

HAS THE GIFT OF TONGUES CEASED?

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HAS THE GIFT OF TONGUES CEASED?

We must inquire today whether the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased in large measure because on January 1, 1901, in a class on the Holy Spirit in Acts at the newly opened Bethel Bible College of Topeka, Kansas, Agnes Ozman, with the support of her teacher Charles Parham, asked that her classmates lay hands upon her that she might receive the Holy Spirit. They did so, and Agnes spoke in tongues. William Seymour, a later graduate of another Parham school, led the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906 where the presence of speaking in tongues sparked a revival that gave notoriety to the practice and impetus to the beginnings of the Pentecostal denominations.¹ The 1960's brought a new tongues practice to the mainline denominations in conjunction with the growing ecumenical movement. Beginning with Californian Episcopalian churches and eventually including Roman Catholics, this new use of the "gift" met resistance among some with the old convictions.² In the 1990's, the Third Wave Movement of Peter Wagner and John Wimber made signs and wonders such as tongues-speaking integral components of institutions that have been influential in evangelical circles, including Fuller Theological Seminary, the Toronto Blessing, the Vineyard Movement, and Sovereign Grace Ministries. Today's Neo-Pentecostalism advocates a prosperity gospel.

In contrast to the conclusions drawn by the proponents of these movements, evidence from the examination of Scripture shows that the New Testa-

ment gift of tongues has ceased. First, tongues have ceased because their purpose was transitory; second, tongues have ceased because the New Testament gift is not the phenomenon of today; and finally, tongues have ceased because the scriptural canon is complete.

The Purpose of Tongues Was Transitory

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

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

sea (1 Cor. 10:2), and the church's inaugural baptism was the outpouring of revelation beginning with Pentecost (1 Cor. 12:13).

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

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

In addition to the three Acts passages, we see the gift of tongues recurring in the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12-14. The description of the

worship practices of this uniquely problem-riddled congregation provides for us our only epistolary instruction regarding the gift of tongues in the New Testament. On the other end of the spectrum of Christian maturity stands the church at Rome. They also received a letter from the apostle Paul, which lists gifts (Rom. 12:3-8). The contrast between the 1 Corinthians list (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and the Romans list is instructive. In the first place, although the Romans list contains seven gifts and the 1 Corinthians list contains nine gifts, the lists have only the gift of prophecy in common.⁵ Second, the Romans list is simply called “gracious gifts” (Rom. 12:6), whereas the 1 Corinthians list has a more specific revelatory designation, “manifestations of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:1, 7). Third, the Romans list does not include ranking, but the ranking of the 1 Corinthians list is the major theme of the next three chapters. This theme dictates that tongues should be ranked dead last. Finally, the Romans list was to be practiced in an unmitigated fashion, whereas the 1 Corinthians list required limiting parameters. This remarkable dissimilarity is best accounted for as the difference between normative/gracious gifts and temporary/revelatory gifts. We may also discern that the normative/gracious gifts offered little opportunity for entertaining pagan counterfeits, whereas entertaining pagan counterfeits of the temporary/revelatory gifts proliferated throughout the Hellenistic world.

Because the Roman context is clearly the normative ideal for the exercise of the gifts of grace in a local church (Rom. 1:8), and because the Corinthian context, which includes the gift of tongues, has very little in common

with the Roman context, in terms of both the nature of the gifts and the need of the church for correction, it therefore follows that the Corinthian context is not normative, but exceptional.

Paul describes the exceptional purpose of tongues when he says, “Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe” (1 Cor. 14:22). The gift of tongues has ceased because its purpose as a validating sign-miracle to a skeptical world has ceased. No longer must the apostolic message be validated in an inaugural fashion. That was accomplished by Pentecost’s miraculous fulfilment of Joel, which gave birth to the church. Through their inscripturation the miracles of the apostolic age continue to provide validation for the church’s message today. The purpose of tongues and other sign-miracles in the church was passing away even in the first century (Heb. 2:3-4).⁶ Founded on the revelation received by the apostles and New Testament prophets (Eph. 2:19-3:5), the church has thrived without further special revelation for centuries.⁷

