

THE
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MSJ Tribute to Dick Mayhue
John MacArthur

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The Writings of Dr. Richard L. Mayhue: 1974 to Present
Compiled by Dennis M. Swanson



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EDITORIAL

This issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal* celebrates the completion of twenty-five years of publication. To commemorate this event, the faculty is honored to dedicate this issue to Richard L. Mayhue for his twenty-five years of service to the seminary. After serving as Dean of the Seminary since 1990, he was recently named Research Professor of Theology and is engaged along with John MacArthur, the seminary president, in the massive project of completing a systematic theology.

The articles in this issue represent the labor of several faculty members who presented this material in the annual faculty lecture series last January. That series, inaugurated in 1997 by Dr. Mayhue, has been renamed “The Richard L. Mayhue Lecture Series.” The lead article, written by Dr. Mayhue, deals with the biblical description of divine healing, an area where he has made one of the most significant contributions in evangelical literature over the years.

To introduce the series of articles, we have included John MacArthur’s Introduction to *Strange Fire* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2013, ix–xviii). It is a most appropriate beginning to this fall issue, one that focuses on a biblical analysis of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. The case for non-continuationism or the cessation of these gifts is compelling to the point of conviction.

Introduction to *Strange Fire*

Nadab and Abihu were not shamans or snake-oil salesmen who infiltrated the camp of the Israelites in order to spread the Canaanites’ superstitions among the people. They were by all appearances righteous, respectable men and godly spiritual leaders. They were priests of the one true God. And they were not middling Levites. Nadab was heir apparent to the office of the high priest, and Abihu was next in line after him. They were the eldest sons of Aaron. Moses was their uncle. Their names head the list of “nobles of the children of Israel” (Exod 24:11). Aside from their father, Aaron, they are the only ones singled out by name the first time Scripture mentions Israel’s “seventy elders,” the group of leaders who shared spiritual oversight in the Hebrew nation (Num 11:16–24). Scripture does not introduce them to us as sinister figures or notoriously wicked men—quite the opposite.

These two brothers, together with the other seventy elders, were privileged at Sinai to ascend the mountain partway and watch from a distance as God conversed with Moses (Exod 24:9–10). The people of Israel had been instructed to stand at the

foot of the mountain and “not go up to the mountain or touch its base” (Exod 19:12). While God was up there talking to Moses, if so much as a stray beast wandered onto the skirt of Sinai, that animal was to be stoned or shot (v. 13). From the base of the mountain, all the rank-and-file Israelites could see was smoke and lightning. But Nadab and Abihu were expressly named by the Lord Himself, who invited them to come up and bring the seventy elders. And “they saw God, and they ate and drank” (Exod 24:11).

In other words, Nadab and Abihu had been closer to God than almost anyone. No other Israelite except Moses himself had ever been given a higher privilege. These men certainly *seemed* to be godly, trustworthy spiritual leaders and faithful servants of God—young men of renown. No doubt virtually everyone in Israel esteemed them highly.

And no doubt everyone in Israel was staggered when God suddenly struck Nadab and Abihu dead with a blast of holy fire. This occurred, apparently, on the first day of their service in the tabernacle. Aaron and his sons were anointed in a seven-day-long ceremony when the building of the tabernacle was complete. On the eighth day (Lev 9:1), Aaron offered the first sin offering ever made in the tabernacle, and the ceremony was punctuated with a miracle: “Fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces” (Lev 9:24).

Moses records what happened next:

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said to Aaron, “It is what the LORD spoke, saying, ‘By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored’” (Lev 10:1–3 NASB).

Most likely Nadab and Abihu had taken fire from some source other than the brazen altar and used it to light their censers of incense. Remember that God Himself set the altar ablaze with fire from heaven. Apparently Nadab and Abihu had filled their censers with fire of their own making, or coals from some fire in the camp of Israel. The actual source from which they obtained their fire is not recorded. Nor is it important. The point is they used something other than the fire God Himself had ignited.

Their offense may seem trifling to someone accustomed to the type of casual, self-indulgent worship our generation is known for. They may have also been drinking, and perhaps they had imbibed enough that their judgment was poor. (Leviticus 10:9 seems to suggest this was the case.) Still, what Scripture expressly condemns is the “strange fire” they offered. The crux of their sin was approaching God in a careless, self-willed, inappropriate manner, without the reverence He deserved. They did not treat Him as holy or exalt His name before the people. The Lord’s response was swift and deadly. The “strange fire” of Nadab and Abihu ignited the unquenchable flames of divine judgment against them, and they were incinerated on the spot.

This is a sobering and terrifying account, and it has obvious implications for the church in our time. Clearly, it is a serious crime to dishonor the Lord, to treat Him with contempt, or to approach Him in a way He detests. Those who worship God must do so in the way He requires, treating Him as holy.

The Holy Spirit—the glorious third member of the Trinity—is no less God than the Father or the Son. Thus, to dishonor the Spirit is to dishonor God Himself. To abuse the Spirit’s name is to take God’s name in vain. To claim He is the one who empowers self-willed, whimsical, and unbiblical worship is to treat God with contempt. To turn the Spirit into a spectacle is to worship God in a way that He deplors. That’s why the many irreverent antics and twisted doctrines brought into the church by the contemporary Charismatic Movement are equal to (or even worse than) the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu. They are an affront to the Holy Spirit, and therefore to God Himself—grounds for severe judgment (cf. Heb 10:31).¹

When the Pharisees attributed the Spirit’s work to Satan (Matt 12:24), the Lord warned them that such hard-hearted blasphemy was unforgivable. Ananias and Sapphira were instantly struck dead after lying to the Holy Spirit. As a result, “great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things” (Acts 5:11). Simon Magus, when he asked to purchase the Spirit’s power with money received this severe rebuke in response: “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” (Acts 8:20 NASB). And the author of Hebrews, writing to those in danger of insulting the Spirit of grace, offered his readers this sober admonition: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). The third member of the Trinity is dangerous to anyone who would offer Him strange fire!

Reinventing the Holy Spirit

Of course, you wouldn’t know that from the way the Holy Spirit is treated by scores of professing Christians today. On the one hand, some mainstream evangelicals are guilty of neglecting the Holy Spirit altogether. For them, He has become the forgotten member of the Trinity—as they attempt to grow the church through their own cleverness rather than His power. For the sake of popular appeal, they deemphasize personal holiness and the Spirit’s sanctifying work. They contend that biblical preaching, in which the sword of the Spirit is wielded with care and precision, is now passé. In its place, they offer entertainment, edginess, empty platitudes, or the elevation of uncertainty—thereby exchanging the authority of the Spirit-inspired Scriptures for cheap and impotent substitutes.

¹ As J. C. Ryle expressed more than a century ago, “It is just as perilous to dishonor the Holy Ghost, as it is to dishonor Christ.” (J. C. Ryle, “Have You the Spirit?” *Home Truths* [London: Werthem & MacIntosh, 1854], 142.)

On the other hand, the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements² have pushed the pendulum to the opposite extreme. They have fostered an unhealthy pre-occupation with supposed manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power. Committed charismatics talk incessantly about phenomena, emotions, and the latest wave or sensation. They seem to have comparatively little (sometimes *nothing*) to say about Christ, His atoning work, or the historical facts of the gospel.³ The charismatic fixation with the Holy Spirit's supposed work is false honor. Jesus said, "When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, *He will testify of Me*" (John 15:26). So when the Holy Spirit becomes the focal point of the church's message, His *true* work is undermined.

The "Holy Spirit" found in the vast majority of charismatic teaching and practice bears no resemblance to the true Spirit of God as revealed in Scripture. The real Holy Spirit is not an electrifying current of ecstatic energy, a mind-numbing babbler of irrational speech, or a cosmic genie who indiscriminately grants self-centered wishes for health and wealth. The true Spirit of God does not cause His people to bark like dogs or laugh like hyenas; He does not knock them backward to the ground in an unconscious stupor; He does not incite them to worship in chaotic and uncontrollable ways; and He certainly does not accomplish His kingdom work through false prophets, fake healers, and fraudulent televangelists. By inventing a Holy Spirit of idolatrous imaginations, the modern Charismatic Movement offers strange fire that has done incalculable harm to the body of Christ. Claiming to focus on the third member of the Trinity, it has in fact profaned His name and denigrated His true work.

Whenever God is dishonored, those who love the Lord feel both pain and righteous indignation. That is what David experienced in Ps 69:9 when he exclaimed, "Zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." The Lord Jesus quoted that verse when He cleansed the temple; clearing out the money changers who had treated God's temple and His people's worship with brazen disrespect. I have long felt a similar burden in response to the appalling ways in which the Holy Spirit is maligned, mistreated, and misrepresented by so many within charismatic circles.

It is a sad twist of irony that those who claim to be most focused on the Holy Spirit are in actuality the ones doing the most to abuse, grieve, insult, misrepresent, quench, and dishonor Him. How do they do it? By attributing to Him words He did not say, deeds He did not do, phenomena He did not produce, and experiences that have nothing to do with Him. They boldly plaster His name on that which is not His work.

² Throughout this book, all three waves of the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement are generally treated together—using the broad terms *charismatic* or "Charismatic Movement" as ways to refer to the entirety of the classical Pentecostal, Charismatic Renewal, and Third Wave Movements.

³ "The Charismatic Movement directly endangers the biblical understanding of mission. For there is a shift here in the central proclamation, away from Christ Crucified (1 Cor. 1:22–23; 2:2) toward the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit. This leads to a certain loss of spiritual reality and balance." From the Statement of the European Convention of Confessing Fellowships at its meeting in Frankfurt, March 1990, "World Missions Following San Antonio and Manila," in *Foundations: A Journal of Evangelical Theology*, no. 26 (British Evangelical Council, Spring 1991): 16–17.

In Jesus' day, the religious leaders of Israel blasphemously attributed the work of the Spirit to Satan (Matt 12:24). The modern Charismatic Movement does the inverse, attributing the work of the devil to the Holy Spirit. Satan's armies of false teachers, marching to the beat of their own illicit desires, gladly propagate his errors. They are spiritual swindlers, con men, crooks, and charlatans. We can see an endless parade of them simply by turning on the television. Jude called them clouds without water, raging waves, and wandering stars "for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" (v. 13). Yet they claim to be angels of light—gaining credibility for their lies by invoking the name of the Holy Spirit, as if there's no penalty to pay for that kind of blasphemy.

The Bible is clear that God demands to be worshipped for who He truly is. No one can honor the Father unless the Son is honored; likewise, it is impossible to honor the Father and the Son while dishonoring the Spirit. Yet every day, millions of charismatics offer praise to a patently false image of the Holy Spirit. They have become like the Israelites of Exodus 32, who compelled Aaron to fashion a golden calf while Moses was away. The idolatrous Israelites claimed to be honoring the Lord (vv. 4–8), but instead they were worshipping a grotesque misrepresentation, dancing around it in dishonorable disarray (v. 25). God's response to their disobedience was swift and severe. Before the day was over, thousands had been put to death.

Here's the point: we can't make God into any form we would like. We cannot mold Him into our own image, according to our own specifications and imaginations. Yet that is what many Pentecostals and charismatics have done. They have created their own golden-calf version of the Holy Spirit. They have thrown their theology into the fires of human experience and worshipped the false spirit that came out—parading themselves before it with bizarre antics and unrestrained behavior. As a movement, they have persistently ignored the truth about the Holy Spirit and with reckless license set up an idol spirit in the house of God, dishonoring the third member of the Trinity in His own name.

A Trojan Horse of Spiritual Corruption

In spite of their gross theological error, charismatics demand acceptance within mainstream evangelicalism. And evangelicals have largely succumbed to those demands, responding with outstretched arms and a welcoming smile. In so doing, mainstream evangelicalism has unwittingly invited an enemy into the camp. The gates have been flung open to a Trojan horse of subjectivism, experientialism, ecumenical compromise, and heresy. Those who compromise in this way are playing with strange fire and placing themselves in grave danger.

When the Pentecostal Movement started in the early 1900s, it was largely considered a cult by theological conservatives.⁴ For the most part it was isolated and contained within its own denominations. But in the 1960s, the movement began to spill over into the mainline denominations—gaining a foothold in Protestant

⁴ For example, some of the early leaders of Dallas Theological Seminary "did not hesitate to call Pentecostalism both a cult and a satanic agency, a view not uncommon among evangelicals in the 1920s" (John Hannah, *An Uncommon Union* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009], 327, n61).

churches that had embraced theological liberalism and were already spiritually dead. The start of the Charismatic Renewal Movement is usually traced to St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California. Just two weeks before Easter in 1960, their pastor, Dennis Bennett, announced that he had received a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Spirit. (He revealed he and a small group of parishioners had been holding covert meetings for some time, during which they practiced speaking in tongues.)

Liberal Episcopal leaders were less than enthusiastic about Father Bennett's announcement. In fact, Bennett was soon fired from the Van Nuys church. But he remained in the Episcopal denomination and was eventually called to serve as rector in a liberal, dying urban church in Seattle. That church immediately began to grow, and Bennett's neo-Pentecostalism gradually spread and took root in several other spiritually parched congregations. By the end of the decade, desperate and dying mainline churches around the world were embracing charismatic doctrine and seeing numerical growth as a result.⁵

The emotional experientialism of Pentecostalism brought a spark to those otherwise stagnant congregations, and by the 1970s the Charismatic Renewal Movement was beginning to gain real momentum. In the 1980s, two professors at Fuller Theological Seminary—a mainstream evangelical school that had abandoned its commitment to biblical inerrancy in the early 1970s⁶—began to promote charismatic ideas in the classrooms. The result has been termed “The Third Wave,” as Pentecostal and charismatic theology infiltrated evangelicalism and the Independent Church Movement.

The results of that charismatic takeover have been devastating. In recent history, no other movement has done more to damage the cause of the gospel, to distort the truth, and to smother the articulation of sound doctrine. Charismatic theology has turned the evangelical church into a cesspool of error and a breeding ground for false teachers. It has warped genuine worship through unbridled emotionalism, polluted prayer with private gibberish, contaminated true spirituality with unbiblical mysticism, and corrupted faith by turning it into a creative force for speaking worldly desires into existence. By elevating the authority of experience over the authority of Scripture, the Charismatic Movement has destroyed the church's immune system—uncritically granting free access to every imaginable form of heretical teaching and practice.

Put bluntly, charismatic theology has made no contribution to true biblical theology or interpretation; rather, it represents a deviant mutation of the truth. Like a deadly virus, it gains access into the church by maintaining a superficial connection to certain characteristics of biblical Christianity, but in the end it always corrupts and

⁵ John Dart, “Charismatic and Mainline,” *Christian Century*, March 7, 2006, 22–27.

⁶ George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) is a detailed account of how Fuller Seminary abandoned the principle of biblical inerrancy. Near the end of the book, Marsden reports on a course being taught in the 1980s by C. Peter Wagner (*Ibid.*, 292–95). Marsden viewed the course, titled “Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth,” as “an anomaly” at Fuller, given the seminary's movement toward “progressive” doctrines. Marsden wrote, “The unique feature of the course was that, not only did it analyze ‘signs and wonders’ in Christian churches today, it also included ‘practical sessions’ in which signs and wonders, including actual healings, were performed in class” (*Ibid.*, 292).

distorts sound teaching. The resulting degradation, like a doctrinal version of Frankenstein's monster, is a hideous hybrid of heresy, ecstasy, and blasphemy awkwardly dressed in the tattered remnants of evangelical language.⁷ It calls itself "Christian," but in reality it is a sham—a counterfeit form of spirituality that continually morphs as it spirals erratically from one error to the next.

In earlier generations, the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement would have been labeled heresy. Instead, it is now the most dominant, aggressive, and visible strain of so-called Christianity in the world. It claims to represent the purest and most powerful form of the gospel. Yet it primarily proclaims a gospel of health and wealth, a message completely incompatible with the good news of Scripture. It threatens all who oppose its doctrine with charges of grieving, quenching, resisting, and even blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Yet no movement drags His name through the mud with greater frequency or audacity.

The incredible irony is that those who talk the most about the Holy Spirit generally deny His true work. They attribute all kinds of human silliness to Him while ignoring the genuine purpose and power of His ministry: freeing sinners from death, giving them everlasting life, regenerating their hearts, transforming their nature, empowering them for spiritual victory, confirming their place in the family of God, interceding for them according to the will of God, sealing them securely for their eternal glory, and promising to raise them to immortality in the future.

To promulgate a corrupted notion of the Holy Spirit and His work is nothing less than blasphemy, because the Holy Spirit is God. He is to be exalted, honored, and adored. Along with the Father and the Son, He is to be glorified at all times for all He is and all He does. He is to be loved and thanked by those whom He indwells. But for that to occur, He must be worshipped in truth.

How Should We Then Respond?

It is high time for the evangelical church to take a stand and to recover a proper focus on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual health of the church is at stake. In recent decades, the Charismatic Movement has infiltrated mainstream evangelicalism and exploded onto the global scene at an alarming rate. It is the fastest-growing religious movement in the world. Charismatics now number more than half a billion worldwide. Yet the gospel that is driving those surging numbers is not the true gospel, and the spirit behind them is not the Holy Spirit. What we are seeing is *in reality* the explosive growth of a false church, as dangerous as any cult or heresy that has ever assaulted Christianity. The Charismatic Movement was a farce and a scam from the outset; it has not changed into something good.

