigm gives a reasonable explanation as to why.

Objection 6: Cessationists are afraid to embrace the full power of the Holy Spirit due to peer-pressure, traditional stereotypes, and personal comfort boundaries.

Rob Wilkerson: I cannot help but get the very strong sense that the arguing, exegeting, debating, and striving against a continuationist position is in some way, great or small, motivated by a fear of the unknown, the subjective, the unexplainable, and the abuse [of gifts].

Response: I believe more accurately, that cessationists are afraid of attributing to the Spirit something that did not originate from Him; of adding to His Word; of taking His name in vain; of presenting His power in such a way that it is not unique or incredible.

As the title of this seminar suggests, cessationism (at least ideally) is motivated by a genuine *fear of the Lord* that they not add to His Word or attribute to Him that which He did not do.

Objection 7: Cessationists are inconsistent in asserting that some of the gifts have ceased (the miraculous gifts) while some of the gifts have continued (the non-miraculous gifts).

Jon Ruthven: Most cessationists believe that the “non-miraculous” spiritual gifts continued: hospitality, helps, administration, evangelism, pastoring, teaching, *etc.* On the other hand, the “miraculous” gifts had to cease because they accredited new doctrine. Besides creating an artificial and unbiblical distinction among spiritual gifts, this teaching confuses the sufficiency of doctrine with the *means by which* that doctrine is communicated. Just as inspired preaching *applies* the gospel to the hearers’ spiritual needs but does not add to the Scripture, so the same for the gift of prophecy. Just as the gift of hospitality *expresses* the gospel in physical ways, but does not add content to Christian doctrine, in the same way a gift of healing. *Neither* the “non-miraculous” *nor* the “miraculous” gifts *add* anything to the content of the gospel; they are simply means to communicate the gospel, whether in word or in deed. Spiritual gifts do not *prove* the Gospel, so much as they *are* the Gospel!

- A. It is not inconsistent for cessationists to differentiate between types of gifts if the Scripture itself does this. For example, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul focuses only on the revelatory gifts (tongues, prophecy, knowledge, wisdom) even after listing all the gifts in chapter 12.
- B. The vast majority of charismatics (at least doctrinally conservative charismatics) agree that there are no longer apostles in the church today. For charismatics to assume that the apostolic office has ceased but that the prophetic office continues seems equally inconsistent (especially in light of passages like Eph. 2:20).
- C. There are cessationists who believe that all of the gifts have ceased. These cessationists would look at a passage like Heb. 2:3–4 and conclude that all of the gifts are no longer active.
- D. Whether or not these non-miraculous gifts are still active, all Christians are commanded to apply such characteristics in their life (such as mercy, hospitality, giving, *etc.*). This is in contrast to the miraculous gifts which are only listed as specialized endowments of grace.

Objection 8: Cessationists promote a sterile overly-formal Christianity which overemphasizes doctrinal head knowledge and underemphasizes true spirituality.

Wayne Grudem: I don't know that that is representative of all of cessationism but there is a segment of the cessationist community that is so suspicious of any emotional component, any subjective component in all of our relationship with God and with others that it tends to quench a vital aspect of the personal relationship with God in the lives of ordinary believers. And that can tend to a dry orthodoxy in the next generation that abandons that faith and the church spiritually becomes dry and static, and I'm concerned about that.

Response:

- A. I believe there are some aspects in which this can be true. There is a certainly a place for emotional response in worship—just read the Psalms. And there are times when, cessationists can become so cerebral that they drift toward the Ephesian church which, in Revelation 2, was admonished by Christ Himself for having lost their first love, despite being doctrinally orthodox.
- B. There is an element, as well, in which cessationist churches can become so scared of “looking charismatic” that they purposely discourage legitimate forms of expression in worship.
- C. At the same time, many charismatic churches emphasize experience over sound doctrine. This is utterly backwards. If the doctrine is wrong, the experience is immediately suspect.

Objection 9: Cessationism is wrong because miracles still occur, not to mention all of the sign gifts that are displayed each week at thousands of charismatic churches.

- a. Actually, most cessationists do not deny that miracles can occur in the church age
- b. The primary question is whether or not the miraculous gifts are still occurring in the church today
- c. If we examine the biblical description of those gifts, we find that contemporary charismatic practice does not match up.

Objection 10: Cessationism is dying out.

Jon Ruthven: Cessationism is an increasingly beleaguered position represented by three concentric circles. Many strongest defenders of cessationism in the inner circle are defecting to more modern “mediator” positions, who can see both sides and respect the arguments of charismatics, but still resist personal change. But this second circle in turn is losing defectors to the outer circle of the “open-but-cautious” position. It may well be that if present trends continue, and we speak the truth in love, that our friend George will one day discover that cessationism has taken its rightful place in the Museum of Theological Curiosities beside the “gap theory” of creation, the bodily ascension of Mary, and the doctrine that Mussolini is the antichrist.

Wayne Grudem: By far the most common view expressed among seminary graduates is open but cautious. They say "I'm not convinced by the cessationist arguments but I really don't know how to put these things into practice in my own church and I've never seen them happen." Tim, the cessationist argument is not winning the day in terms of exegetical arguments or persuasiveness in the books published. I think it's appealing to a smaller and smaller group of people.

- A. Actually, I think cessationism is alive and well, even within so-called charismatic circles.
- B. If, often by their own admission, the phenomena taking place in their churches is different than that which characterized the New Testament church as described in the book of Acts – then in a very real sense, I believe, they are cessationists (at least in a sense).
- C. In my opinion, they are referring to non-New Testament phenomena using New Testament terms.

Vern Poythress: There is no need for Gaffin [a cessationist] and Grudem [continuationist] to disagree about the modern phenomena. They disagree only about the label given to the phenomena (“not-prophecy” versus “prophecy”) and about whether the NT phenomena were identical or merely analogous to the modern phenomena. ... If charismatics and noncharismatics could agree on these points, I think that the debate on modern spiritual gifts would be largely over. [March 1996] (http://www.etsjets.org/jets/journal/39/39-1/39-1-pp071-101_JETS.pdf)

CONCLUSION: Because of our love for God, we want to see His Spirit honored. The Spirit is most greatly honored when we operate in a way that is exegetically driven and biblically precise. Today we have suggested that it is less than accurate to refer to modern charismatic practice with the biblical labels of “tongues,” “prophecy,” and “healing.” Personally, I believe doing this also detracts from the uniquely glorious working of the Spirit during the apostolic age. It is the fear of the Lord, and the desire to test all things carefully (cf. 1 Thess. 5:20–22), that motivates this concern.

At the same time, I think cessationists can sometimes drift toward dry orthodoxy. There is an appropriate place for emotional expression in worship (as long as it is in keeping with the orderly nature of worship). If we stifle that expression, we do our congregations a great disservice.