The New Testament Gift Is Not Today’s Phenomenon

The second reason the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased is that it does not exist today. Claims to miraculous phenomena never really disappeared from the history of the professing Church, so it is not at all surprising that we still have plenty of counterfeits to observe. With everything from the

bleeding stigmata of Roman Catholic saints, to the healing powers of the virgin mother's milk, miraculous signs increased over the history of the visible Church in reverse proportion to the doctrinal purity she experienced. The proliferation of miraculous signs has been positively correlated with doctrinal apostasy.⁸ The consummation of this law of church history shall be the proliferation of false christs in the last days (Matt. 24:24). The Lord's warning includes the possibility that the very elect would be deceived under these conditions. The question we must answer regarding the cessation of tongues, therefore, is not whether the phenomenon is truly supernatural, or whether the phenomenon is practiced by some who are elect, but rather whether the phenomenon agrees with scriptural precedent. Today's gift of tongues violates this precedent in three important ways.

First, the New Testament gift of tongues was the sudden ability to speak a known foreign language, not the ecstatic speech common in the ancient world of paganism and characteristic of today's charismatic movement. Although the term $\gamma\lambda\tilde{\omega}\sigma\sigma\alpha$ commonly occurs throughout Hellenism to describe a pagan ecstatic phenomenon, the New Testament usage of the word describes an unprecedented gift of the Holy Spirit.⁹ This meaning of the word must come from Paul's usage in 1 Corinthians and Luke's usage in Acts. Three possibilities present themselves: (1) both men use the term to describe ecstatic speech; (2) both men use the term to describe known human language; (3) the men use the term differently, Paul as ecstatic speech and Luke as known language.

There is no linguistic evidence for the third of these options. Both men utilize the word $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\alpha$ in their passages in a technical way to describe a spiritual gift. The proximity of the lives of these men argues that their understanding of the gift of $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\omega\nu$ must have agreed.¹⁰ The question then becomes how best to interpret their united testimony so as to pick between either the first or second of the possible understandings. In this endeavor, Luke's usage is clearly decisive. He employs a lengthy passage (Acts 2:5-13) complete with a list of the languages in question while arguing the known-language reality of New Testament $\gamma\lambda\omega\sigma\sigma\omega\nu$. The arguments for ecstatic speech from Paul's usage in 1 Corinthians are not nearly as convincing.¹¹

Today's gift of tongues further violates the scriptural precedent in its total disregard for the regulations Paul communicates to control the gift in 1 Corinthians 14. Verse 20 begins the section in question by teaching that the path to spiritual manhood must involve a growing use of prophecy and a mitigating use of tongues. Edification is the goal (14:26), and important restrictions are the means to that end. These include (1) a maximum of two or three participants per service (14:27), (2) a sequential ordering of the participants (14:27), (3) the necessity of an interpreter (14:27), (4) subjection to the prophets (14:32), (5) the exclusion of females (14:34-35), and (6) orderliness (14:40).

It is the fourth of these restrictions, subjection to prophets, that makes the use of tongues and immediate prophetic revelations especially obsolete

with the presence of the completed canon. The prophets have spoken with infallible authority in the Scriptures, and their sufficiency for our faith and practice is truly complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This sufficiency requires that any other potential substitute simply defer. When “mini-prophetic-revelations” absorb any of the attention that might otherwise be afforded the inspired text of the completed canon, the hierarchy of prophecy that Paul demands in 1 Corinthians immediately becomes disoriented. The only proper way to be truly “subject to the prophets” in our context today is to be silent as the infallible book is taught line upon line. This was unavailable to many first-century Christians.

Finally, scriptural precedent is violated by the fallibility of today’s prophet. The best defenders of today’s charismaticism concede this fallibility.¹² The verbal inerrancy and infallibility of the New Testament manifestations of the Spirit are perhaps best highlighted by the fact that the miraculous gift of tongues required an equally miraculous gift of the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 14:27). Paul did not call for one who knew the language used by the tongues-speaker as in Acts 2. Nor does he allow that the tongue-speaker may give his own translation without the supernatural gift (1 Cor. 14:13). Rather, one possessing a supernatural ability to convert the foreign language into a verbally accurate and inerrant translation for the authoritative instruction of the church congregation was required. The interpretation of tongues was not a natural ability, but a supernatural gift, and it had to be a supernatural gift because God’s revelations are verbally inspired and inerrant. A translation or para-

phrase produced with mere human ingenuity and talent would not have been sufficient for this authoritative and infallible work of revelation. Many of today's tongues-speakers rarely bother with an interpreter, and when they do those interpreters are not verbally inspired and inerrant. In conflict with the nature of special revelation, today's prophets simply often get things wrong.