⁷ In much of the world, the Charismatic Movement indiscriminately absorbs the pagan ideas of local false religions into its theology. For example, in Africa, a traditional obsession with witchdoctors, demonic spirits, and ancestor worship has been largely assimilated by Pentecostal churches there. The resulting hybrid calls itself "Christian" but is actually rooted in tribal paganism. For more on this, see Conrad Mbewe, "Why Is the Charismatic Movement Thriving in Africa?" Grace to You blog (July 24, 2013), <http://www.gty.org/Blog/B130724>.

This is the hour for the true church to respond. At a time when there is a revival of the biblical gospel and a renewed interest in the *solas* of the Reformation, it is unacceptable to stand by idly. All who are faithful to the Scriptures must rise up and condemn everything that assaults the glory of God. We are duty-bound to apply the truth in a bold defense of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If we claim allegiance to the Reformers, we ought to conduct ourselves with the same level of courage and conviction they displayed as we contend earnestly for the faith. There must be a collective war against the pervasive abuses on the Spirit of God. This book is a call to join the cause for His honor.

I also hope to remind you what the *true* ministry of the Holy Spirit looks like. It's not chaotic, flashy, and flamboyant (like a circus). It's usually concealed and inconspicuous (the way fruit develops). We cannot be reminded too often that the Holy Spirit's primary role is to *exalt Christ*, especially to elicit *praise for Christ* from His people. The Spirit does this in a uniquely personal way, first of all by reproof and convicting us—showing us our own sin, opening our eyes to what true righteousness is, and making us sense deeply our accountability to God, the rightful Judge of all (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit indwells believers, empowering us to serve and glorify Christ (Rom. 8:9). He leads us and gives us assurance of our salvation (vv. 14-16). He prays for us with groanings too deep for words (v. 26). He seals us, keeping us secure in Christ (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 4:30). The Spirit's daily presence is the source and the secret of our sanctification as He conforms us to the image of Christ.

That is what the Holy Spirit is truly doing in the church even now. There's nothing baffling, bizarre, or irrational about being Spirit-filled or Spirit-led. His work is not to produce a spectacle or to foment chaos. In fact, where you see those things, you can be certain it is *not* His doing, "for God is not the author of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33, 40). What the Spirit of God *does* produce is fruit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22–23).

My prayer for you as you read this book is that the Spirit Himself will give you a clear understanding of His true ministry in your own life, that you will embrace a biblical perspective on the Spirit and His gifts, and that you will refuse to be duped by the many spiritual counterfeits, false doctrines, and phony miracles that vie for our attention today.

Soli Deo Gloria.

With this issue (25:2), publication of *The Master's Seminary Journal* has completed twenty-five years. May the Lord be pleased to be our teacher on these and other crucial issues for His honor and glory during the next quarter century!

Irvin Busentiz
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MSJ TRIBUTE TO DICK MAYHUE

John MacArthur
President
The Master’s Seminary

In the first edition of the *MacArthur Study Bible*—and in all subsequent editions and languages—there is a paragraph that identifies a most crucial contribution:

My highest gratitude belongs to my friend and ministry partner, Dr. Richard Mayhue, Senior Vice President and Dean of the Master’s Seminary. He has worked next to me through the whole project, laboring beyond anyone while serving as project manager, OT and NT researcher, editor, and counselor. His exceptional gift for management, along with his vast knowledge of Scripture and doctrine, coupled with our one-mindedness theologically, plus his writing skill, have made for a most effective ministry partnership.

That paragraph is representative of Dick Mayhue’s vast ministry contribution. The *MacArthur Study Bible* project began in earnest in 1994 and was completed just three years later, in 1997. Such would not have been possible without the efficient precision of Dick’s considerable skills and relentless “round the clock” effort. The *Study Bible* has since been translated into some ten languages, and has stood the test of time.

For over 25 years, Dick has stood by my side making numerous critical contributions.

Our paths first crossed in 1980, when we met at a conference Dick had organized at Grace Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. It immediately became clear that God had gifted him with a remarkable combination of theological astuteness, leadership skill, and pastoral warmth. As a result of that meeting, the Lord opened Dick’s heart to come join me at Grace Community Church, which he did that same year. His early ministry at Grace included starting our national Shepherds’ Conference, preaching, teaching, and assisting me in research and writing.

After five years of pastoral leadership in Long Beach, California, Dick returned to Grace Church in 1989 and joined the faculty of The Master’s Seminary as Professor of Pastoral Ministry. In 1990, he was appointed Dean of the seminary, a post he

has held continuously since. For eight of those intervening years (2000–2008), he also acted as Vice President and Provost for The Master's College, juggling the weighty and complex responsibilities that come with giving oversight to two institutions of higher education. His organizational skills and untiring efforts proved him more than equal to the task. The quality of both institutions was heightened as a result of his unwavering dedication and God-honoring stewardship.

More recently, as Research Professor of Theology, he has embarked upon a culminating capstone project: a single-volume systematic theology written in conjunction with the seminary faculty. The finished product will be an accessible compendium of Christian doctrine that I know will greatly assist and encourage believers all over the globe.

In every way, Dick Mayhue has embodied the essence of a faithful friend, ministry partner, and co-laborer for the sake of Christ. His impact over the last quarter century has been carried to numerous churches and mission fields through the influence of our seminary graduates. The full extent of his work, both in print and in the lives of his students, will continue for the glory of God until the end of the age and on into eternity.

I speak for myself, the board, the faculty, the staff, 1,500 alumni, and 400 current students of The Master's Seminary in expressing profound gratitude to our Lord for giving us such a gift as Dr. Richard Mayhue, purchased at Calvary and graciously bestowed on us here. Our deep appreciation is accentuated by his relentless care for sound doctrine, his fastidious stewardship of this vital institution, and his Christ-honoring commitment to excellence in everything. Thank you, Dick, for your many years of faithful service.

REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF RICHARD L. MAYHUE

By Irvin A. Busenitz
Dean, Professor of Old Testament
The Master's Seminary

For more than three decades, I have had the privilege of watching, up close and personal, the life and ministry of Dr. Mayhue. As I reflect on these years of ministry association, there are more than a few things that have significantly impacted my life and ministry. This occasion provides an opportunity not only to express my appreciation to this man but also to give thanks to the Lord who orchestrated it all through His divine providence.

The first intersection of our lives began in the fall of 1976 on the plains of northern Indiana. Dr. Mayhue and I were both enrolled in the Doctor of Theology program at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake. He was a commuter student, shuttling to the campus weekly for doctoral seminars from Columbus, Ohio, where he served as an associate pastor. His busy schedule simply did not permit us to become acquainted outside of class. But there were glimpses of the qualities that I would later come to know and appreciate.

Never did I anticipate that our paths would cross again so soon. In summer, 1980, Dr. Mayhue joined the pastoral staff of Grace Community Church as a personal assistant to Dr. MacArthur. As a professor at Talbot's Valley Extension on the campus of Grace, I got to know Dr. Mayhue more intimately and our acquaintance began to grow over the next four years. After a five-year hiatus to pastor the Grace Brethren Church of Long Beach, California, Dr. Mayhue joined the TMS faculty in 1989 and began serving as Dean of the Seminary in 1990.

While that was the genesis of my relationship with Dr. Mayhue, it was not the end. As Associate Dean, it was my privilege to serve alongside him, now for the past twenty-five years, and to observe his personal, spiritual, and academic leadership qualities. Some observations, woven into the fabric of a ministry relationship, include:

- His commitment to Scripture. He was zealous to train students to study and proclaim God's Word with precision and power. As the Seminary Dean, it was

imperative to him that God's Word not be compromised, not only in teaching and preaching but also in conduct and example.

- His commitment to biblical leadership. His life exuded a commitment to running the race of life and ministry in a winning style (1 Cor 9:24–27), always in accordance with the mandates of God's Word. Like Christ, he walked behind as a servant, beside as a brother, and ahead as a God-appointed leader.
- His commitment to detail. Regardless of how mundane, he was committed to excellence in every detail. From the quality of seminary correspondence to the cleanliness of the campus (he was frequently seen picking up a scrap of paper or pulling a weed in the planter) to the seminary budget, he was exceptionally fastidious.
- His commitment to shepherding. Whether it was a handwritten note to give encouragement, orchestrating an anonymous cash gift to help someone in need, or an early-morning stop by the hospital to pray with my wife before she headed into surgery, he freely and graciously gave of himself.
- His commitment to simplicity. One of his favorite lines, "See it big; keep it simple," was an oft-repeated adage when engaged in problem resolution. He has a notable ability to analyze and simplify. But nowhere was that more evident than in his masterful ability to alliterate his (or anyone else's) sermon outline, making the outline simple and easy to remember.
- His commitment to honoring others. No one is more gifted when introducing a speaker. I have observed hundreds of these occasions. Every introduction is unique; no two are the same. Yet Dr. Mayhue has an amazing ability to make them all special. While I'm sure these moments are hammered out with great preparation, they are extemporaneously delivered with remarkable clarity and appropriate honor.

Much more could be said. Under his leadership, the seminary student body has nearly tripled in size, growing to approximately 400. He has authored or edited over 30 books, with many translated into multiple foreign languages. He was one of the very first to go into the former USSR to help launch Irpin Biblical Seminary near Kiev, Ukraine. For 25 years, the Lord has given me the privilege to walk the path of ministry together with him. I am eternally grateful.

A TESTIMONIAL TO RICHARD L. MAYHUE

Keith Essex
Associate Professor of Bible Exposition
The Master's Seminary

“Hello Keith. This is Dick Mayhue.” So began a telephone call I received in the fall of 1984 while in my office at Magnolia Baptist Church in Anaheim. This was my first personal contact with a man whose friendship and influence have been used by the Lord to impact me greatly during the past thirty years of my life.

When I first talked to Richard L. Mayhue, I already had heard a lot about him. In 1974, after graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary, I joined the pastoral staff at Grace Brethren Church, Long Beach, California to begin the ministry of the Grace Bible Institute. There, I was told of an outstanding graduate of Grace Theological Seminary who was beginning his ministry as Associate Pastor at the Grace Brethren Church in Worthington, Ohio. A number of people who knew Dick pointed out the similarities in our training and ministries. Little did I know then that in a decade, our lives and ministries would become intertwined. Later, in 1980, I heard that the now Dr. Mayhue had joined the pastoral staff at Grace Community Church, particularly overseeing The Shepherds' Conferences. I left the church staff in Long Beach in 1981, but continued to teach at the Bible Institute. In 1984, Dick became the senior pastor of the church in Long Beach. Thus, the telephone call in the fall of that year from him asking if I would pray about returning to the Bible Institute full time. I told him I would pray, but that I would soon be a pastoral candidate at the Evangelical Free Church of Redondo Beach. We stayed in touch as I did become the pastor, but Dick did not give up on encouraging me to return to Long Beach in a part-time capacity. I learned first-hand of his persistence in pursuing what the Lord had laid upon his heart. As a result, I served an additional six years at the school as part-time Academic Dean, three of those years under Dick's leadership as he served as President of the school. During this time, Dick and I became close friends and realized that we had not only the same theology, but a common philosophy of ministry. In 1989, Dick returned to Sun Valley to become the Professor of Pastoral Ministries at The Master's Seminary which had been founded in 1986. A year later, he became Senior Vice President and Dean of the seminary. Due in large measure to Dick's

influence and encouragement, I joined the TMS faculty part-time in 1992 and full-time in 1994.

In my thirty years of association and friendship with him, I have been able to learn a few more facts about Dr. Richard L. Mayhue. He was born August 31, 1944 in Silver Spring, Maryland to Richard and Myrtle Mayhue. He has one sister, Linda. In 1962, he left Maryland to go to Columbus, Ohio and enroll at The Ohio State University (and to this day he is a vocal and diehard Buckeye fan!). Dick was a business major in college and also a part of the Navy ROTC. Most important, while in Columbus, he met, wooed, and ultimately made Lois "B" Nettleingham his bride. Dick and "B" were married June 18, 1966 after his graduation from Ohio State. Immediately after marriage, Dick began five years of active service in the Navy, including combat in Viet Nam. The Lord blessed the Mayhues with two children, a son, Wade, and a daughter, Lee, plus two grandsons. While still in the Navy, the Lord saved Dick at an evangelistic meeting at Scott Memorial Baptist Church in San Diego on April 6, 1970 through the preaching of Ken Poure. Feeling the call of the Lord to ministry, the Mayhue family moved to Winona Lake in the summer of 1971 and Dick enrolled at Grace Seminary from which he received his M.Div., Th.M., and Th.D. degrees.

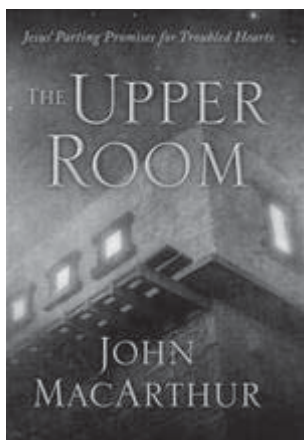
During the time I have known him, I have come to appreciate the characteristics with which the Lord has blessed Dick as he displays the glory of His Savior:

1. *Dedication:* Since his conversion, Dick has been passionately dedicated to serving His Lord. He is wholly committed to the ministry in which the Lord has placed him. His love for both Grace Community Church and The Master's Seminary is continually on his lips and is seen in his actions. His Christian commitment is also seen in his dedication to the welfare of his beloved "B" and their family. Those of us who are a part of the TMS family have experienced Dick's dedication to us; he is always seeking ways to make us more effective in the ministries to which the Lord has called us. To be a colleague of Dick in the Lord's service is to have a dedicated friend who you know is regularly praying for you.
2. *Discipline:* Dick Mayhue is one of the most self-disciplined men I know. His schedule is legendary among those who know him. He arises early each morning (around 2:00 am) to read Scripture, pray, answer correspondence, and work on his projects. The time when most of the world is sleeping are the most productive hours of his day. He is also disciplined to stay with the tasks before him until they are done. This disciplined life-style is the foundation which enables him to be a great administrator; he is always on top of what needs to be done.
3. *Discernment:* Dick knows what is going on in the evangelical world. He is well read and an astute observer of all that is taking place. He has written penetrating books, articles, and papers on such vital theological topics as hermeneutics, Satan, spiritual gifts, divine healing, sanctification, the church, and eschatology. In all of his writing, Dick is always complete in his research, detailed in his logic, and precise in his prose. He is both a skilled exegete in the biblical text

and an outstanding theologian. His discernment has been of great value to TMS. Dick has stated many times that the seminary is always one faculty hire from a crisis if the wrong man is chosen. Over the past twenty-five years, his track record is stellar in finding the right combination of spirituality and scholarship in the faculty of TMS.

4. *Decisiveness:* As with any leader the Lord raises up, Dick is decisive when his research is complete and a decision has been made. True to his Navy background, he steers a steady course to the goal that is to be achieved. That is why so many at TMS fondly refer to him as the “Admiral.”
5. *Discretion:* Dick is discreet in all of his dealings with people. A secret is safe with him. Once again, his military training is merged with Christian sensitivity in following proper protocol. He is a man of order who is able both to receive orders and give orders.

Above all, Richard L. Mayhue is a man of Christian integrity. I am thankful to the Lord for the example and influence he has had in my life and in those who make up the family of TMS. I am honored to be able to represent the teaching faculty of the school Dick loves so dearly and say to him, “Well done, faithful servant of the Lord. We thank God for you.”



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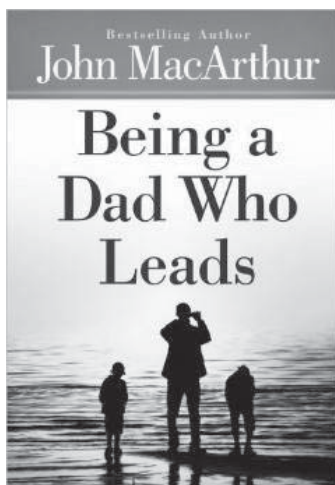
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THE GIFTS OF HEALING

Richard L. Mayhue
Research Professor of Theology
The Master's Seminary

Correctly understanding and obediently applying the biblical truths summarized in this essay could make the difference between life and death. After briefly reviewing the tragic demise of 11-year-old Wesley Parker and the subsequent decades of communicating with his father, Larry Parker, six major scriptural considerations are offered. First, the overview of the biblical healing record. Second, the comparison showing that Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2 both deal primarily with sin, not sickness. Third, the proposal that James 5 applies to today, but without a miraculous element. Fourth, the assertion that 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 prove so vague and ambiguous that no consequential conclusions can be reached from them. Fifth, the listing of biblical principles by which Christians are to understand and deal with ill health. Sixth, the brief summary which scriptural clarity brings to contemporary confusion regarding what Scripture actually teaches about miraculous physical healing.

* * * * *

Contemporary Confusion

Larry and Alice Parker wanted God's best for their family of six. But their oldest son suffered from diabetes and regularly received insulin injections. When Daniel Badilla held special services in their Barstow, California church, the Parkers "walked the aisle" with 11-year-old Wesley. They sincerely sought a healing miracle.

The preacher pronounced Wesley healed. Larry joyfully entered, "Praise God our son is healed!" into Wesley's insulin log. But Wesley's next insulin test indicated differently. Yet, by faith, the Parkers claimed the healing and blamed the unexpected insulin results on Satan.

Shortly afterward, Wesley began to suffer the nausea and severe stomach cramps that predictably indicated low insulin. Larry and Alice postponed medical treatment and sought God's continued healing power through prayer. In spite of their

sincere faith, Wesley fell into a coma and died three days later. *Newsweek* magazine reported the tragedy nationally.¹

A lawyer in Indiana later shared with me this letter that he received from Larry Parker. Years had passed since Wesley's death. During that time, Larry struggled for the truth and found it only as he sought full scriptural counsel. He wrote:

I am writing this letter with the hope and prayer that somehow I can share with you a lesson that I have learned at great expense. It is only by the grace of God, and the never-failing, all-encompassing love of Jesus Christ our Lord that my wife and I have been able to come through this trial. . . .

We wanted to see our son healed, but went about it the wrong way. It was during our trial for involuntary manslaughter and felony child abuse that my wife felt she could tell me what the Lord had shown her. She told me that our love, because it was lacking, failed Wesley, and that God's word says, "Love never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

I knew then that we had allowed what we thought was faith to cause us to forget to love. As we prayed for Wesley and saw him in obvious pain, our love for him wanted to give him the insulin that we knew would stop his suffering. However, we felt that would be a lack of faith, and would cost him his healing. We learned that our actions were contrary to what the Scriptures say. God's Word says that love is greater than faith (1 Corinthians 13:8).

The trouble lies with the fact that we confuse faith and belief. We think that if we believe hard enough, the healing will take place. We tie healing to some ability on our part to believe enough, i.e., to have enough faith.

To withhold medicine, especially life-giving medicine, is a very presumptuous act on our part that actually hinders the Spirit of God from His work.

My prayer is that you will consider these thoughts at length, for they have come at an incomprehensible price that no one would voluntarily pay.²

I am deeply moved by Larry's honesty, not to mention the excruciating pain he suffered. The issue could not be more real, for the lives of loved ones are at stake. God can, has, and does heal, but always for His own purposes, in His own way, and at His appointed time. We cannot force God to heal nor can we humanly manufacture a genuine healing experience.

¹ "The Exorcist," *Newsweek* (September 10, 1973), 31. More recently (February 2014), Herbert and Catherine Schaible were sentenced to up to seven years in prison for withholding medical treatment in the death of their seven-month-old son, Brandon. See online at: <http://www.charis-manews.com/us/42860-philadelphia-faithhealer-couple-gets-7-years-in-prison-for-infant-son's-death>. Last accessed September 11, 2014.

² Larry and Alice Parker have published their story in *We Let Our Son Die* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House Publishers, 1980). Larry has given permission to quote this letter. In so doing, the Parkers are not endorsing all of the conclusions reached in this essay.

Tragically, our world offers very convincing counterfeits of the real thing. Even more tragic, in our eagerness to see God work, we as Christians sometimes flock to anyone who claims a miraculous healing. In doing so, we trivialize genuine divine healing—we accept man’s deceitful illusions in place of God’s divine intervention.³

I wish that the Parkers could have read the following essay before attending that healing service over forty years ago. For Wesley, it might have meant life rather than death.

OT Prophets, Christ, and NT Apostles⁴

Old Testament Prophets

This is the revealed OT record before the time of Christ’s cross:

- Saints suffered.
- God afflicted.
- Healing methods varied widely.
- Unbelievers recovered.
- Sinners went physically unpunished.
- The innocent were struck down.
- Satan proved insignificant.
- Resurrections were rare.
- Faith requirements are never directly mentioned.

So what can be concluded from these facts? Basically this—God’s special interventions during the two-thousand-plus years starting with Job and Abraham (about 2200 B.C.) and ending with Christ fall shockingly short of most people’s expectations. The Old Testament gives infinitesimal attention to healing in comparison to everything else addressed from Genesis to Malachi. God afflicted more than He healed. His healings were few and far between. And when God did choose to heal, His methods defied predictability.

Christ

Various reasons existed for Christ’s healing ministry, all of which contributed to the authentication of the person of Jesus as the true Messiah. Christ never performed healing miracles merely for their physical benefit, as we can see from these New Testament passages. Healing miracles were—

Matthew 8:17: a preview fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isa 54:3.

³ Larry and Alice Parker expressed these essential thoughts in Larry Parker, *No Spin Faith* (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, 2007).

⁴ For the biblical details supporting summaries in this section, see Richard Mayhue, “Cessationism, ‘The Gift of Healing,’ and Divine Healing,” *MSJ* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 263–86 and Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2001).

Matthew 9:6: to let people know that Christ had the authority to forgive sins (see also Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24).

Matthew 11:2–19: to authenticate the messianic ministry for John the Baptist, who was in prison (cf. Isaiah 35; see also Luke 7:18–23).

Matthew 12:15–21: a preview fulfillment of the messianic prophecy in Isa 42:1–4.

John 9:3: to let people see the works of God on display in Christ.

John 11:4: for the glory of God through Christ.

John 20:30–31: to call people to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 2:22: God's authentication of Christ.

The evidence is stunning. Christ's healings were:

- undeniable, even to naysayers
- spectacular
- overwhelming
- abundant
- awesome
- spontaneous
- public
- instant, immediate
- authoritative
- without limitations
- total, complete
- convincing
- irreversible
- unprecedented
- way beyond medical explanation

No one before or since has even fractionally approached the power of Jesus Christ to heal. He remains forever unique. No one could possibly claim to have a healing ministry like Christ's. However, God's healing power did not stop with His Son but continued on through the apostles.

The Apostles

God used signs, miracles, and wonders to authenticate the apostles and their ministry (Rom 15:18–19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:4). Whether the apostles themselves

(or, on rare occasions, those they ministered with) did the signs, those signs attested to the authority of the apostles as revealers of truth (see Acts 2:42–43).

If non-apostolic Christians through the centuries were supposed to perform such deeds, then these could not have served as the signs of apostleship (see 2 Cor 2:12). The signs by the apostles attested that their words had equal authority with those of Jesus Himself, for He had chosen them as His spokesmen (see Matt 10:11–15, 20, 40; 1 Cor 14:37). True signs could be counterfeited, but they would not fool God (Matt 7:21–23). The church received continual warnings to be alert, to be on guard, and to be discerning (Acts 20:17–32; 2 Cor 11:13–15).

Healings became significantly less noticeable with the passing of time in the apostolic era. Paul mentions nothing about future healing ministry in his last three epistles—1, 2 Timothy and Titus. In his other letters, Paul also mentions nothing about current healing except to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30). Neither 1 or 2 Peter says anything about healing, although Peter does alert his readers to the possibility of suffering (1 Pet 2:20–21; 4:19). Nor does John mention healing in his three epistles. Interestingly, not one of the non-apostolic epistles—Hebrews, James, and Jude—instruct the saints about future miraculous healing ministries. James, writing around A.D. 50, exhorted believers who were seriously ill to call for the elders to anoint them and pray over them rather than to call for someone who had the ability to heal.

Following the historical progress of the apostles who wrote about miraculous gifts, miracles diminished in scope as time moved onward. In 1 Corinthians (A.D. 55), Romans (A.D. 51), and Acts 19:11–12 (A.D. 52), we read of extraordinary miracles that were taking place. Later epistles indicate that those phenomena were waning. Paul did not heal Epaphroditus (Phil 2:27, A.D. 60). Trophimus was left sick by Paul at Miletus (2 Tim 4:20, A.D. 64). Paul prescribed wine for Timothy’s stomach ailment (1 Tim 5:23, A.D. 62–63) instead of recommending that Timothy submit himself to someone who could heal. Paul himself had severe health problems (Gal 4:13 and possibly 2 Cor 12:7) that he could not cure by miraculous means.

Specific instructions from Christ for the church say absolutely nothing about physical healing either (Rev 2 and 3). In fact, just the opposite happens: Jesus prepares the church at Smyrna for suffering and death (2:10), warns the church at Thyatira of God’s impending judgment involving sickness and death because of immorality and idolatry (2:22–23), and rebukes the Laodiceans for boasting in their physical health to the exclusion of spiritual well-being (3:17–18). In the seven letters to the seven churches (Rev 2:1–3:22, A.D. 95), no mention is made of miraculous sign gifts.

While the Gospels indicate that the disciples would see God do great miracles through them, just the opposite proves true in the epistles and Revelation. There is no biblical expectation that the postapostolic generations of Christians would experience or perform the healing miracles of either Christ or His apostles.

The Bottom Line

The biblical evidence can be summarized this way: healing is *noticeable* in the Old Testament (over a span of 2,000 years), *overwhelming* in the Gospels (about three years), *occasional* in Acts (about 30 years), and *negligible* in the epistles (about

40 years). As the apostolic age ended, miraculous healing by direct human intervention ceased. And the healings reported by early church historians do not compare to the biblical record as to the miraculous quality of instant, total, and undeniable healing.

The Scriptures teach that miracles through human agents served a very specific purpose. That purpose focused on authenticating the prophets, Christ, and the apostles of God as certified messengers with a sure word from heaven. When the canon of Scripture closed with John's Revelation, there no longer existed a divine reason for performing miracles through men. Therefore, such kinds of miracles ceased according to the Scriptures.

Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2

God can sovereignly choose to heal whomever and whenever. But, it will not be a frequent occurrence nor will it be done through human healers as attested by these many definitive statements about Christ's atoning sacrifice:

First, the gospel is good news about our sin problem, not our sicknesses (Rom 3:23; 6:23).

Second, Christ's atonement focuses primarily upon our sins (iniquities), not our sicknesses (Lev 16:1–34; Isa 53:5–6, 11–12; 1 Pet 2:24).

Third, Christ died for our sins, not our sicknesses (1 Cor 15:3).

Fourth, Christ was made sin, not sickness (2 Cor 5:21).

Fifth, Christ forgave our sins, not our sicknesses (1 John 2:12).

Sixth, Christ gave Himself for our sins, not our sickness (Gal 1:4).

Seventh, our bodies are corruptible and subject to sickness (1 Cor 15:42–44).

Eighth, we will all die physically (Heb 9:27).

Ninth, the New Testament "healing promise" refers to salvation, not physical healing (1 Pet 2:24).

Tenth, our hope while on earth is heaven, not healing (Rom 8:24–25).

Isaiah 53

A careful examination of the language in Isa 53:4–12 clearly points to the emphasis on Christ's substitutionary atonement for our sins, not our poor health. To the objective observer, Isaiah's point is unmistakable:

- v. 5 – “our *transgressions*” and “our *iniquities*”
- v. 6 – “the *iniquity* of us all”
- v. 8 – “the *transgression* of my people”
- v. 10 – “He would render Himself a *guilt offering*”
- v. 11 – “He will bear their *iniquities*”
- v. 12 – “*transgressors*” and “He himself bore the *sin* of many”

1 Peter 2

Now, Peter quoted Isa 53:9 in the context of Christians suffering for their faith. Peter urged them to follow Christ’s example (2:18–25). This is not a text on relief from suffering, but reasoning to endure it like Christ.

The example of Christ’s suffering centers on the cross. Verses 24–25 draw the discussion to a clear conclusion with five statements about Christ’s suffering for our salvation:

1. The *fact* of salvation (v. 24a): “He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross . . .”
2. The *purposes* of salvation (v. 24b); “. . . that we might die to sin and live to righteousness . . .”
3. The *means* of salvation (v. 24c); “. . . for by His wounds you were healed.”
4. The *need* for salvation (v. 25a); “For you were continually straying like sheep . . .”
5. The *result* of salvation (v. 25b); “. . . but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.”

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

Unless we begin with the perspective of eternal salvation, we will never biblically understand how God works in the physical affairs of mankind in this life. The good news is that Christians are securely saved. The other news is that not all of salvation’s benefits will be received until our bodies have been raised from the grave. After God initiates our salvation in this life, all Christians still sin, still suffer ill health, and eventually die.

James 5:13–20

What contribution does the first book written in the New Testament make to the discussion? The most basic thing that could be said is that James writes nothing about “signs, wonders, and miracles,” nor mentions “gifts of healing.” Let it be further stated what James is *not* about:

- It is not about the Roman Catholic practice of “last rites.”
- It is not limited to Jews only.
- It is not limited to the first century.

Well then, what is James about? First, due to the limited length of this essay, let the writer refer the reader to his fuller treatment of this text.⁵ Second, several observations about the text leads to a very reasonable understanding of an admittedly difficult New Testament passage:

- The Greek word for sick (*kamnō*) in 5:15 refers to an extreme illness, to the point of incapacitation or death.
- The patient is to call for the “elders,” not someone with the gift of healing (5:14).
- The elders are to go to the patient and pray in faith (5:15), rather than the patient going to the elders.
- An absolute promise of healing is made in 5:15.
- The primary context of 5:15–16 is sin, not sickness.
- The illustration in 5:17–18 is the most important clue. James refers back to 1 Kings 17–18 when God chastised Israel for habitual, unrepentant sin by withholding rain for over three years. Then, when Israel repented, righteous Elijah prayed, it rained again, and the land was healed.

Now, what explanation of the text does justice to all six observations, especially the illustration in 5:17–18? James uses this exact experience of Israel as an illustration of what he is teaching on a personal level in James 5:14–15. King Ahab had sinned grievously without precedent (1 Kings 16:30, 33). So, God chastised the king and his kingdom with drought (1 Kings 17:1, 7; 18:5). Not until after Elijah confronted the false prophets of Baal and Asherah did the people repent—even to the point of slaying the idolatrous priests (1 Kings 18:37, 39–40). When the people turned back to God, the need for physical chastisement no longer existed, so Elijah prayed and it rained (1 Kings 18:42, 45). God healed the land according to His earlier promise to Solomon (2 Chron 7:13–14; cf. Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 8:35–36).

Now that we understand James’ illustration, let’s go back to James 5:13–20 as a whole to see what we can learn. Here is the parallel idea. A believer has wandered into sin and has remained in sin. God has chastised him by bringing sickness into his life in order to bring him back to Himself. When the believer recognizes that God has brought an untimely and severe illness to incapacitate him, he is to call for the elders

⁵ See “Is James 5 for Me?” in Mayhue, *Healing Promise*, 127–39.

of the church. The elders are then to come. He is to confess his sin, and they are to anoint him with oil and pray over him. Because sin is the cause of the sickness and the sin has been repented of, then God will raise him up.

The healing is never said to be instantaneous or miraculous, but it will be complete. Because sin is cared for through confession, there will be no further need for chastisement. So, God takes away the chastisement and the believer is restored to physical health. This is the absolute promise of James 5:15 in context and in harmony with the point of the Elijah illustration in James 5:17–18. When the condition of physical chastisement for the unrepentant sin is dealt with according to James 5, the repentant Christian will be healed because there is no longer a need for physical chastisement. We might consider this the ultimate form of a divinely imposed church discipline which ends with restoration (Matt 18:15–20).

1 Corinthians 11:9, 28, 30

Is the reference to “gifts of healings” in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 referring to miraculous sign gifts as exercised by the prophets, Christ, and the apostles? If so, did this continue to the present time? Or, are “gifts of healings” a more providential gift for the church that continues to the present time, but not as miraculous or powerful as those of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles? If so, this is an “originationist” view, not a continuationist position as above.

These are significant issues/questions. Does 1 Corinthians 12 help to answer them? Let’s begin by making some basic observations from the biblical text:

- “Gifts of healings” appears only in 1 Corinthians 12 (A.D. 55), never before nor after 1 Corinthians, including 2 Corinthians.
- It does not appear in other gift lists, e.g., Rom 12:6–8; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 4:11.
- It has no apparent connection to James 5:13–18 in that James was written 5–10 years before 1 Corinthians.
- It is not an “office” gift, e.g., apostle, prophet, evangelist, or pastor-teacher.
- “All” did not have the gift (v. 30).
- It is sovereignly bestowed by the Holy Spirit (vv.11, 28).
- It is gifted according to God’s will (v. 11).
- There is no description of how the gift functioned.
- It is obscure! and vague!
- Just because it is mentioned in the Corinthian letter doesn’t necessarily mean that it was practiced in the Corinthian church.

So, “gifts of healings” is the most enigmatic phrase that deals with healing in the entire Bible. As a result, no meaningful or certain conclusions should be drawn from it! The parallel plurals “effecting of miracles,” “distinguishing of spirits,” and “kinds of tongues” could very well indicate that the manifestation was temporary (one-time only) and had to be renewed by God at His will. If God intended “gifts of healings” to function as something other than a miraculous sign gift, we would expect to see it manifested in the lives of Paul’s numerous associates. But there is not the

slightest hint of its appearance after A.D. 59. An argument from silence alone is not conclusive, but it is one more piece of evidence that needs to be seriously considered because it is consistent with the other indications mentioned above.

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

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

But one might ask, “In spite of the vague nature and ambiguity of 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30, how else can we explain or understand the innumerable healings occurring all over the modern world?” First, understand that most of these are taking place in a non-Christian context, especially in Africa. These could not possibly be of God and yet they are really no different in kind or character from those being claimed by people calling themselves Christians.

Second, there are numerous, plausible explanations for supposed or real healings that are not miraculous healings at all.⁶ They include:

- There was a misdiagnosis.
- There was a psychogenic phenomenon.
- The report of healing was misleading or misunderstood.
- There was a placebo effect.
- There was a hypnotic effect.
- The report of healing was intentionally false.
- There was a Satanic imitation.

Therefore, there is no credible reason to invoke either 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30 or reported healings into the biblical discussion regarding healing as a *continuation* of Old Testament and New Testament miracles or as a lesser *origination* of God-involved healing.