The Scriptural Canon Is Complete

Here the focus becomes 1 Cor. 13:8-13.¹³ In this passage Paul makes his point about the importance of love in ministry by comparing its permanence with the transitory character of the manifestations of the Spirit, which the Corinthian church had found so captivating. Verse 8 begins,

⁸Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.

It is important to begin with the understanding that the full range of “manifestations of the Spirit” are in view as Paul begins his conclusion of chapter 13.¹⁴ It also informs our discussion to note that this contrast with love would not work in the same way with the Romans list of gracious gifts. The exercise of the majority of the Romans gifts are in essence expressions of love.

The list discussed previously in 1 Cor. 12:7-10 contains two connecting words used to chain the list together: ἄλλος and ἕτερος. The first means *another of the same kind* and the second *another of a different kind*. Understood in the light of Paul's alternating use of these words, the list clearly identi-

fies three connected classes of manifestations of the Spirit.¹⁵ A representative from each of the three classes receives mention in verse eight; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the apostle has the entire 1 Corinthians 12 list in view as he speaks of cessation and termination.

Verses 9 and 10 need to be taken together:

⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Following the conjunction *For*, these verses together explain in further detail the transitory nature of the manifestations of the Spirit. These activities are modified by the phrase *in part* (ἐκ μέρους), and contrasted to the phrase *that which is complete* (τὸ τέλειον). The phrase translated *in part* does not carry the normal Greek preposition for a phrase with this meaning (ἀπό μέρους; see 2 Cor. 1:14, 2:5). Instead, with ἐκ the phrase carries more the idea of a whole divided into individual pieces. In the New Testament, it is used only here and in 1 Cor. 12:27, where Paul speaks of the body of Christ and its members: “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually (ἐκ μέρους) members.” Charles Hodge translates the verse: “That is, collectively ye are the body of Christ; individually or severally, ye are members.”¹⁶ The phrase ἐκ μέρους is the complement of “collectively.” It is the individual pieces that comprise the collective, and so it discloses a connection between the parts and the whole. Though undoubtedly obvious to his Greek readers, Paul’s point is often missed in English that “the parts” are in a sense individual components of “the whole.”

Consequently, this relationship between *that which is in part* and *that which is complete* helps us define the important latter phrase. Verse 8 names for us three of the individual pieces which may be described as ἐκ μέρους: the revelation from the Spirit that is the word of knowledge, the revelation from the Spirit that is prophecy, and the revelation from the Spirit that is kinds of tongues. Understood in the broader context, each individual manifestation of the Spirit listed in 12:7-10 can be understood as ἐκ μέρους, individual components of a larger whole. What then is the composite whole (τὸ τέλειον)? It is clear first of all that the composite must include its individual pieces because of the relationship established between ἐκ μέρους and τὸ τέλειον. Because the ἐκ μέρους are the individual manifestations of (or revelatory work from) the Spirit, τὸ τέλειον must be the complete, composite, or collective manifestation of (or revelatory work from) the Spirit. Inserting the return of Christ is unnatural, because there is no apparent component/whole connection between the manifestations of the Spirit of 1 Corinthians 12 and the Second Coming or the Rapture. There is no sense in which the Rapture is the composite Holy Spirit work of revelation. Conversely, the complete canon of Scripture qualifies as the ultimate composite of individualized manifestations of (or revelations from) the Spirit. NT Scripture is the collective composition of the truth contained in individual NT revelations communicated and validated in the sign gifts. It is the completed product of that work of the Spirit that was promised in Joel, begun at Pentecost, and finished on Patmos (Rev. 22:18-19).