A Biblical Prescription⁷

We all search for one clear scripture that states, “When you are sick, this is what you should do.” I certainly came up empty-handed when I looked for such a verse. But God has provided us with a prescription that comes from various portions

⁶ See “Understanding Reported Healings” in Mayhue, *Healing Promise*, 63–81.

⁷ For a more thorough discussion, see Joni Eareckson Tada, *A Place of Healing* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010).

of His Word; the combined wisdom of these truths will serve you well. Like a physician's consultation, this counsel needs to be taken in full.⁸

First, acknowledge that God sovereignly rules life, and then personally rest in that unshakable truth.

Second, remind yourself of the biblical reasons for sickness in general.

Third, it is extremely important to determine if your sickness is resulting from continued sin in your life.

Fourth, commit the entire matter to the Lord by faith.

Fifth, seek the help of healthcare professionals.

Sixth, recognize that it might not be God's will for you to fully recover.

Seventh, thank God for the circumstances in which He has placed you, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Eph 5:20).

Eighth, as you pray, ask God for the faith and patience to endure and the wisdom to understand why (James 1:2-5). He vowed that His grace would be sufficient (2 Cor 12:9). Claim that reassuring scriptural promise for yourself and rest in it.

Finally, pray that your circumstances would bring glory to God (John 11:4; 1 Cor 10:31). Only when that becomes your constant preoccupation will you experience full victory in the midst of your circumstances and will Christ have preeminence in all of your life.

Having accepted the biblical prescription, you might now be asking, "Is it right or wrong to pray for God's healing touch?" Let me assure that there is absolutely nothing wrong with asking. Paul asked three times to be delivered (2 Cor 12:8). Jesus asked to be delivered (Matt 26:39). However, we need to be willing to prayerfully receive God's answer regardless of what it is. We must submit our will to God's will, as did Christ and Paul.

The most appropriate words of wisdom I know of in this regard have been offered by Charles Wood. His wife fought several bouts with cancer. They had prayed often. He counsels, "In illness, I would pray for healing until God grants it or unless or until He makes it plain that it is not His will and gives peace about it."⁹

⁸ See "On My Back by Divine Design" in Mayhue, *Healing Promise*, 223-36.

⁹ Charles R. Wood, "We Learned to Pray for Healing," *Moody Monthly* (November 1976), 157.

At the End

Three times in his volume, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit*, Dr. Jack Deere sets forth something like the following hypothetical scenario. What is your reaction to it?

If you take a new convert, who prior to his conversion knew nothing about the history of Christianity or the New Testament, and you lock him in a room with a Bible for a week, he will come out believing that he is a member of a body that is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and a body that consistently experiences miracles. It would take a clever theologian with no experience of the miraculous to convince this convert differently.¹⁰

At first glance and without much thought, one might agree. But for this writer, another look at the statement quickly causes it to become an *agree/disagree* situation. I *agree* that a new convert who is totally unknowledgeable of history, who has no experience interpreting the Bible, and who has no study tools might conclude that the church today experience miracles like the first-century church.

But I totally *disagree*, along with you, too, probably, that the new convert would be correct. Since when is a new convert with nothing but a Bible an authority on the correct theological analysis of a subject so complex as miracles? Further, why would the theologian have to be “experienced” in the miraculous to be credible since the Scriptures are sufficient, without recourse to experience, to articulate clear doctrine (2 Tim 3:16–17)?

So, the thrust of our study has not been whether God can or cannot heal. He can! He does!

However, an honest and complete examination of the defining Scriptures (Isa 53:4–12; 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30; James 5:13–20; 1 Pet 2:24–25) demonstrates that there is no biblical basis for a *ministry of miraculous healing directly through a human healer today*. That ceased with the apostolic age. Alleged contemporary faith-healing ministries fall embarrassingly short of the biblical pattern—in purpose, time, scope, and intensity.

On the other hand, God can at times act in such ways that *only His direct intervention* is an adequate explanation for physical healing.

Healing by God’s direct intervention is not instantaneous, nor always complete. Our Lord’s unmistakable touch is not brought about by any demand, gimmick, method, or plea from a would-be healer. It is God’s response to the earnest prayer of a believer that heals a child of the King for our Lord’s glory.

¹⁰ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 54, 99, 114. See the writer’s review—“Who Surprised Whom? The Holy Spirit or Jack Deere?,” *MSJ* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 123–40.

GOD’S KINGDOM AND THE MIRACULOUS

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Clusters of miracles are not the norm in history. They occur at strategic times in history. Miracles happen with special representatives of God in connection with the nearness of the kingdom of God on earth. While the kingdom will become near again in the coming Tribulation Period, this church age is not characterized by the nearness of the kingdom and thus miracles are not the norm for this age.

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this article is to examine the relationship between the kingdom of God and miracles or what the Bible often calls “signs and wonders.” Miracles do not occur in a vacuum. They happen for a reason and in connection with other purposes of God. In fact, a correct understanding of miracles must come within a proper understanding of the broader and primary theme of Scripture—the kingdom of God.

Both sides of the miracles debate, whether continuationist or cessationist, acknowledge the importance of the kingdom to their views. Modern promoters of signs and wonders base their view on a certain perspective of the kingdom. For example, John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard Movement, also known as the Signs and Wonders Movement, explicitly adopted George Eldon Ladd’s “already/not yet” view of the kingdom as the “theological basis” for his continuationist views. Ladd taught that the Davidic/Messianic kingdom of Jesus was inaugurated with Jesus’ first coming and that Jesus is currently reigning from David’s throne.¹ Using Ladd’s ideas, Wimber concluded that if the Davidic kingdom of Jesus is in operation

¹ See George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 336–37. Ladd says, “Jesus has now been enthroned as the Davidic Messiah on the throne of David, and is awaiting the final consummation of his messianic reign” (336). Also, Jesus “has begun his messianic reign as the Davidic king” (Ibid.). In making these claims Ladd acknowledges that this perspective “involves a rather radical reinterpretation of the Old Testament prophecies” (Ibid.).

now then the miracles of that kingdom should be occurring today. In his 1986 book, *Power Evangelism*, which was updated in 2009, the now late Wimber wrote:

I was already acquainted with George Eldon Ladd's writings (he was a Fuller Theological Seminary professor), but it was not until I read his book *Jesus and the Kingdom* that I realized his work on the kingdom formed a theological basis for power evangelism. As I read Dr. Ladd's books, and read afresh the gospel accounts, I became convinced that power evangelism was for today.²

In this book, the authors Wimber and Kevin Springer devote Part 1, which consists of five chapters, to the kingdom of God as the theological foundation for their power evangelism approach. Thus, they openly proclaimed an already Davidic reign of Jesus as the basis for signs and wonders in their ministry. One analyzer of the Signs and Wonders movement, Ken Sarles, also noted this connection, "In the Signs and Wonders movement the existence of the miraculous gifts is directly linked to the kingdom of God on earth. The movement has capitalized on a certain view of God's kingdom that provides the theological undergirding for the practice of signs and wonders."³ Thus, it cannot be emphasized too much that a theology of signs and wonders involves a theology of the kingdom of God. In the case of Wimber, the inaugurated kingdom reign of Jesus was the basis for his views on the continuation of signs and wonders for today.

In general, one's kingdom view will affect how one perceives signs and wonders in this present age. Also, a proper understanding of the kingdom helps us understand the purpose of miracles. On the other hand, a faulty understanding of the kingdom can lead to a wrong view of miracles. Often, when I disagree with those who believe signs and wonders should be regular occurrences today, my main disagreement is usually with their kingdom theology.

Before we delve into the connection between miracles and the kingdom of God, I want to summarize the main point of this article—*Signs and wonders occur in rare and strategic times in history when the nearness of the kingdom of God on earth is being presented or addressed in close connection with Israel. These presentations are associated with unique representatives of God—Moses, Elijah, Jesus, the apostles, and the two witnesses in the book of Revelation. However, this present age we live in is not the Davidic/Messianic reign of Jesus or the Tribulation Period that immediately precedes the kingdom. Continual signs and wonders, therefore, are not a part of God's plan for this age.*

As I make this claim I acknowledge that there are kingdom implications for this present age even though the Davidic reign of the Messiah awaits the future millennial kingdom. Jesus the Messiah, who is the ultimate Son of David, has arrived with His first coming. With His ascension, Jesus currently is exalted at the right hand of the Father as Ps 110:1 predicted. Also, messianic salvation is happening for all who believe in King Jesus (see Acts 15:14–18). So there are kingdom implications now. But

² John Wimber & Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism*, (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1986, 2009, 19).

³ Ken Sarles, "An Appraisal of the Signs and Wonders Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January-March, 1988): 71-72

this era we live in is not the Davidic/Messianic/Millennial *reign* of Jesus, therefore, the miracles that occur with such a reign are not happening in this age. When Jesus returns, the millennial kingdom will bring the binding of Satan, widespread healing of diseases, and resurrection. But these await the future.

In addition, the issue here is not whether God has done or can do miracles. God has done and performs miracles for His purposes. But the claim that signs and wonders should be the normal experience of this age performed by Christians today is incorrect.

What Are Signs and Wonders?

As we begin this study let us start with some clarifications. *First, when we refer to biblical miracles or signs and wonders, we are speaking of directly supernatural occurrences that cannot be explained by natural processes or laws.* T. R. McNeal rightly describes these as “events which unmistakably involve an immediate and powerful action of God designed to reveal His character or purposes.”⁴

Miracles are often referred to as “signs and wonders” in the Bible. “Signs” point to things. A sign miracle points to the power of God and what He is accomplishing.⁵ “Wonders” refer to a response to the miracles. God’s miracles are awesome and draw an appropriate response of wonder and awe. The vast majority of miracles and signs and wonders in the Bible are so powerful that even the enemies of God cannot deny them. Biblical miracles are public, instant, and undeniable. For example, when God performed miracles through Moses at the time of the Exodus, there was no doubt about what happened. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were directly affected. They resisted for a while, but the signs were so powerful and compelling that Pharaoh finally let the Hebrews go. No one needed to convince the Egyptians at that time that real signs and wonders were occurring. Also, when Jesus did His miracles He did them in the open for all to see. And they were undeniable even to those who desired to kill Him. As John 11:47 states:

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs.”

In Acts, before many people in Jerusalem, the apostles declared:

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22).

When the apostles performed miracles in Jerusalem in the realm of the hostile religious leaders, no one denied that a miracle had occurred. Also, when the apostles healed a man the religious leaders who killed Jesus could not even deny it:

⁴ T. R. McNeal, “Miracles, Signs, Wonders,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers), 1135.

⁵ *Ibid.*

On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" . . . And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. . . . "For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:5-7, 14, 16).

Also, in the future Tribulation period the two witnesses of Revelation 11 perform miracles of judgment like those of Moses and Elijah against the earthdwellers for twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev 11:3). Their miracles are public and undeniable by all. In fact, the people rejoice when these two witnesses are killed, hoping their miracles have ended (see Rev 11:9–10).

So the signs and wonders in the Bible were public, instant, and undeniable even to God's enemies. This criterion is important and is the one we should use to evaluate claims in regard to the miraculous. Any who assert that modern signs and wonders are for today must meet this standard. It is one thing to claim signs and wonder are normative for today, it is another to show that they are actually occurring. In our age if Christians were performing the kinds of signs and wonders that occurred in the Bible with huge public crowds in largely populated areas, we probably would be seeing documentation of these. But we are not. No evidence exists that the types of signs and wonders in the Bible are happening today. This is not because God is not powerful. Instead, these demonstrations are not part of God's purposes for today. Those who claim that signs and wonders are normative for today are not performing miracles so powerful that crowds are stunned and skeptics have to admit something supernatural is taking place. This alone casts great doubt on modern claims of miracles. They are not showing that the Bible's standard for miracles is occurring today.

Second, undeniable signs and wonders occur at strategic times in biblical history through unique representatives of God. One can find miracles throughout the Bible. No one questions that. Nor does anyone question that God can do miracles today. But there are only a few times in history where miracles come in clusters. And when these clusters occurred they were performed through very select and unique representatives of God and were not normative for others. Let us highlight these.

The first major cluster of signs and wonders is found at the time of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. The miracles of this event were so extraordinary that most references to signs and wonders in the Old Testament point back to the Exodus. According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* of the 18 Old Testament uses of "signs and wonders" at least 13 refer to the Exodus.⁶ Another cluster of miracles occurs during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Over forty miracles occurred in the careers of these two men of God. The next major cluster of miracles appears with the ministry of Jesus, particularly in His early campaign where He performed widespread miracles for the people of Israel. B. B. Warfield observes

⁶"Miracles," *Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

that as a result of Jesus' healings, "Disease and death must have been almost eliminated for a brief season from Capernaum and the region which lay immediately around Capernaum as a center."⁷

This is followed by the post-Pentecost ministry of the Apostles who also performed signs and wonders, particularly early on and in Jerusalem with large Jewish crowds. The last cluster of miracles is found in the future when the two witnesses of Revelation perform miracles of judgment for 1,260 days in Jerusalem. In each of these miracle clusters, there were or will be unique men of God through whom these miracles were occurring.

Third, the presence of signs and wonders comes within the context of the nearness of the kingdom of God on earth in relation to Israel. When signs and wonders occur in clusters there are strong kingdom implications. As Alva McClain observed, "In the Scriptures great public exhibitions of miraculous divine power are invariably connected with the Mediatorial Kingdom of God."⁸ And not only this, there is a close connection to God's kingdom purposes with the nation, Israel.⁹ This was true at the time of Moses and the Exodus. Yes, the miracles performed at this time served several functions. They showed that Moses was God's man. They were judgments against Pharaoh, Egypt, and the gods of Egypt. Also, they were acts of mercy for the Hebrew people who were suffering. They also coincided with the giving of the Mosaic Law. All these are true. *But the greater purpose involved God's kingdom intentions through the Abrahamic Covenant.* Back in Genesis 12 God promised Abraham that a great nation would come from him and that this nation would be given the promised land as the platform for bringing blessings to all the families and nations of the earth. The Exodus occurred so God's kingdom program with Israel (and eventually the nations) could begin. The Abrahamic Covenant would not be fulfilled if Israel remained forever enslaved in Egypt. The signs and wonders at this time delivered the Hebrew people in dramatic fashion so that God's kingdom on earth with Israel could begin.

After God delivers the Hebrew people from the Egyptians He has a message for them at Sinai. They will receive God's law, which functions as their national constitution, and then God says, "and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). That's the main purpose for the Exodus and miracles associated with it. God's kingdom program involves the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and Abraham's people, Israel, becoming a great kingdom and nation set apart for His purposes. And this is done through the very unique representative, Moses. Miracles, therefore, transpired in connection with the establishment of Israel as God's chosen kingdom and nation on the earth. And it happened with Moses as a unique mediator. Miracles would still occur after Moses. The conquest of the promised land had miracles. Yet even then we are told that no one performed miracles like Moses, not even Joshua:

⁷ B. B. Warfield, *Christianity and Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 54.

⁸ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 411.

⁹ McClain notes that miracles "are the signs of the Kingdom, given primarily as a testimony to the nation of Israel, to whom in a peculiar sense that Kingdom belonged by divine covenant, and upon whose repentance depended its imminent establishment upon the earth." (Ibid., 411).

Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel (Deut 34:9–12).

The next cluster of miracles occurred with Elijah and Elisha as recorded in 1 and 2 Kings. The miracles they performed testified to their credentials as prophets to a rebellious northern kingdom of Israel that was on a fast track toward captivity. They stood as warning posts to a kingdom that was headed toward calamity and dispersion. It would not be long before the northern kingdom would end and go into captivity. The southern kingdom would not be far behind. Also, while we do not know for sure, many believe Elijah will be involved with the signs and wonders that precede Jesus' second coming and kingdom as one of the two witnesses of Revelation. These witnesses shut up the sky so there is no rain, which is reminiscent of what God did through Elijah.

Then the next cluster of miracles was done by Jesus the Messiah and were explicitly related to the proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom to Israel. The summary statement of Jesus' early ministry is found in Matt 4:17: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was immediately followed by a healing ministry in Israel:

Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them (Matt 4:23–24).

Matthew 8–9 details Jesus' healing ministry to the people of Israel. And Matt 9:35 offers a summary statement of Jesus' ministry at this point: "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness." The crowds declared: "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel" (9:33). This shows the startling contrast between what Jesus was doing compared to Israel's history before Him.

With Matthew 10 Jesus delegates the task of kingdom proclamation to Israel with attending miracles:

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness (Matt 10:1).

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons (Matt 10:5–8a).

Several things are worthy of note here. First, Jesus’ incredible ability to perform miracles is delegated to “the twelve.” Second, the message at this time was only to Israel. Third, the performing of miracles is associated with the nearness of the kingdom. The kingdom is near or “at hand,” which means impending or on the brink. Something very special is taking place at this point. This is not a normative situation. Later when the Great Commission is given the disciples were told to take the gospel to the world (see Matt 28:19–20). But here the focus is on Israel.

With Matt 12:22–23 Jesus explicitly explains the significance of His miracles:

Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?”