Jesus also had promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them “all things” (John 14:26) and guide them into “all the truth” (John 16:13). This is the τέλειον, the complete manifestation or revelation of the Spirit. Jude called it “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Once it was delivered, the partial manifestations of the Spirit passed away. Thus Paul affirms the ultimate authority of his own letter in the Corinthian passage as an inspired apostle of an inspired scriptural text (14:37-38). Moving on we come to a section of the passage, which normally does not factor largely into the interpretation of the whole or in answering the question at hand:

¹¹When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

There is here, however, an obvious connection between the concept of revelation and the illustration Paul is using. Paul does not refer to the “playing” or the “activities” of childhood which are put away, but rather he speaks of the child’s communication and comprehension, topics closely associated with the two aspects of the Holy Spirit’s work of revelation. He revisits the metaphor as he argues for the preference of prophecy over tongues (14:20). Prophecy helps the understanding more than tongues; it better develops mature thinking. The completed canon of the New Testament, bringing the church into revelatory manhood, would produce even more mature thinking than this.¹⁷

The next verse has presented the greatest challenge to proponents of the interpretation just delineated, and the greatest support to the view that the

passage speaks of Christ's return.¹⁸

¹²For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

The spiritual power of some great hymns of the faith can be seen in the dominant interpretations of this verse.¹⁹ The typical interpretation follows the beginning of Paul's metaphor (the mirror) while interpreting the first phrase of the verse, but then loses the metaphor when interpreting the second phrase of the verse.²⁰ This approach is incorrect. As Paul speaks of "dimly," he is talking about a mirror. So also, when he speaks of "face to face," he is still talking about a mirror. Although he uses vocabulary similar to Num. 12:8, which describes Moses as an especially privileged prophet (note that only he in his day was an author of Scripture), the mirror metaphor is at the center of Paul's point. Corinth was known in the ancient world for the high quality of its mirrors.²¹ These mirrors, however, were not made out of glass as ours are today, but rather out of polished brass²² (Exod. 38:8). Brass reflects well when it is polished well, but if the surface is tarnished or uneven, the reflection can be distorted and out of focus. This is the metaphor the apostle Paul is using to describe the transitory nature of the manifestations of the Spirit. With these transitory gifts, the content of God's revelation is only dimly seen and subject to the abuses known in the Corinthian church, but when the canon reached completion, the reflection of the face obtained a sharper focus. Revelatory content became clear. The mirror metaphor occurs two other times in the New

Testament, once repeated by Paul (2 Cor. 3:15-18), and once earlier by James (James 1:22-25). Both of these pictures refer to the written word of God. The phrase “face to face,” though often used in the Old Testament of person to person encounters, also can mean simply a reflection as in Prov. 27:19.²³

We must equally be careful with the final half of the verse. It is often concluded that only when we are resurrected with the Lord will we know Him as fully as He knows us. But this conclusion clearly assumes too much.²⁴ Our knowledge of God is complete when He completes His self-revelation, not when we have obtained a complete understanding of Him. We fully know Him when we fully know the “all things” and “all the truth” He has chosen to reveal to us (John 14:26, 16:13). This happened at the close of the New Testament canon, and it was by then that tongues had ceased along with the other manifestations of the Spirit. Paul concludes:

¹³And now abides faith, hope, love—these three; and the greatest of these is the love.

Here again we have a significant contrast as Paul concludes his call not to forget the importance of love in the exercise of any gracious gift or manifestation of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:1-3). He contrasts what abides with what he has just said will cease. Faith, hope, and especially love will abide; things that are partial will not (13:8). If our possession of revelatory manifestations of the Spirit is incomplete until the return of Christ, then the completed canon of Scripture belongs to the category of what shall cease rather than what shall abide in

Paul's contrast.²⁵ To the contrary, the Psalmist affirms, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). When the perfect comes, what came before it ceases, so the completed canon cannot belong to this category of the partial, for with faith, hope, and love, it will abide forever. Verse 9, "Now we know in part and we prophesy in part," cannot refer to possessors of the scriptural canon because that canon shall never "be done away."

CONCLUSION

The transitory, non-normative nature of the manifestations of the Spirit shows that the New Testament gift of tongues has ceased. The phenomena of today may qualify as wonders of some kind, but not as the New Testament gift (Matt. 7:20-23). Finally, Paul makes decisively clear that the New Testament gift of tongues would cease with the close of the canon. The completed revelation has come, and its all-sufficient truth requires our fullest attention.