Then Jesus says in Matt 12:28:

“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Jesus declares that His miracles point to the kingdom. The kingdom had not actually arrived at this point. Jesus had not been crucified, resurrected or ascended yet. The Day of the Lord had not occurred. But there was a presence of the kingdom in Jesus’ person and works that the people were experiencing. Each miracle Jesus did was a sample, glimpse, or foretaste of kingdom conditions, when the restoration of all things would occur. When Jesus the Messiah was standing in the midst of the people and leaders of Israel performing undeniable signs and wonders in the power of the Holy Spirit there was a sense in which the kingdom had come upon the people. It was present in the person and works of the King. The conditions that characterize the kingdom were being shown to them. The Messiah was in their midst. There was the removal of the negative effects of a fallen world such as disease and death. Old Testament kingdom passages predicted a coming era where disease and death would be removed. Isaiah 35 is one such passage:

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
 And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
 Then the lame will leap like a deer,
 And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
 For waters will break forth in the wilderness
 And streams in the Arabah.
 The scorched land will become a pool
 And the thirsty ground springs of water. . . . (Isa 35:5–7a)

Isaiah 25:6–8 indicates that kingdom conditions bring the removal of death. So when Jesus raised a person from the dead that was a foretaste of the resurrection to come in the kingdom.

In Matthew 11, when John the Baptist was in prison, He wanted confirmation that Jesus really was the One. Jesus responds with words from Isaiah 35:

Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to Him, “Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you hear and see: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM (Matt 11:2–5).

In sum, Jesus’ miracles were within a kingdom context. At this time in history He was presenting the impending kingdom and kingdom conditions to Israel. Every miracle Jesus did was a foretaste and glimpse of what the kingdom would be like when it arrived.

- When Jesus healed a sick person it was a glimpse of worldwide healing.
- When Jesus raised the dead this was a glimpse of the coming resurrection of the dead.
- When Jesus cast out demons it was a glimpse of the coming removal of Satan from the earth.
- When Jesus showed mastery over nature and animals it was a glimpse of coming harmony over nature.

The focus of Jesus’ ministry changed after the events of Matthew 12. Jesus told the religious leaders that they had committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which in its context, was stubborn and willful rejection of Jesus the Messiah who was performing kingdom miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit in their presence. Up until this point both Jesus and the twelve were doing widespread kingdom proclamation to the cities of Israel. After Matthew 12 Jesus withdraws from the crowds and becomes much more focused on preparing the disciples for His coming death. In Matthew 13 Jesus starts speaking in parables which puzzled the disciples at first. Jesus stated that He was communicating in parables now to hide truth from those who would not hear (see Matt 13:13–15). This was a major shift in His teaching approach. Also we are told by Matthew that Jesus’ focus shifts from that earlier in His ministry:

Matt 4:17: From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matt 16:21: From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

These two “From that time” statements are significant and encapsulate what Jesus’ message is at these strategic times in history. At the time of Matt 4:17 Jesus’ emphasis is on the nearness of the kingdom of heaven and the necessity of repentance for Israel to enter it. Many signs and wonders accompanied this time. Yet according to Matt 16:21, Jesus’ priority shifts to preparing His disciples for the cross. This does not mean that Jesus never does miracles or speaks of the kingdom again. He certainly does. But His emphasis is not on widespread proclamation of the kingdom to the cities of Israel. It is focused on preparing His disciples for His death and sharp confrontations with the opposing religious leaders of Israel.

Moving on—with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, which itself was a unique miracle, another period starts where signs and wonders occur in the context of the kingdom. This time it is at the hands of the apostles. In Acts 3 the apostles, in the heart of Jerusalem at the temple, healed a lame man in the name of Jesus. The crowd was amazed and this led to a proclamation of the kingdom to the “men of Israel” (3:12), the very people who had Jesus killed. In fact, Acts 4:1 says this crowd included the priests and Sadducees. The apostles use the miracle as an opportunity to call the people of Israel to repentance. In Acts 3:18–21 Peter says that Israel’s repentance would lead to forgiveness of sins and the kingdom and the second coming of Jesus:

But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (Acts 3:18–21)

Here an undeniable miracle leads to a message from Peter to Israel. He preaches that repentance leads to forgiveness of sins which leads to Jesus’ return and the kingdom. On the next day, the miracle was again the basis for proclamation to the leaders of Israel:

On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “By what power, or in what name, have you done this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health (Acts 4:5–10).

On multiple occasions the apostles are said to perform “signs and wonders”:

Acts 4:29–30:

And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

Acts 5:12–16:

At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

Several things are worthy of note here. First, “signs and wonders” were being done “at the hands of the apostles” in Jerusalem—not by the Christians as a whole. Close apostolic representatives such as Stephen and Philip would also perform miracles, but miracles were not being performed by the Christian crowd. The miracles were linked to the apostles. Second, like miracles at the Exodus and the ministry of Jesus, the signs and wonders of the apostles were public, instantaneous, and undeniable to everyone. Third, everyone the apostles offered healing to were healed:

They [the multitudes] even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed. (Acts 5:15b–16).

Fourth, the miracles were being performed in Jerusalem as part of the proclamation of the nearness of the kingdom to Israel. Just as Jesus’ miracles were signs of the kingdom to Israel, so too were the miracles of the apostles. The biggest clusters of miracles in Acts were done in Jerusalem before the eyes of all the people and leaders of Israel. As John MacArthur puts it, “The New Testament miracle age was for the purpose of confirming the Word as given by Jesus and the apostles, of offering the kingdom to Israel, and of giving a taste, a sample, of the kingdom.”¹⁰

History shows that after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 signs and wonders largely ceased. Next, signs and wonders will be performed by special representatives of God during the coming Tribulation—the two witnesses of Revelation 11:

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1984), 360.

And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire (Rev 11:3–6).

These two men of God are God's witnesses for 1,260 days, which is half of the seven-year Tribulation period. They have supernatural ability to destroy their enemies and control nature at will. These two witnesses are not named but their miracles are similar to those of Moses and Elijah. Perhaps these witnesses are the actual persons of Moses and Elijah. If so, how fitting that two men of God who were so involved with the kingdom in Israel's history would be present and part of the nearing arrival of the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah?

Even their deaths are miraculous. They are killed but three and a half days later they are resurrected and snatched into heaven (Rev 11:11–12). This time period that they are operating in involves the nearness of the kingdom of God. Just a few verses later we are told:

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign” (Rev 11:15–17).

Thus, the ministry of the two witnesses is very closely connected with the impending kingdom of Jesus.

So then, when we survey biblical history, it appears that clusters of miracles at the hands of unique servants of God occur during times when the kingdom is being established or presented on the earth. Or in the case of Elijah and Elisha, miracles were a warning for the historical kingdom in Israel as it was heading towards captivity. What does this mean for the present age we live in? This age is not one in which we have prophetic or apostolic representatives performing signs and wonders in connection with the establishment or removal of the kingdom of God on earth. The last cluster of signs and wonders took place before the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem when the apostles were performing miracles mostly in a Jewish context or showing Jews that Gentiles were also the people of God.

As A.D. 70 approached, the signs and wonders even among the apostles seem to wane:

- The last recorded miracle in the Bible occurred around A.D. 60 by Paul on the island of Malta. About three years later Paul wrote that Epaphroditus “was sick to the point of death” (Phil 2:27).

- Around A.D. 67 Paul did not heal Timothy's stomach but recommended a little wine for medicinal purposes (1 Tim 5:23).
- A short time after this Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Tim 4:20).

The book of Hebrews also gives significant information regarding the strategic time of signs and wonders by the apostles. Hebrews 6:5 makes reference to the audience of Hebrews tasting “the powers of the age to come.” Here we are told that the first-century readers had tasted something. They had tasted miracles. And these miracles are linked with “the age to come.” The age to come is the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah. Thus, these people had tastes and glimpses and previews of the coming kingdom. In addition, the writer of Hebrews links these miracles with the unique ministry of the apostles:

For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Heb 2:2–4).

Note that the author links “signs and wonders” with a specific group—“them”—the apostles (“God also testifying with them”). The apostles were the ones “who heard” the words of Jesus. He does not indicate that signs and wonders are an ongoing part of the entire church's ministry, even at this time in the first century. When we look at Hebrews the writer says his readers had tasted the powers of the age to come but then looks back and says these were specifically linked with the ministry of the apostles. This again shows that miracles were done at a unique time with unique representatives.

In surveying Jesus' messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2–3 there is no call for these churches to perform signs and wonders. In fact, the emphasis seems to be on faithful service amidst persecution, and when the kingdom comes then they will be rewarded and reign upon the earth (Rev 2:26–27).

Kingdom Situation	Time Period	Kingdom Media- tor(s)	Result
Signs and wonders to deliver Hebrews from Egypt	The period of the Exodus	Moses	Israel established as a kingdom
Signs and wonders as the kingdom in Israel deteriorates (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 13)	Time of Elijah and Elisha	Elijah and Elisha	Israel continues downward spiral to captivity
Signs and wonders as the kingdom presented to Israel (Matt 3-12)	Early ministry of Jesus	Jesus the Messiah	Israel refuses to repent; kingdom to come in the future
Signs and wonders as Jesus and kingdom presented to Israel after Holy Spirit's outpouring (Acts 2-28)	A.D. 33-70	The Apostles	Israel refuses to believe; kingdom to come in the future
Signs and wonders with events of Tribulation Period (Rev 6-19)	Future	Two Witnesses of God in Jerusalem (Moses and Elijah?)	Kingdom and second coming of Jesus to appear very soon

Miracles and the Davidic Kingdom

There is another important issue that needs to be addressed in regard to miracles and the kingdom. That is the relationship between the promised Davidic/Messianic reign of Jesus and miracles. As mentioned earlier, those who argue for the presence of signs and wonders today explicitly connect their view with the belief that the Davidic/Messianic reign of Jesus is in operation today. Not only does John Wimber do this, but the defender of the Pentecostal/Charismatic view in the book, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, Douglas Oss, does so as well. He devotes several pages to how the Davidic reign is in operation today and says, "our purpose is to apply this principle to the continuity of the miraculous gifts."¹¹ He also says "the anointed Davidite, Jesus, passes on his own anointing to those who come under his reign." His point is this—we are currently in the Davidic reign and kingdom of Jesus, so the miracles of the Davidic kingdom are for today.

Yet while Jesus has been exalted as Messiah at the right hand of God, the Scripture seems to indicate the assumption of His Davidic throne and the beginning of His Davidic reign are still future. For example, Luke 19:11 states, "While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." The people thought the kingdom was going to come very soon, so Jesus gives the parable of the minas to indicate that He must go away first to heaven and then the kingdom will come later. In Matt 19:28 Jesus indicates that his Davidic kingdom reign will

¹¹ Douglas A. Oss, "A Pentecostal/Charismatic View," in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 268, n. 53.

occur when the renewal of the earth takes place and the apostles are ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel:

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

With Matt 25:31 Jesus links the assumption of His glorious Davidic throne with His second coming with His angels: “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.” The kingdom comes with Jesus’ second coming. In Luke 21 Jesus predicted events in the coming Tribulation period and referred to the kingdom as arriving after these events: “So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.” Note the very kingdom that was near in His early ministry is now said to only be near with the events of the coming Tribulation period. In Rev 3:21 one of the future rewards to the church is this: “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”

So on multiple occasions Jesus places His sitting on the throne of David as in the future and with His second coming to earth. This challenges the claim that signs and wonders should occur today because we are in the Davidic kingdom. The evidence suggests otherwise. Robert Saucy makes a good point when he states, “In our opinion the statement of the presence of the kingdom deserves more careful consideration than simply saying it is here and it is coming, or some other ‘already/not yet’ terminology.”¹²

While many aspects of eschatology have occurred with Jesus’ first coming, the thrust of Scripture seems to be on the futurity of the kingdom. Evidence of a present messianic kingdom in this age is not as strong as some think. Christopher Rowland’s skepticism in this regard is well founded:

Despite the fact that the consensus of New Testament scholarship accepts that Jesus believed that the kingdom of God had already in some sense arrived in Jesus’ words and deeds, the fact has to be faced that the evidence in support of such an assumption is not very substantial.¹³

Jesus’ resurrection and ascension mean that Jesus is now fulfilling the promise of Ps 110:1–2 that David’s Lord would be seated at God’s right hand for a time *until* the Messiah reigns over His enemies from Jerusalem. Thus, Jesus fulfills the promise of the Davidic King who is at the right hand of God (already), but His messianic kingdom reign is future (not yet). Thus, there is an already aspect of the Messiah’s session at the right hand of God, but this differs from many already/not yet proposals which view Jesus as reigning currently from the throne of David. To compare:

¹² Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism, The Interface Between Dispensational & Nondispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 99.

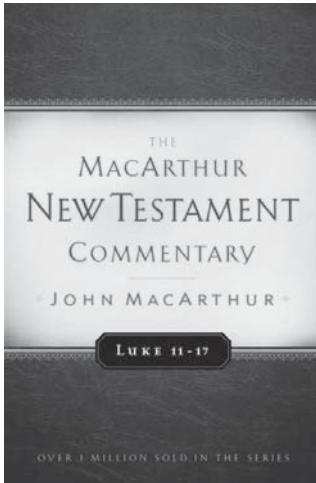
¹³ Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 135–36.

Common Already/Not Yet Proposal	Our Proposal
Jesus reigns from David's throne now and culminates this reign at His return	Jesus possesses all authority at the right hand of the Father now but His reign from David's throne in Jerusalem awaits His return

As this chart shows, our proposal contains an already/not yet scenario, but it is that of Jesus' session at the right hand of the Father being already, with the Davidic reign being not yet.

Conclusion

Studying the relationships of miracles to the kingdom of God helps with understanding the timing of miracles. Miracles are closely connected with the nearness and presence of the kingdom on earth. The church age we live in is not the messianic kingdom and thus we do not see the miracles of the kingdom in this age.



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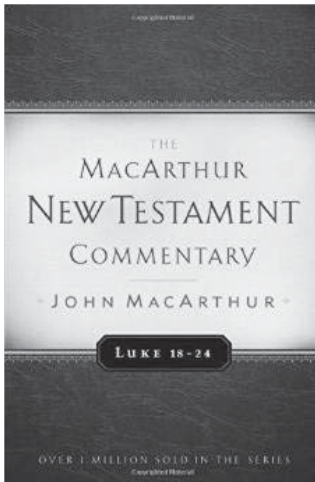
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THE GIFT OF PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Professor of New Testament
The Master's Seminary

Prophecy is a miraculous, supernatural gift that communicates both (1) immediate, temporal revelation to God's people (unwritten or unrecorded), and (2) the same gift God used to inscripturate the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Because it is a miraculous gift controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, God's prophet never fails in communicating accurately. No true prophet of God prophesies falsely or inaccurately in delivering the message from God. Modern charismatic ideas of true prophets who can prophesy falsely or inaccurately does not receive support from the Old or New Testament. While false prophets sometimes prophesy correctly, God's true prophets always have one-hundred percent accuracy. The need for the Strange Fire Conference (2013) is demonstrated in current charismatic views of prophecy that condone false or inaccurate prophesy among those who claim to be God's true prophets.

Overall Thoughts on Prophecy

In general terms, prophesying in the Old and New Testament may be defined as the supernatural, Spirit-given communication of God's will and word to God's people.¹ The prophetic gift is always a supernatural gift. It is not merely heightened human insight, nor can it be equated with today's preaching in the pulpit. The preacher

¹ The present writer has written extensively on the gift of prophecy in the New Testament era of the apostles. The reader is encouraged to read the articles cited in this paragraph for a more detailed presentation. This article summarizes these larger articles as well as a follow-up article to the Strange Fire Conference in 2013. F. David Farnell, "The New Testament Prophetic Gift: Its Nature and Duration," A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of New Testament, Dallas Theological Seminary (May 1990). F. David Farnell, "Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets? A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Hypothesis," *MSJ* 2, No. 2 (1991): 157–80. F. David Farnell, "Is The Gift of Prophecy for Today?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 1992–1993 Series in 4 parts: Part 1: "The Current Debate About New Testament Prophecy," *BibSac* 149, No. 595 (July–September 1992): 277–303; Part 2: "The Gift of Prophecy in the Old and New Testaments" *BibSac* 149, No. 596 (October–December 1992): 387–410; Part 3: "Does the New Testament Teach Two Prophetic Gifts?" *BibSac* 150, No. 597 (January–March 1993): 62–88; Part 4: "When Will the Gift of

is not a prophet. Sermons are not inspired by the prophetic gift, but perhaps a sermon can be aided through the gift of illumination, which can be imperfect and interfered with, so as to be defective in content. Prophecy is supernatural in its expression of communication that could not be known on merely a human level. Therefore, it also does not fail or become fallible in its expression. Why? Because the true biblical prophet is directly controlled by the Holy Spirit of the living God, and God's Spirit will never fail in His communication through the human instrument. Although God's instrument may be fallible, because God's spirit controls the whole prophetic process from beginning to end, including the prophet, a true prophet and the prophet's prophecy will never fail or be inaccurate. Moreover, any alleged theories or ideas of "fallible" prophesying ("getting it wrong at times" and still being "genuine" prophecy) by any so-called "genuine" prophet blasphemes God's Spirit. Since God's Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth," He cannot fail in His communication through human prophetic instruments (John 14:17, 26; 16:14; 1 John 4:6; 5:6).

Importantly, the gift of prophecy includes inscripturation of God's written word in the OT and NT as well as any supernatural, direct communication (temporary, written or unwritten) by God to His people. The same gift operates through the same Spirit of the Living God. Since God cannot err, his prophets cannot err since the Holy Spirit of the Living God controls the entire prophetic process. One cannot overstress that with the gift of prophecy God not only inscripturates but also communicates supernaturally directly with His people in the OT and NT. The supernatural is key to understanding the gift of prophecy in the OT or NT. There is nothing supernatural about views of prophecy that claim prophecy is sometimes accurate and sometimes is not, as is seen in today's charismatic movement. Whether the object of prophecy is Scripture (permanent written revelation of God's word) or temporary revelation of God's word (immediate, specific revelation to a situation among God's people, revelation not necessarily written down or characterized by a temporal situation) from God to man, it is given by the same prophetic gift through the same Spirit.

The Miraculous Nature of NT Prophecy

Prophecy's essential nature, both in the OT and NT, is that of a miraculous gift which involved the direct reception of revelatory information from God to the prophet. This miraculous nature of prophecy can be demonstrated in several ways. The following is not meant to be exhaustive but merely illustrative of the supernatural character of the prophetic gift.

The Prophet as Spokesperson for the Lord

The chief function of the prophet (προφήτης) or of prophecy (προφητεύω) was not necessarily found in the element of prediction of future events.² Although the

Prophecy Cease?" *BibSac* 150, No. 598 (April–June 1993): 171–202. F. David Farnell, "The Montanist Crisis, A Key to Refuting Third-Wave Concepts of NT Prophecy," *MSJ* 14, No. 2 (Fall 2003): 235–62.

² In the earliest literature which contain occurrences of *προ*, the adverb overwhelmingly assumes a local connotation. Since several other verbs (e.g., *προλεγω*, *προφονεω*) are found with a local connotation, one may assume that follows a similar pattern. Even with this original localized meaning of "forth," the

element of prediction was an important factor in the prophetic role, the predictive aspect is considered a later development in the significance of the word group.³

A primary function of the prophet in both its secular significance (Greek) and sacred usage (LXX and NT) is someone who proclaimed or announced the will of God to the people.⁴ As such, the prophet is the “immediately-inspired spokesman” for Deity.⁵ Since every prophet declares something which is not his own, the nearest synonym that comes closest to the primary function of the prophet is found in the Greek word κήρυξ (verb—κηρύσσω), for the κήρυξ also declares what he has received from another.⁶ Thus, the προφήτης occupies a mediatorial role for he is both

verb eventually held the temporal meaning of “in advance” or “before,” the temporal connotation of “foretelling” developing later in the evolution of the word’s meaning. Hence, in its original usage the specific or basic meaning of προφήτης was “herald” or “proclaimer.” S. v. “προφήτης,” by Helmut Krämer, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 6 (1968): 783. Theodore M. Crone, “Early Christian Prophecy: A Study of Its Origin and Function” (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen University, 1973), 11; E. Fraenkel, *Geschichte der griechischen nomina agentis*, vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Kärll J. Trübner, 1910), 34; Erich Fascher, *Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1927), 3–11. Fascher’s work reflects the ideas of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* which assumes an evolutionary development between Greek or Hellenistic religions and Christianity. Reitzenstein, a leading proponent of this school, notes: “Kein Mensch behauptet, dass der Inhalt der frühchristlichen εὐαγγελισμῶν dem Heidentum entlehnt sei; aber bestreiten sollte man nicht länger, dass seine Form und Auffassung tatsächlich übernommen ist.” Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1927), 240. However, such assertions by the history-of-religions school of an evolutionary development between Christianity and Hellenistic religions has been called into serious question and doubt, nor is such a scheme assumed by the present writer. What is merely being asserted here is that the Bible did not develop in a vacuum and that the Greek language forms an important exploratory background to the usage of the term in the New Testament. For further information on the discrediting of many of the assertions of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, consult such works as Gerhard Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 51–54; Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*. Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University, 1988), 172–79.

³ Fascher notes that in its original usage, the term almost never has the sense of “predictor” or “foreteller,” but must receive this meaning from other qualifying words in the context. It is the same way with the cognate verb προφητεύω. Fascher, ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ, 51–52.

⁴ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 6. Aune notes regarding Christian prophets, “The prophet was unique among early Christian leaders in that, unlike other functionaries, he claimed no personal part in the communication which he conveyed. Prophets acted as leaders in many early Christian communities because they were regarded by themselves and others as inspired spokesmen for ultimate authority, God (or Jesus, or the Spirit of God, or even an angelic mediator).” David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 204.

⁵ Boring describes a prophet in the following general terms, “A prophet is an immediately inspired spokesman for the (or a) deity of a particular community, who receives revelations which he is impelled to deliver to the community.” M. E. Boring, “What Are We Looking for? Toward a Definition of the Term ‘Christian Prophet.’” *Society of Biblical Literature, Seminar Papers*, 1 (1973): 152. In terms of Christian prophets, Boring notes that a prophet is “a Christian who functions within the Church as an immediately-inspired spokesman for the exalted Jesus, who receives intelligible revelation which he is impelled to deliver to the Christian community.” Boring, *idem*, 44. Hill also notes that the prophet is “a divinely called and divinely inspired speaker who receives intelligible and authoritative revelations or messages which he is impelled to deliver publicly, in oral or written form, to Christian individuals and/or the Christian community.” David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 8–9.

⁶ Krämer, “προφήτης,” 6:795; S. v. “κήρυξ” by G. Friedrich, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3 (1965):687. Friedrich defines the basic meaning of κήρυξ as “herald” or “proclaimer” for the royal court or Deity. See also Fascher, ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ, 51.

the mouthpiece of and spokesman for God.⁷ In such a role, a prophet had the potential to claim much authority in a believing community, particularly since that prophet assumed the position of one who announced the will of God to His people.⁸

This primary function of the biblical prophet as spokesman or mouthpiece for the Lord also underscores the essentially miraculous nature of both OT and NT prophecy.⁹ That is, the basic nature of the genuine biblical prophet designates someone who, through the inspired prophetic state, was in direct contact with God in the performance of their gift in a way that others were not.¹⁰ Prophecy's miraculous nature centers strategically in the supernatural reception of revelation from God to the prophet.¹¹ Importantly, such a gift had to be completely miraculous in character, for without such a gift possessing a Spirit-mediated, miraculous element, the community could not guard itself against hopeless doctrinal confusion and error.

Prophecy and Revelation

Prophecy is a sovereignly bestowed charisma through which revelations from God occur (1 Cor 2:10; 12:10; 13:9; 14:6; 14:29). The same gift of prophecy was

⁷ Krämer, “προφήτης,” 6:795.

⁸ This also underscores why so much stress is made in both the OT and NT for evaluating prophets (Deut 13:1–5; 18:20–22; Matt 7:15; 1 Cor 14:29–31; 1 John 4:1–3 cf. *Didache* 11). False prophets could do much harm among believing communities through their false prophesying which, in turn, could lead many astray. The woman named “Jezebel” at Thyatira is an example of this. As a self-styled “prophetess,” she used her prophetic authority to mislead many in that local community (Rev 2:20–23). The Montanist excesses are another example of false prophets who used their prophetic authority to lead some in the church astray (for further information, see the first article of this series).

⁹ The conclusion that the idea of a prophetic “herald” somehow is to be equated with the modern equivalent of “preacher” is *non-sequitur*. As will be demonstrated in the comparison of prophecy and other related gifts, the miraculous nature of the gift of prophecy, which involves the impartation of direct revelatory knowledge, sharply delineates prophet from preacher. While both the prophet and preacher proclaim, the evidence from the biblical data demonstrate that such an equation of prophet with preacher is tenuous at best.

¹⁰ Lindblom notes, “Common to all representatives of the prophetic type here depicted is the consciousness of having access to information of the world above and experiences originating in the divine world, from which ordinary men are excluded.” Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 32–33.

¹¹ Even in “charismatic” exegesis, apostles who possessed the gift of prophecy demonstrate the miraculous nature of the gift. For example, the method of using the OT by NT prophets resembled the *pesherim* of Qumran. Paul illustrates this Spirit-guided supernatural element in his exegesis of Isa. 59:20–21; 27:9 in Romans 11:25–26. Aune notes, “The remarkable thing about the quotation is that the phrase ‘from Zion,’ which apparently justifies the coming of messiah from the Jews and his proclamation among the Gentiles, is found neither in the Hebrew original or in the LXX Through the medium of an interpretive alteration in the OT text, of the sort not found infrequently in the *pesherim* of Qumran, an insight into the destiny of both Israel and the Gentiles have been extrapolated. To Paul the OT text means that a redeemer (i.e. Jesus Christ) shall come *from Zion* (for the benefit of the Gentiles) and will banish ungodliness from Jacob (i.e. ‘all Israel’).” Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 252. An additional example of this would be Eph 4:8 cf. Ps 68:18. Later, Aune, however, asserts that someone with the gift of teaching could have produced such exegesis but this is highly unlikely (idem, 345–46). After an extensive discussion of the nature of NT exegesis, Longenecker correctly asserts that when apostolic exegesis “is based upon a revelatory stance” it cannot be reproduced on a merely human level. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 219–20; R. L. Thomas, “The Spiritual Gift of Prophecy in Revelation 22:18,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 32 (June 1989), 204 n. 16.

active whether the revelation received involved canonical matters or entailed the impartation of immediate guidance to the church (e.g. the writing of the book of Revelation—Rev 1:10 vs. the command of the Holy Spirit through church prophets to send out Barnabas and Saul—Acts 13:1–4). Also, the same gift was involved whether that revelation came from apostles who possessed the gift of prophecy or non-apostolic NT prophets (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 1 Cor 14:29–31). For this reason, prophecy involved speech based on direct reception of revelatory information from God through the prophet(s) which, in turn, guided the people of God in matters of faith and practice.¹²

Furthermore, the prophet's reception of revelation did not have to entail exclusively predictive elements to be miraculous. This does not minimize the predictive characteristic exhibited in prophecy, for prophecy is frequently predictive,¹³ but it reduces prophecy to its primary characteristic of Spirit-inspired speech based on direct revelatory communication from God involving information which often could not be known on a mere ordinary human basis.¹⁴ Even prediction involves the communication of divine truth that could not be known by ordinary, human means, i.e. supernatural communication between God and the prophet.¹⁵

Gentile inclusion in Eph 3:5–10 illustrates this point. This concept, revealed through apostles and NT prophets to the church, is primarily doctrinal and does not necessarily encompass prediction. The revelatory nature of Paul's gospel did not necessarily involve solely predictive elements but reception of the true nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ and justification by faith (Acts 9:3–6, 20; Gal 1:12, 16–17). In Acts 13:1–3, God reveals His will through the prophets regarding sending forth Barnabas and Saul upon their first Gentile mission. In Matt 26:67–68 (cf. Mark 14:65 and Luke 22:64), the Jews sarcastically ask Jesus during His trial to prophesy who hit him, thus indicating possession of supernatural discernment but not necessarily predictive elements. In John 4:19 the woman at the well perceives Jesus to be a prophet, not upon the basis of prediction, but upon His miraculous knowledge of her marital history. Luke 7:39 indicates that the Pharisees considered a prophet to have

¹² Saucy's view of prophecy is perhaps one of the best, succinct definitions most consistent with the biblical data: "prophecy in the biblical sense should be speech which is inspired by the Spirit and therefore totally true and authoritative." Since the Source of genuine biblical prophecy is the Spirit, attempts at arguing for different levels of prophetic authority are tenuous. As Saucy notes in response to Grudem's hypothesis, "we have seen nothing sufficient to overturn the traditional understanding of all genuine prophecy as speech directly inspired by the Spirit of God and therefore fully authoritative." See R. L. Saucy, "Prophecy Today? An Initial Response," *Sundoulos* (Spring 1990), 5.

¹³ Thomas notes, "While prediction was not the major element in NT prophecy, it was an indispensable part of it." R. L. Thomas, *A Review of The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (January–March 1992), 94.

¹⁴ Edgar argues that a prophet "often predicts and, in fact, *must* predict if he is to be recognized as a prophet" [italics his]. Thomas R. Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts: Are They for Today?* [Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1983], 72. However, the role of προφήτης must not be confused with the μαντις ("soothsayer"). The μαντις belonged strictly to a secular setting and did not possess the hortatory function of the prophet. For further information, consult Krämer, "προφήτης," 790; C.H. Peisker and Colin Brown, "Prophet," in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1986), 3 (1978): 76.

¹⁵ Edgar aptly notes: "The prophet is representative of God. When prophesying he often discerns and interprets God's will in a specific situation . . . His information is gained in a supernatural manner *directly* from God. When he speaks apart from direct revelation, his message is no more accurate than any ordinary spokesman for God." Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts: Are They for Today?*, 72.

supernatural discernment of the true character of people. In 1 Cor 14:29–31 prophets are linked with the miraculous ability to determine true prophets from false prophets rather than merely setting forth predictive prophecies (cf. 1 Cor 12:10).¹⁶ Hence, the miraculous nature of prophecy has its basis in the reception of revelation. Such revelation frequently involved the reception of information which exceeded normal human cognitive functions.¹⁷ As spokespersons for God, biblical prophets, both in the OT and NT, distinguished themselves primarily and foremost as prophets by the possession of a supernatural ability to receive revelations directly from God. Therefore, prophecy, reduced to its basic function, is Spirit-inspired utterance based upon the direct, miraculous reception of divine revelation.¹⁸

Another point about the miraculous nature of prophecy must be addressed: specifically, the equating of prophecy with mere comfort, admonishment, or encouragement. This reflects a misunderstanding of 1 Cor 14:3 in which Paul says that “one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.” However, Paul is not defining prophecy but, in context, “merely uses the fact that prophecy is understandable and therefore results in edification, exhortation, and encouragement.”¹⁹ Since prophecy, in contrast to tongues, contributed directly to the understanding of the congregation, it had an edifying effect upon the whole group, including the speaker (1 Cor 14:4).²⁰ Godet notes,

The conclusion is often drawn from this verse, that since to prophesy is to edify, exhort, comfort, whoever edifies, exhorts, comforts, merits according to Paul the title prophet. This reasoning is as just as it would be to say: He who runs moves his legs; therefore, whoever moves his legs, runs; or to take a more nearly related example: He who speaks to God in a tongue, speaks to God; and

¹⁶ As noted previously in article three, just as *ερμηνεία* was needed in conjunction with the exercise of *γλωσσῶν, διακρίσεις* needed to accompany *προφητεία*. Although this correlation is not explicit in 1 Corinthians 14, it is strongly implicit by virtue of the contextual flow of chapters 12–14 and the use of cognate words in 12:10 and 14:29 to depict the gift and exercise of discerning. Inspired spokespersons were in the best position to judge spontaneously whether a new utterance was in agreement with Paul's teaching (Gal 1:8–9; 2 Thess 2:1–3) and the generally accepted beliefs of the Christian community (1 Cor. 12:1–3). Cf. A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *First Corinthians*, in ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914), 267, 321–22.

¹⁷ Cf. also Matt 12:25 par.; Mark 2:5–8 par.; 9:33–41; 10:21 par.; 12:15 par.; Luke 6:8; 9:47; 11:17; 19:5; John 2:24–25. Hill comments, “the ability to reveal the secret of man's heart was regarded by Paul as a distinctive mark of the effectiveness of prophesying (1 Cor. 14:24–25) and it seems to have been considered a mark of the prophetic phenomenon by Jesus' contemporaries.” David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1979), 60.

¹⁸ This communication of divine revelation may assume a variety of forms, such as dreams (Deut 13:1–5; Matt. 2:19–22; Acts 2:17), visions (e.g., Gen 15:1; 2 Chron 32:32; Isa 1:1; Acts 10:10–16; 16:6–10), visitations by heavenly messengers (e.g., Zech 1:11; 2 Kings 1:15; Acts 10:3; 27:21–25; Rev 1:1), and the prophetic or ecstatic state of the prophet (e.g., 1 Cor 12:3; Rev 1:10—*εὐ πνευματικῶν*).

¹⁹ Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts: Are They for Today?*, 69–70.

²⁰ R. L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 121. As Bruce notes, “when Christians assembled together hear the mind of God cogently declared in a language that they can understand, this promotes their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, 1971), 130.

therefore whoever speaks to God, is a glossalalete. No, certainly; one may edify, comfort, encourage, without deserving the title of prophet or prophetess.²¹

These latter concepts are better viewed as the results of prophecy and not necessarily as references to the content of prophecy.²² Hence, the result of prophecy for the body was: edification, exhortation, and comfort.²³

For example, the book of Revelation is labeled as “revelation” ἀποκάλυψις and also as “prophecy” (προφητείας—Rev 22:18) which John the prophet receives in the prophetic state (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνευματι) (Rev 1:10 NA28)—Rev 1:10) directly from Jesus Christ or angelic ministers (Rev. 1:1). Brown notes, “Although the words *parakaleō* and *paraklesis* do not occur, the letters to the seven churches (chs. 2 and 3) and indeed the whole work constitute a series of messages of consolation and exhortation. The work carries the authority of the exalted Christ, speaking through the

²¹ F. L. Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Reprint of the 1886 T & T Clark Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 2:267–68. In contrast, Ellis contends that the mere act of exhortation “is a form of prophecy” and constitutes a “specific ministry of a prophet.” He contends that Judas and Silas in Acts 15:30–35 are prophets on the basis of their ministry of παρακλησις. However, the verses cited do not actually support Ellis’ contentions for the content of the prophet’s message of παρακλησις / παρακαλεω is not revealed. Acts 15:32 states only that the prophets Judas and Silas strengthened and encouraged the Antioch congregation “through many words” (δια λόγου πολλοῦ). Such a statement supports the contention that the result of their prophetic activity was the edification and strengthening of the congregation since their message was the means through which edification and strengthening of the congregation were accomplished. Furthermore, Ellis’ citation of Acts 11:23; 16:40; and Acts 20:2 as examples of prophetic exhortation do not necessarily support his argument for the verses merely state that Barnabas, Paul, and Silas exhorted without identifying such an activity directly with prophecy or with their being prophets. In Acts, when the content of NT prophesy is revealed, the miraculous nature of that content is evidenced (e.g., Acts 11:28; 13:11; 20:23, 25; 21:10–11; 27:22). Furthermore, Ellis, reflecting Conzelmann’s view (cf. H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* [Mohr: Tübingen, 1963], 27) incorrectly suggests that tongues and the interpretation of tongues may possibly be equated with prophesy in Acts. He cites Acts 2:4, 11, 17; and 19:6 as examples where prophecy and tongues are closely associated. However, nothing in the context requires that the two charisma be equated. A variety of charismatic phenomena occurred on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:17) with prophesy and tongues prominent. In Acts 19:6 prophesy and tongues are best seen as separate phenomena experienced by John’s disciples especially since distinct verbs are used to describe such activities and no attempt at equating either is seen in context. Furthermore, Scripture elsewhere distinguishes between tongues and prophesy (1 Cor 14:1–25; 26–33). For further information, see E. Earle Ellis, “The Role of the Christian Prophet in Acts,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*. Edited by W. W. Gasque and Ralph Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 55 n. 1, 56 n. 3, 57–58.