Today's evangelical compromise with charismatics is a failure traceable to the new evangelical repudiation of biblical separatism. The apostle Paul warned not only of a heterodox gospel and an aberrant Christology, but also of a different spirit (2 Cor. 11:1-4). The apostle John named this kind of spirit *the spirit of antichrist* (1 John 4:1-3). Its fruit was the many false prophets that had gone out into the world. He warns, "Believe not, but test." The authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture is rejected by charismaticism and compromised by continuationism (2 Tim. 3:14-17).²⁶ The Protestant reformers rejected any second stream of revelation in their day,²⁷ and so must we.

ENDNOTES

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

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

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

4 Note that the Spirit’s falling upon the Samaritans in Acts 8:14-17 may be considered a third recurrence in this list, although tongues is not expressly mentioned there. The inclusion of the Samaritans in the body of Christ would have been an issue similar to that of the God-fearing Gentiles and the Ephesian Gentiles. For a thorough treatment of this topic, see the “Strange Fire” presentation of R. C. Sproul titled, “Undervaluing Pentecost” (<https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>). Sinclair Ferguson notes how Peter ties the Cornelius event to the Pentecost event as two similar events (Acts 11:15-17). *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 81.

5 See the appendix table A1 for a list of the gifts in each passage. The one gift the lists have in common, prophecy, is a broad category of spiritual giftedness that may have included some elements best characterized as normative gracious gifts (in Romans 12) and some best characterized as temporary manifestations of the Spirit (in 1 Corinthians 12). Note that in his contrast of prophecy as superior to tongues in the Corinthian context, Paul seems to expand on these two categories in 1 Cor. 14:26, where his prophecy category includes “has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation” and his tongues category includes “has a tongue, has an interpretation.” This expansion of the category of prophecy into three separate elements (revelation, music, teaching) could explain why it appears in both the normative list of Romans (its music aspect) and in the temporary list of 1 Corinthians (its revelation aspect). Prophecy as revelation is transitory (1 Corinthians 13); prophecy as music and/or teaching is normative (Romans 12).

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

7 Jesus prays, “Sanctify them in thy truth; thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Paul exhorted Timothy, “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Charles Spurgeon commented on the scourge of continuing revelations in his message titled, “The Paraclete”: “I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonored by persons (I hope they were insane) who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not, for some years, passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations of hypocrites or maniacs! Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me, and it may save them some trouble if I tell them once and for all that I will have none of their stupid messages! When my Lord and Master has any message to me, He knows where I am, and He will send it to me direct— not by mad-caps! Never dream that events are revealed to you by heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Spirit; if you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God! Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the Word of God already; He adds nothing

to the Bible, and never will! Let persons who have revelations of this, that, and the other, go to bed and wake up in their senses. I only wish they would follow the advice and no longer insult the Holy Spirit by laying their nonsense at His door!"

8 Benjamin B. Warfield affirms, "There is little or no evidence at all for miracle-working during the first fifty years of the post-Apostolic church; it is slight and unimportant for the next fifty years; it grows more abundant during the next century (the third); and it becomes abundant and precise only in the fourth century, to increase still further in the fifth and beyond. Thus, if the evidence is worth anything at all, instead of a regularly progressing decrease, there was a steadily growing increase of miracle-working from the beginning on." *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918; reprint, London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), 9-10.

9 *BAGD*, s. v. "γλωσσαι," interprets the word as "language" in Acts but "ecstatic speech" in 1 Corinthians. Commenting in regard to 1 Corinthians 14, the lexicon says: "There is no doubt about the thing referred to [in 1 Cor. 12-14], namely the broken speech of persons in religious ecstasy. The phenomenon, as found in Hellenistic religion, is described. . . . The origin of the term is less clear." The lexicon, however, leaves the dichotomy this creates between Luke and Paul unresolved. Classical Pentecostals from the beginning believed their tongues gift to be the gift of the sudden ability to speak fluently a foreign language they had not before studied. For Agnes Ozman, the first to experience the gift in 1901, the language was Chinese. With missionary zeal these early Pentecostals took their tongues gift to mission fields around the world. Their disappointment and failure in this endeavor is a matter of historical record.