²² Several arguments add additional support to this assertion: (1) Edification is classified as a separate spiritual gift in Rom 12:8. Thus, a distinction between speech which merely edifies and speech as prophesy must be intended. (2) Any believer could exhort, edify or comfort without the activity of prophesying or being considered a prophet (e.g., Rom 15:2; 1 Cor 8:1; Eph 4:29; Col 4:8; 1 Thess 3:2; 5:11); and (3) In Eph 4:11–16 apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are seen as gifted—men to the church who, along with prophets, in the exercise of their functions, caused the body of Christ to be edified and matured (Eph 4:13). Therefore, a distinction between the edifying nature of prophecy and the edifying effect of other spiritual gifts and gifted men given to the church must be considered. Most likely, this distinction centers in the fact that prophecy resulted from direct revelation from the Lord (1 Cor 14:30), and the proclamation of that miraculous revelation resulted in edification, comfort, and encouragement of the hearers (1 Cor 14:3).

²³ Cf. Eph 4:16 which reinforces the idea that οικοδομήν—“building up”—cf. 4:12) refers to the personal spiritual growth that came from the reception of prophetic truth. Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Longmans, Green, 1887), 260.

Spirit (Rev 22:18f.).²⁴ The vast bulk of the content exhibits the miraculous element of predictive prophecy where John is transported to the future (chs. 4–22).²⁵ Even in the messages to the seven churches which are considered “historical” in nature (i.e., chs. 2–3 written to seven historical churches—“the things which are” [cf. 1:19]) miraculous elements predominate. For instance, supernatural knowledge of the spiritual conditions of these churches emphasizes the miraculous nature of these messages (e.g., Rev 2:2–6; 2:9–10; 3:19–28; 3:2, 4–5; 7–12; 15–18) which, in turn, brings comfort and encouragement to some churches (e.g., Smyrna—2:8–11; Philadelphia—3:7–13), while admonishment to others (Rev 2:10; 3:14–19).²⁶ Prediction also forms an important part in these messages to the churches for Smyrna is warned of impending persecution (“you will have tribulation ten days”); in Thyatira, Jezebel, the false prophetess, is predicted to be cast on a bed of affliction and to go into great tribulation for her wicked deeds; Philadelphia is promised deliverance “from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole world” (3:10) and those of the “synagogue of Satan” will be made to bow down at their feet (3:9).

Similarly, Paul miraculously prophesied/predicted in Acts 27:22–26 that not one life would be lost in the shipwreck which was experienced on his journey to Rome. Not only did this constitute a marvelous and visible vindication of Paul as God’s prophet to the unbelievers who guarded him, but it also comforted and encouraged those who, along with Paul (e.g., Luke—“we”—27: 27, 29), faced such a terrible ordeal.

In light of this, whether or not that information involved elements of prediction or *resulted* in edification, comfort, or encouragement does not militate against its essence as being the miraculous impartation of revelation to the prophet by the Holy Spirit which, in turn, is proclaimed to members of the Christian community. Therefore, if the prophet is speaking apart from immediate revelation, it is unlikely that such proclamation may strictly be termed “prophecy.”²⁷

²⁴ Brown, “Prophet,” 3:88.

²⁵ Four main schools of interpretation have existed regarding the nature of the content of Revelation: (1) praeterist; (2) idealist; (3) historicist; and (4) futurist. The present writer adheres to the “futurist view” of Revelation in the interpretation held by dispensational premillennialists who assert that the great bulk of the material of the book (chs. 4–22) is still future. The events of chs. 4–22 cover the time periods of the future Great Tribulation, the Second Advent, the Millennium, and the New Heavens and Earth. Only the futurist view gives due recognition to the prophetic nature of the book and points to the Second Advent as the central unifying theme of the book. Furthermore, such a view is most consistent with the grammatico-historical hermeneutic with its emphasis on consistent literal interpretation while allowing for figures of speech. For further information, consult John F. Walvoord, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 23; D. Edmond Hiebert, “The Non-Pauline Epistles and Revelation,” vol. 3 in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1981), 263–68.

²⁶ The omniscience of Christ regarding the spiritual condition of the churches and the communication of that supernatural knowledge to the prophet John is seen in such phrases as “I know” (Ὅϊδα—2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). Supernatural communication is also reinforced by the recurring phrase “eyes like a flame of fire” with reference to Thyatira (1:14; 2:18). This phrase refers to the surpassing intelligence of the One so described, particularly as He relates the knowledge of the future to his prophet John (cf. Dan 10:6, 14); see R. L. Thomas, “The Glorified Christ on Patmos,” *BibSac* 122 (July 1965), 244.

²⁷ Thomas comments, “New Testament prophets were . . . vehicles of divine revelation, some of which passed into written form and was included in Scripture (e.g., the Epistle to the Hebrews). The very words of their prophecies, being based on and inseparable from divine revelation (cf. 1 Cor 14:29), were

The Ecstatic²⁸ State of the Prophet

The ecstatic or prophetic state of the prophet also demonstrates the unique revelatory role of the prophet as spokesperson for the Lord. In the OT, certain stereotyped phrases reveal the prophetic state.²⁹ For example, “the Holy Spirit entered into” the prophet and that prophet receives revelation (e.g., Ezek 2:2; 8:3; 11:5–12, 24; 12:1), or “the hand of the Lord” was upon the prophets when prophetic communication was received (e.g., 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1). Sometimes the phrase, “the Spirit of God came upon,” is used to describe the revelatory state (Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20; 2 Chron 15:1; Isa 61:1), or the phrase “the word of the Lord came to” is used (1 Kings 19:9; 1 Sam 15:10; 2 Sam 24:11; Jon 1:1; Hag 1:1; 2:1, 20; Zech 7:1; 8:1). Another phrase that is used is “filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord” (Micah 3:8).³⁰

inspired and therefore authoritative. This was an indispensable element of prophecy. Without direct revelation from God someone who promoted edification through exhortation and comfort had to base his message on the inspired words of others and was exercising the gift of exhortation (cf. Rom 12:8) or teaching (cf. 1 Cor 12:28), not the gift of prophecy.” See Robert L. Thomas, “A Review of *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*,” 93–94; see also John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit at Work Today* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 42–43; Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts: Are They for Today?*, 70.

²⁸ The idea that biblical prophecy should be labeled as “ecstatic” is debated. Both the definition of ecstasy and the precise nature of prophetic state of “ecstasy” has no consensus (see T. Callan, “Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco–Roman Religion in 1 Corinthians,” *Novum Testamentum* 27 [1985], 139). The term “ecstatic” for some connotes the idea that the biblical prophet was somehow irrational in the prophetic state. Robinson comments: “The institutions of Israelite worship, its religious festivals, and sacrificial customs, appear to have been drawn largely from the practices of Canaan. . . . Even the prophets themselves . . . are genetically related to an older non–moral type Nebi'im, who are, perhaps, like the holy places and festivals, and the general details of sacrifice, a contribution of Canaan to Israel's development.” (H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*. Second Edition. Revised [London: Duckworth, 1956], 17–18. Reflective of the *Religionsgeschichtliche* Schule approach which posits an evolutionary development of religions, the assumption was that since other nations practiced various forms of irrational frenzy in the expression of their ecstatic state in the surrounding areas of Palestine (i.e., Asia Minor, Canaan, Greece, and Syria), the Hebrew prophets were influenced by such “prophetic” practices (for further information, consult T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* [New York: Harper, 1960], 155–57; William O. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*. Second Edition. Revised [London: Society for Promoting of Christian Knowledge, 1944], 200; idem. *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* [Cleveland: World, 1962], 397). However, in reply, to such assertions, the “ecstatic” state of biblical prophets was qualitatively different than that of pagan prophetism, especially since the Holy Spirit was so intimately involved in the prophetic process of biblical prophets (e.g., Neh 9:30; Micah 3:8; Zech 7:12; Ezek 2:2; 3:12–14). Such a state prepared the prophet for receiving divine revelation, and at no time was irrational. For a refutation of the concept of an irrational ecstatic state, consult Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 37–56; idem, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 90–112.

²⁹ In the Old Testament, no single Hebrew word, like the Greek ἐκστάσει, is used to describe the revelatory state. The LXX uses ἔκστασις thirty times to translate eleven different Hebrew words, most of which mean “fear” (e.g., 2 Chron 14:14; Ruth 3:8) or “trembling” (e.g., Gen 27:33; Exod 19:18). Furthermore, the LXX uses ἐξίστανω and ἐξίστημι for twenty-nine Hebrew words which are synonyms for “fear” and “amazement.”

³⁰ Certain prophets do not have explicit statements that they were empowered by the Spirit in the prophetic state. For example, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, and Malachi do not have direct statements as to the Holy Spirit's prophetic empowerment of their ministry. However, Zech 7:12 and Neh 9:30 all associate the ministry of such prophets directly with the enablement of the Holy Spirit. For further information, consult Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 46–47.

NT prophets exhibit a similar prophetic state. In Acts 10:10, Peter, in the state of ecstasy, receives revelation regarding the inclusion of uncircumcised Gentiles like Cornelius into the fellowship of the church (cf. Acts 11:5 [ἐκστάσει]). In Acts 22:17, Paul relates that in the ecstatic state (ἐκστάσει) he was warned to depart from Jerusalem because of the hostility of the Jews and commissioned to be an apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:26–30). John is “in the Spirit” on the Lord’s day (ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι—Rev 1:10) and because of this prophetic state is enabled to receive the contents of Revelation (cf. also 4:2—ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι cf. 17:3 and 21: καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι; Agabus, “indicating through the Spirit” (ἐσήμανεν διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος—Acts 11:28) predicts the coming famine during the reign of Claudius. Paul, in the prophetic state, receives “visions” (ὄπτασις) and “revelations” (ἀποκαλύψεις) from the Lord (2 Cor 12:1). Genuine NT prophets in 1 Cor 12:3 who are in the prophetic state (ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ) are guarded from erroneous revelatory statements because of the intimate ministry of the Spirit of prophecy.³¹ The Holy Spirit exercises sovereign control over the true prophet’s prophetic activity. These verses also serve to stress the special relationship that the Holy Spirit maintains to the prophetic state which provides an important demonstration of the miraculous and rational nature that such experiences entailed for both the OT and NT prophet.³²

In summary, prophecy is a Spirit-meditated miraculous gift. Several factors demonstrated this. First, the primary characteristic involved was Spirit-motivated speech centering in direct reception of revelation from God. Without such revelation, prophecy does not function. Second, supernatural discernment, insight, and knowledge are frequently involved which conveyed information and insight that

³¹As noted in the third article of this series, the context surrounding 1 Cor 12:3 lends perspicuity to the situation addressed in 1 Cor 14:29. Apparently, false prophets had preached that Jesus was “accursed” (12:3) even though they professed to be true prophets. The thrust of the passage in the context of 12:3 is that genuine prophets are guarded by the Holy Spirit from making such starkly erroneous prophesies. False prophesying becomes a signal that a false prophet is active. Paul later warns the congregation to evaluate each prophecy carefully to ensure that a genuine prophet was speaking.

³² This is in contrast to the secular prophet whose experiences often were irrational. Expressions like *μαντις* (“soothsayer”), *χρησμολογος* (“oracle-relater”), *μαινομαι* (“to rage”), *εἰθουσιασμος* (“god–possessed”) which convey an irrational ecstasy are not used of biblical prophets in the NT. In the LXX, the word group *μαντευομαι* is almost always used of pagan soothsayers and false prophets. However, an exception in the LXX may be found in Prov 16:10—*μαντεῖον ἐπὶ χεῖρσιν βασιλέως* (Friedrich, “προφήτης,” 6:851 n. 430). In the NT, the verb is also used in a negative sense of soothsaying in Acts 16:16 (*μαντευομενη*). In the LXX, the word *μαινομαι* is used in Jer 32 (25): 16 and conveys a negative connotation of “going mad,” while in Jer 36 (29): 26 it is also used negatively in terms of madness. In the NT, *μαινομαι* has a negative connotation. In John 10:20 it is used by the Jews toward Jesus who asserted that He was demonized and was thus “insane” (*δαμόνιον ἔχει καὶ μαινεται*). In Acts 12:15 the word has a negative connotation where the girl, Rhoda, is considered “mad” because she reports that Peter was standing at the door (*οἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν εἶπαν μαινῆ ἢ δὲ δῦσχυρίζετο οὕτως ἔχειν*). It is used negatively by King Herod Agrippa II toward Paul in Acts 26:24 after hearing the gospel message (*Ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογουμένου ὁ Φῆστος μεγάλη τῆ φωνῆ φησιν μαινῆ, Παῦλε τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει.*) and also negatively by Paul in v. 26 in his denial that he was “mad” (*ὁ δὲ Παῦλος οὐ μαινομαι, φησίν, κράτιστε Φῆστε*). Paul also uses the term negatively in 1 Cor 14:23 where the word again has the idea of “insane” or “mad” (*οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαινεσθε*). In the LXX, the verb *χρησμολογεω* occurs in Jer 45 (38):4 where government officials who opposed Jeremiah request his death for not “giving oracular responses” or pronouncements of peace (*χρησμολογεῖ εἰρηνην*). The word *εἰθουσιαζειν* and its cognates do not appear in the LXX or the NT.

could not be obtained by ordinary human means. Third, prophecy often involved prediction. Prediction was a vital element in biblical prophecy in contrast to secular examples of προφήτης. Fourth, edification is better understood as the effect of prophecy on the listener rather than the content. Fifth, the Spirit-mediated prophetic state of the prophet reinforces the supernatural element involved. This miraculous element of prophecy is frequently neglected in determining the meaning, nature and function of the gift.

Strategic New Testament Passages on the Gift of Prophecy

New Testament prophecy is directly based on the same gift displayed in the Old Testament. One of the most important NT passages on the prophetic gift is Acts 2:14–21, uttered by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Joel’s prophecy of the revival of the OT prophetic gift in the Messianic era of the NT has begun to be fulfilled in the promised outpouring of Messiah Jesus’ Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Due to the strategic nature of Joel 2 in Acts 2, the present writer cites the full text in Acts 2:14–21.³³

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘and it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘that I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of my spirit and they shall prophesy, and I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the lord shall come, and it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved.’”

Note in this verse that Peter views NT prophecy as the promised revival of the OT gift that is now active in the New Testament. Peter sees the outpouring of God’s Spirit that resulted in prophecy as a direct fulfillment of Joel 2—“This is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.” Regardless of how one interprets the signs of verses 19–21,³⁴ Peter understands Pentecost as the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel’s promise of a revival of OT prophecy in the Messianic or NT era.

³³ All quotes from NAU update 1995 unless otherwise specified.

³⁴ It is beyond the scope of this section to resolve all of the interpretive problems involved in these verses. It will suffice to say that there are four views on the fulfillment of this Joel 2 passage in relationship to eschatology. First, the classic dispensational interpretation of these verses is to regard it as fulfilled in pure analogy in the present and to place its actual fulfillment entirely into the future immediately preceding the return of Christ. Essentially two New Covenants are seen: one with Israel and one with the church. This view sharply dichotomizes Israel and the church. Examples of those who hold this view are Arno C. Gaebelien, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Our Hope, 1912), 52–53. Charles C. Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody, 1961), 20–21.

One of the most prominent NT prophets, Agabus, modeled himself directly after OT prophetic actions (Acts 11:28–30; 21:10–14). His use of symbolic acts of binding his hands and feet with Paul's belt and use of "thus says the Holy Spirit" (21:11) in these passages coordinate well with OT prophetic style that is displayed (e.g., Ezek 5:1–2; Isa 20:3). Agabus' prophecies were fulfilled. Importantly and often overlooked is that any prophet(s) coming from Judea (the head church) would be previously vetted for genuineness and have a proven track record:

As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "The will of the Lord be done!" (Acts 21:10–14).