10 W. G. Putman agrees with this proposition stating: "However, it is unlikely that Luke, a careful historian (Lk. 1:1-4) and close companion of Paul (who spoke in tongues, 1 Cor. 14:18), misunderstood the nature of glossolalia." The author therefore attempts to contrive a way to excuse Luke from referring to known languages. *New Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "Gift of Tongues," 1207. Sinclair B. Ferguson supports known language. *The Holy Spirit* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 212-213.

11 These arguments for ecstatic speech include the phrase "tongues . . . of angels" (13:1), the phrase "in his spirit he speaks mysteries" (14:2), the use of φωνή rather than γλωσσαι (14:10-11), and the phrase "my mind is unfruitful" (14:14). Angels nowhere employ ecstatic speech. "Speaking mysteries" is parallel to "no one understands," and it describes the negative effect on those who did not know the foreign languages spoken as in Acts 2:13. The term φωνή is a synonym for γλωσσαι, not by way of contrast to it. Paul's use of Isa. 28:11-12 in 14:21 demonstrates that he had known human languages in mind. And the "unfruitful mind" is not a state of unconsciousness, but rather the state of isolation. It is a mind that can only edify itself because it alone knows the language (14:4).

12 The evangelical charismatic Wayne Grudem writes the following in this regard, advocating a two-tiered revelatory prophetic gift: "Do those in the charismatic movement today understand prophecy to have such lesser authority? Though some will speak of prophecy as being the 'word of God' for today, there is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted." *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 90. B. B. Warfield counsels against acceptance of the possibility of corrupted supernatural revelation: "That we may believe in a supernatural redemption, we must believe in a supernatural revelation, by which alone we can be assured that this and not something else was what occurred, and that this and not something else was what it meant. The Christian man cannot afford to relax in the least degree his entire confidence in a supernatural revelation." "Christian Supernaturalism" in *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 18-19.

13 That a misunderstanding of this passage provides a launch pad down the slippery slope of continuing revelation can be illustrated by a recent blog by Pastor Jason Meyer, John Piper’s successor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, MN, titled, “Confessions of a Functional Cessationist.” Meyer wrote, “I have never adopted the cessationist viewpoint that certain spiritual gifts ceased when the apostolic age came to an end. Paul’s argument that tongues and prophecy will end ‘when the perfect comes’ (1 Corinthians 13:8–10) is a reference to the second coming of Christ, not the close of the biblical canon. I tell my cessationist friends that there is a day coming when I too will be a cessationist: the second coming.” This pastor then explains how he intends no longer to be a functional cessationist with a violated conscience and how he will begin to “desire God in His gifts” by bringing his leadership to the Charismatic Convergence Conference, “eager to learn from others” [<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/confessions-of-a-functional-cessationist>; accessed 10/10/2017].

14 See the study done by Robert I Potter, *A Look at the Book: Tongues & Continuous Revelation* (Herber City, UT: Herber Valley Press, n.d.).

15 See the appendix for Table A2, *ibid.*, 2.

16 Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1&2 Corinthians* (1857; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 260.

17 For other advocates of this interpretation see Robert L. Reymond, *What About Continuing Revelations and Miracles in the Presbyterian Church Today? A Study of the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1977), 32-34, and R. Bruce Compton, “1 Corinthians 13:10 and the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts,” *The Mid-American Conference on Preaching: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 63. Cessationists John MacArthur, Jr. (*Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 389) and Richard Gaffin, Jr. (“A Cessationist View” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 55) disagree, seeing *that which is perfect* as Christ’s return. MacArthur’s view depends upon tongues ceasing at a different time than what is described by *that which is in part shall be done away*. Gaffin tries to claim that cessation-timing is not in view.

18 The importance of the phrase “face to face” to this position is illustrated by Wayne Grudem’s conclusion: “This is what is explained by verse 12. Then, at the time the perfect comes, we shall see ‘face to face’ and know ‘even as we are known.’ This means that the time when ‘the perfect’ comes must be the time of Christ’s return.” *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 232.

19 Fanny Crosby’s “Saved by Grace,” the profession of this blind saint who anticipated seeing the Lord “face to face,” comes first to mind. Perhaps Carrie Breck’s “Face to Face” has been equally influential.

20 Compton notes, “Virtually all recognize that the first part of Paul’s analogy, seeing in a mirror dimly, functions metaphorically However, taking ‘face to face’ as a reference to the believer seeing Christ when He returns interprets the second part of Paul’s analogy literally rather than metaphorically” (68).

21 *Ibid.*

22 See H. Porter’s article in *ISBE*, s. v. “Glass.”

23 Here water is the mirror: כַּמִּיָּם הַפְּנִיִּים לְפָנָיו כֵּן לְבַהֲאָרָם לְאָדָם. Charles Bridges explains the meaning of the verse: “As in the reflection of the water face answereth to face; so in another heart we see the reflection of our own. (Ps. xxxiii. 15) Human nature has suffered no change since the fall. The picture of man’s corruption, drawn above four thousand years since, is man, as we see and know him now.” *A Com-*

mentary on Proverbs (1846; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 517.

24 Francis A. Schaeffer makes the point when he says, “The communication which God has made to man is true, but that does not mean it is exhaustive, an important distinction which we must always bear in mind. To know anything exhaustively we should need to be infinite, as God. Even in heaven we shall not be this.” *The God Who Is There: Speaking Historic Christianity into the Twentieth Century* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-
university Press, 1968), 96.

25 John Calvin, although a firm cessationist (see the “Strange Fire” presentation of Steven Lawson titled, “Calvin’s Critique of Charismatic Calvinists” (<https://www.gty.org/library/strangefire>)), struggled with the implications of this contrast [partial now vs. complete then] for the clarity and sufficiency of the completed canon, because he too interpreted the phrase *face to face* to be our encounter with Christ at His coming or our going to Him in death. He wrote: “Hence we must understand it in this manner—that the knowledge of God, which we now have from his word, is indeed certain and true, and has nothing in it that is confused, or perplexed, or dark, but is spoken of as comparatively obscure, because it comes far short of that clear manifestation to which we look forward; for then we shall see face to face. Thus this passage is not at all at variance with other passages, which speak of the clearness, at one time, of the law, at another time, of the entire Scripture, but more especially of the gospel. For we have in the word (in so far as is expedient for us) a naked and open revelation of God, and it has nothing intricate in it, to hold us in suspense, as wicked persons imagine; but how small a proportion does this bear to that vision, which we have in our eye! Hence it is only in a comparative sense, that it is termed obscure.” *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 1,430-431. If Paul includes the canon of Scripture in the dim-mirror period of 1 Cor. 13:12, this is the only NT passage that speaks of this shortcoming of Scripture, even in a comparative sense. This comparison, found in the interpretation of Calvin and other good men, seems at odds with Peter’s comparison of the experience of the Mount of Transfiguration with the more sure word of Scripture’s prophecy (2 Pet. 2:19-21). Peter saw the transfigured Christ face to face, yet he directs believers to the more-sure Scripture. In addition, Calvin’s treatment fails to account for the sense in which God’s Word abides into eternity, given Paul’s contrast between what ceases (the partial revelation that we have only prior to the coming of the perfect) and what abides (things like faith, hope, and love, which we have now and will go on after the coming of the perfect).

26 John MacArthur lists eight dangers of the evangelical continuationist position, including, “5. By insisting that God is still giving new revelation to Christians today, the Continuationist Movement tacitly denies the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. Here the whole movement is most concisely defined. At its core, it is a deviation away from the sole authority of Scripture.” *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 242.

27 The Roman Catholic catechism, section 82, states: “As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” Contrast the true Protestant doctrine of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*: “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men” (1.6).

APPENDIX

Table A1. The list of normative spiritual *gifts* compared to the list of transitory spiritual *manifestations*.

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

Table A2. The categories of spiritual manifestations/revelations in 1 Cor. 12:7-11.

Class I	Class II	Class III
Word Signs	Faith Signs	Tongues Signs
	ἕτερος	ἕτερος
word of wisdom	faith	kinds of tongues (see 13:8)
ἄλλος	ἄλλος	ἄλλος
word of knowledge (see 13:8)	gifts of healing	interpretation of tongues
	ἄλλος	
	effecting miracles	
	ἄλλος	
	prophecy (see 13:8)	
	ἄλλος	
	distinguishing spirits	

A3: 2012 ACCC Resolution—“The Theological Danger of Non-cessationism”

The terms *non-cessationism* and *continuism* have been used in recent days to refer to the belief that the miraculous revelatory sign gifts of the New Testament era, such as speaking in tongues, are still active today. The cessationist view, by way of contrast, concludes that these special revelations of the Holy Spirit ceased at some point early in the Church’s history, either with the passing of the apostles or the closing of the canon of Scripture. The resolve to stand separated from the Charismatic Movement is not a new commitment for the ACCC. Numerous previous resolutions of the Council have

articulated and defended a firm position against this error, a conviction also affirmed by the statements of faith of many fundamental churches and institutions. Fundamentalists of past generations faithfully have confronted charismaticism as a major threat to historic Christian orthodoxy.

Today's Fundamentalist, however, confronts a new temptation for compromise with adherents of the non-cessationist teachings and practices of the Charismatic Movement from conservative evangelicals. Some have expressed concern over this temptation while testing these waters of cooperation once carefully avoided by past Fundamentalist leaders. Other Fundamentalists have expressed a vague willingness to go further. Some have put the cessationist vs. non-cessationist issue into a category of doctrines, like the mode of baptism and church polity, which, in their view, should not divide believers as a test of fellowship. While the common stand and encouraging fellowship of the ACCC has recognized for generations that not every doctrine carries equal force as a test of fellowship, the Council has discerned together that non-cessationism is a first-order theological danger, for it has led to an emphasis on religious experience that undermines biblical authority. Whether the ecstatic gibberish, known to ancient paganism, or the ridiculous claims of modern television personalities to discern maladies of anonymous viewers while pronouncing healing upon them, the currents of non-cessationism in the Charismatic Movement have led to destructive confusion among the adherents of the professing Church.

The apostle John warns us to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Called in that context *the spirit of antichrist* (v. 3), *the spirit that is in the world* (v. 3), and *the spirit of error* (v. 6), these false spirits are positively correlated with the rise of false doctrine. Non-cessationism has born this fruit. From the false teachings of Oneness Pentecostalism, to confusion over the necessity of the tongues experience for conversion, to tolerance for Roman Catholicism and the ecumenism of the one-world church of antichrist, the Charismatic Movement has been a popular force for false prophecy in a world so hostile to the Spirit of Truth. The apostle Paul warned not only against another gospel and another Jesus, but also against another spirit (2 Cor. 11:4).

This is not to deny that some non-cessationists have identified historically with the cause of fundamental separatism against apostasy and the compromise of New Evangelicalism. Nor is it to claim that our movement has been unanimous in its interpretation of the relevant passages in Acts or 1 Corinthians 12-14. Yet Fundamentalists have always been united as ardent critics of the worldliness, confusion, false doctrines, and ecumenism of today's Charismatic Movement—a zeal not shared widely by today's conservative evangelicals infected by this error. In addition, if the cessationist interpretation of these difficult passages is correct, the contemporary phenomena claiming precedent from them cannot be of the Holy Spirit. This is not to suggest that the God of the Bible is no longer the wonder-working, Almighty God of omnipotence. Biblical Christianity is an uncompromisingly supernatural religion. The miracles of the Virgin Birth, the substitutionary blood atonement, and the bodily resurrection of our Lord are at its core. It was the miracle of regeneration that gave us new life in Christ, and our blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Yet the Scripture is clear that our enemy also possesses a supernatural power that produces powerful

signs and lying wonders (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9).

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches, at its 71st Annual Convention, October 23-25, 2012, in the Cedar View Independent Methodist Church, Kingsport, Tennessee, resolves to stand where our fathers have stood, identifying the error of the Charismatic Movement as a danger to the people of God and an important test of fellowship. We determine to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1), and to know them by their fruits, examining the doctrines they espouse according to the prophecy of Scripture—our only rule of faith and practice.

We further resolve to resist the current temptation, caused by the desire for closer ties of fellowship with conservative evangelicals, to compromise with non-cessationism. By the grace of God, we determine to leave to those who follow us a firm commitment to that great pillar of historic Protestant orthodoxy, sola scriptura. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

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