Another strategic factor in the revival of the OT prophetic gift in the NT is that NT prophecy has a much wider distribution among God's people in the New Covenant than in the Old. Joel 2:17 states that "I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind," while the Old Testament prophetic gift was narrowly confined to Israel, the New Covenant under Messiah Jesus extends it to all mankind. It is the same gift, but with a much wider distribution in light of the Great Commission that cancelled ethnic barriers (Matt 28:19–20; Ephesians 2–3).

A second interpretation is that of F. F. Bruce and other amillennialists who see Joel 2 as entirely fulfilled in the present. The pouring out of the Spirit is seen as the main prediction here (verses 17–18) with the cosmic signs (verses 19–21) being fulfilled by the phenomena which accompanied the crucifixion (e.g., darkness—Luke 23:44–49). For an example of this treatment, see F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 67–68.

Another view of these verses is the split-view interpretation which has two variations (thus, comprising the third and fourth views respectively). While both variations see the inauguration of the dispensation of the Spirit in verses 17–18 as occurring in the present, they differ as to how the signs and wonders of verses 19–21 are to be viewed. The first variation is that of Marshall who considers verses 19–21 as being fulfilled during the time of the apostolic age with its accompanying miracles as seen in Acts (e.g., Acts 3:1–11), while the reference to "darkness" (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20) is figurative. For this view, see I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 73–74.

The second variation of this split-view (i.e., the fourth view) is that of Longenecker who sees the signs and wonders of verses 19–21 as being literally fulfilled in the future state. For this view, see Richard N. Longenecker, "Acts," vol. 9 in *EBC*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1981), 275–76. This latter variation of the split view is best, particularly since Marshall's first variation tends to de-escalate the signs in terms of their literal prophetic fulfillment. Furthermore, the second variation allows for the already/not yet tension which appears to exist in Luke/Acts concerning the eschatological fulfillment of the kingdom (e.g., Luke 10:9; 11:20), where the first part of Joel's prophecy appears to be fulfilled (Acts 2:17–18), while the cataclysmic signs await fulfillment in the last days immediately preceding Christ's return (Acts 2:19–21; cp. Rev 6:12).

Since prophecy is widespread among his people according to Joel 2/Acts 2, the chances are much greater for abuse by counterfeit forces, for the devil disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). First Corinthians 14:29–32 states, “let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment, but if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent, for you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.”

Moreover, counterfeit prophecy was warned against in the OT. OT prophets were to be examined routinely and constantly, even if they had an established reputation (Deut 13; 18 and especially 1 Sam 3:19). Since anyone can claim to be a prophet, all claimants must be examined for genuineness, especially in the NT era since God’s Spirit is poured out on many more than in the Old Covenant. God’s people in both the OT as well as NT need to be on guard for genuine prophecy as well as false prophecy/prophesying. That is, prophets, both OT and NT, needed a consistent reputation for getting prophecy correct. Nothing supernatural exists about prophets who sometimes are correct and sometimes are not, for even false prophets sometimes prophesied correctly. True prophecy/prophets were always miraculously enabled by God to prophesy accurately all of the time since it was a supernatural gift. Important also is that genuine prophets take prominence in the examination due to their ability to discern true from false prophets. Because of the potential abuse by many as well as the frequency of abuse, the early church was warned not to despise prophesying (1 Thess 5:19–21): “do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances, but examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.” The good “prophecy” is the one that is genuine; while the false prophecy/prophesying was to be rejected and so also the false prophet rejected.

First Corinthians 13:2 is another important NT passage on prophecy. Prophecy is the greatest gift in comparison to tongues, prophecy or any other spiritual gift, but it is not the greatest gift of all. Love, however, is the greatest of all Christian qualities, for love is the Law of Christ (Matt 22:35–40; Gal 6:2). As Paul reminded believers, “If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor 13:1–3). The preacher or shepherd of God’s flock must take note: love in your ministry is key in God’s evaluation, not the more showy or ostentatious gifts like prophecy. According to 1 Cor 13:8–13 prophecy is temporary and partial in the present time. It will cease. Love will never cease for God is love:

Love 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. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When 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. For 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. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.

As a follow-up, 1 Cor 14:3–4 states that prophecy is more beneficial than tongues. Tongues is the supernatural (i.e., miraculous) ability to speak a known human language without learning it through a cognitive process. This is demonstrated in Acts 2, when the disciples spoke human languages on the day of Pentecost without ever having learned them previously. It is not “gibberish” and nonsensical. Tongues communicates information through human language without ever having to learn that human language on a natural basis. Moreover, one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation among God’s people. Several other things must be noted in comparing prophecy with tongues. First, “one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Cor 14:4). Second, prophecy is more beneficial than tongues since it builds up and encourages, exhorts the body of Christ, not merely an individual as with tongues. Prophecy is a sign to believers while tongues is a sign to unbelievers—“so then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe” (1 Cor 14:22). This makes perfect sense with the understanding of tongues as a supernatural ability to speak a human language without ever having learned it through natural processes of learning. Unbelievers would be influenced through the use of their native language by the evangelist who is able to speak the language of the unbeliever. Finally, prophecy can convict both unbeliever and believer: “but if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all” (1 Cor 14:24), while tongues only centers in the unbeliever.

Prophecy Active again in the Tribulation Period

Whatever the debate about the temporary nature of prophecy in the church age, the Tribulation period suggests its revival: Revelation 11:1–3 states,

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Plain, normal interpretation affirms that God’s two special prophets will communicate His prophetic message of judgment during the Tribulation period. As a consequence, they will be killed as all prophets are in Jerusalem (Matt 23:37).

NT Prophecy and other Related Gifts

The following section is a very brief treatment and comparison of the prophetic gift with other related ministries and offices. This is especially needed since, at times, erroneous equation of the prophetic gift with some of the following gifts has occurred.

Prophecy and Illumination

Illumination and the prophetic gift are two separate and distinct categories, which makes their comparison tenuous. While illumination involves the understanding of divine truth, the prophetic gift was a miraculous gift whereby the divine will was communicated directly to the prophet from God in order that God's revelations could be made known to those in the church. To the present writer, the genuine prophetic gift sustains an immediate and direct relationship to the Spirit of God that illumination does not. The process of illumination is also highly subjective and can result in error for several reasons: (1) not all believers are perfectly filled with the Holy Spirit to understand the Word; (2) not all believers have perfect rational abilities; and (3) illumination may also be hindered by carnality or resistance to the Holy Spirit (Heb 5:12–14). On the other hand, prophecy is mediated by the Holy Spirit and is a miraculous gift which always involved the impartation of supernatural revelation and divine knowledge directly to the prophet. Any parallels between illumination and the prophetic gift are not sufficient to warrant justification of the plausibility of a mixture of truth and error in the prophetic gift.

Prophecy and Teaching

Prophets and teachers are frequently mentioned as the most significant proclaimers of the Word in the community (Acts 13:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph 4:11; Rom 12:6). Like teachers, the prophets mediated knowledge, so that one could learn from them (1 Cor 14:31; Rev 2:20 cf. *Didache* 11:10–12). The prophet instructed the church regarding the meaning of Scripture and through revelations of the future.

However, prophecy is not the same as teaching and should not be confused. Being based upon direct divine revelations, the ministry of the prophet was more spontaneous than that of the teacher. Teachers, on the other hand, preserved and interpreted Christian tradition, including relevant Old Testament passages, the sayings of Jesus, and traditional beliefs of earlier Christian teaching. Furthermore, while the teacher considers the past and gives direction for the present on the basis of what took place or what was said then, the activity of the prophet looks toward the future, and he guides the path of the city forward.

There are good indications that in the NT it is the presence or absence of revelation which distinguishes prophecy from teaching. In the NT, prophecy always depends on a revelation, but, by contrast, no human speech act which is called a διδασχῆ, or διδασκαλία done by a διδασκαλος or described by the verb διδασκω is ever said to be based on ἀποκαλυψις. Furthermore, no ἀποκαλυψις in the NT is ever said to result in a “teaching” of one man to another. Instead, teaching is put in contrast to divine “revelation.” Teaching becomes simply an exposition or application of Scripture (Acts 15:35; 18:11, 25, Rom 2:20–21; Col 3:16; Heb 5:12) or a repetition and explanation of apostolic instruction (1 Cor 14:17; Rom 16:17; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:10).

Prophecy and Preaching

Much has already been said on this area of the preacher in the first part of this article. It is not unusual to find some commentators who have asserted that prophecy is another name for preaching. An example of this view is Mallone, who writes, "If the source of the preacher's sermon is the Word of God, then it can be said that he is fulfilling a prophetic function as he preaches."³⁵ Perhaps this association has been built up because of the "forth-telling" aspect contained in the prophetic activity as the prophet is the spokesman for God. This assumed commonality can be seen in the fact that Mallone makes a close equation of "expository Bible preaching" and the practice of the prophetic gift.³⁶

However, to equate preaching with the spiritual gift of prophecy is wrong. While preaching is essentially a merging of the gifts of teaching and exhortation, prophecy has the primary elements of prediction and revelation involved. All true prophecy rests on revelation (1 Cor 14:30). The prophet does not declare what he has taken from tradition or what he has thought up himself. He declares what has been revealed to him. Furthermore, while preaching includes teaching, the ministry of the prophet was more spontaneous, being based upon direct divine revelations. Teachers expound Scripture, cherish the tradition about Jesus, and explain the fundamentals of the catechism. Prophets, on the other hand, are not bound by Scripture or tradition, speak to the congregation on the basis of direct, immediate revelation.

Prophecy and Evangelism

Like evangelism (εὐαγγελίζομαι), prophecy utilizes proclamation. However, prophecy must be distinguished from evangelism by the hearers/audience to whom it is addressed and the message which it transmits. While evangelism is addressed to unbelievers who have not yet heard and accepted the message concerning Jesus Christ, prophecy is the revelation of God's message to existing believers in the congregation (1 Cor 14:3–4, 29–37). It serves the purpose of the edification (οἰκοδομή) of Christians (1 Cor 14:3–12). Thus, whereas evangelism proclaims God's great acts in Christ by preaching God's great acts in Christ, prophecy sets forth God's will for the world and for individual believers. The prophet is the Spirit-endowed counselor of the Christian community who tells them what to do in specific situations, who blames and praises, whose preaching contains admonition and comfort (1 Cor 14:3).

Prophecy and Gnosis or "Knowledge"

First Corinthians 13:8–12 deals with prophecy and γνῶσις. The similarities are as follows: (1) both are charismata of the Spirit; (2) both are concerned with knowledge of mysteries; and (3) both are fragmentary rather than definite or perfect.

³⁵ George Mallone, "Thus Says the Lord: Prophecy and Discernment," in *Those Controversial Gifts*. (Arlington, TX, Grace Vineyard, 1988), 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In contrast, however, *γνώσις* is not superior to prophecy, but prophecy is the supreme gift of grace. Furthermore, they differ in the way that the knowledge of mysteries is attained and in the use to which this knowledge is put: *γνώσις* is a rational gift of the Spirit, attained speculatively by thinking about the mysteries of the faith, while prophecy rests on inspiration, that is, knowledge is given by sudden revelation and the prophetic thought or image strikes the prophet from without. Furthermore, while *γνώσις* is individualistic, prophecy is by its very meaning and nature concerned with proclaiming to others. Hence, it can be said that *γνώσις* puffs up (1 Cor 8:1), while prophecy edifies (1 Cor 14:3–4).

Prophecy and Discernment

First Corinthians 14:29–30 is clear that Christian prophets possessed a discernment ability (cf. 1 Cor 12:10—*διακρίσεις*) which enabled them to distinguish true prophecy from false prophecy or that which is true and genuinely from God versus anything that is not. In 14:29, the usage of the term, *διακρινέτωσαν*, supports this special discernment ability of the prophet. Since there was not yet a written NT canon or fully established body of doctrine, this gift of discernment was needed as a counterpart to prophecy so as to verify the legitimacy of the direct revelations or prophecies received by so-called prophets so as to determine the legitimacy of the prophecy as well as the prophet. These verses do not necessarily mean that established prophets had to be continually verified. However, it sets down a general rule or principle that any potential prophet needed to face the scrutiny of other potential prophets. So, a principle is established that all prophets had the accompanying gift of discernment, but not all with the gift of discernment could prophesy.

Can Two Different Gifts of Prophecy Be Truly Presented in the New Testament?

The Montanist controversy shuts the door tightly on any idea of two qualitatively different forms of prophetic gifts (i.e., a fallible form of “congregational” prophecy that is separate from the canonical or “apostolic/OT” prophetic gift). The logic here is very clear. Most theologians agree that prophets in the OT period *had to be accurate* or they would be rejected (stoned), and the post-apostolic orthodox church rejected Montanistic prophecy because it was inaccurate/wrong/false (e.g., Montanus and his followers prophesied wrongly on the time of the New Jerusalem’s arrival as well as the place) would not the apostolic church of the first century do the same to false prophets/prophesying? Here is a chart:

<i>OT PERIOD</i>	<i>NT PERIOD</i>	<i>POST-APOSTOLIC PERIOD</i>
<p><i>MUST BE INFALLIBLE, NO ERRORS</i></p> <p><i>PERSON STONED FOR ERRORS (DEUT 13, 18)</i></p>	<p><i>INFALLIBLE!</i></p>	<p><i>MUST BE INFALLIBLE, NO ERRORS</i></p> <p><i>MONTANISM REJECTED FOR ERRORS</i></p>

The early post-apostolic church rejected Montanism due to false prophesying. Epiphanius and Anonymous indicate that the church outright rejected Montanism due to its excesses and false prophesying.³⁷ The writings of the early church in this post-apostolic period are clear that false prophesying was to be rejected. If both before the NT period as well as after, false prophets who prophesied wrongly or falsely were rejected, logic would be strongly persuasive that the NT period was the same.

Conclusion to the Prophetic Gift

A biblical understanding of prophecy is essential for the church to prevent the incorporation of errors into its teaching and/or doctrine. The OT and NT forms of prophecy had no essential differences. The same Spirit inspired and guarded both from error. No such form of false prophesying from a genuine prophet is supported in either the OT or NT. As great as the gift of prophecy or tongues may have been among those in the early church, the display of love among Jesus' disciples transcends all eras and/or times. The greatest mark of God's Holy Spirit in a professing/possessing child of God in the New Covenant is love (Gal 5:22).

³⁷ For details, see F. David Farnell, "The Montanist Crisis, A Key to Refuting Third-Wave Concepts of NT Prophecy," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 14/2 (Fall 2003): 235–62.

ARE TONGUES REAL FOREIGN LANGUAGES? A RESPONSE TO FOUR CONTINUATIONIST ARGUMENTS¹

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Speaking in tongues (glossolalia) has been at the center of the continuationist-cessationist debate for more than a century.² On the one hand, continuationism insists that the gift of tongues is still in operation in the church today. Some continuationist groups, such as classic Pentecostals, prioritize glossolalia above the other gifts, seeing it as the necessary sign of Spirit baptism. Cessationists, on the other hand, contend that the gift of tongues passed away during or shortly after the first century of church history. Consequently, they discourage the practice of modern glossolalia. Much of the debate centers on how each side defines the gift of tongues. Contemporary students of Scripture must allow their understanding of the gift of tongues to be defined from the text of God's Word. The arguments from both sides must be evaluated in light of careful biblical exegesis.

One fundamental point of disagreement between cessationists and continuationists concerns how the gift of tongues ought to be defined.³ Cessationism generally defines the New Testament gift as the miraculous ability to speak fluently in genuine

¹ This article is intended as an expansion of and supplement to the discussion of tongues in John MacArthur, *Strange Fire* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), chaps. 2, 7.

² As Gordon D. Fee notes, "This is obviously the 'controversial gift,' both then and now" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 597). Though the issue stems back to the birth of modern Pentecostalism in 1901 (and even to precursors before that), Fee suggests that the issue has been especially controversial since 1960 (cf. p. 597, n. 80). That timeframe coincides with the beginnings of the Charismatic Renewal Movement.

³ For a detailed survey of the various views of the nature of *glossolalia*, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 970–88. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 77–83.

foreign languages that were previously unknown to the speaker.⁴ For cessationists, the primary biblical example of tongues-speaking is found in Acts 2:4–13. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles (and likely other believers alongside them [cf. 1:15]) were endowed by the Holy Spirit with the supernatural ability to speak in various foreign dialects they had never learned (cf. 2:4, 8–11).⁵ Because modern glossolalia does not consist of genuine foreign languages it does not correspond to what happened in Acts 2.⁶ Consequently, cessationists do not view it as a legitimate parallel to the biblical gift.

By contrast, continuationism generally asserts that although the gift of tongues sometimes involved translatable foreign languages (as in Acts 2), it primarily consisted of incomprehensible, mysterious speech similar to the prayer languages of modern charismatics.⁷ For continuationists, the primary biblical example is found in 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul states, “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries” (v. 2). Wayne Grudem represents the continuationist understanding when he writes: “Are tongues known human languages then? *Sometimes* this gift may result in speaking in a human language that the speaker has not learned, but *ordinarily* it seems that it will involve speech in a language that no one understands, whether that be a human language or not.”⁸

D. A. Carson summarizes the different ways in which tongues might be defined:

⁴ Cf. Robert Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 186, who writes, “As part of the building of the infant church, the gift of tongues consisted of a special capability to speak a foreign language that had not been learned by the natural and usual method.” See also, Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 120–64. For a cessationist who does not agree with this perspective, see Charles R. Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1973).

⁵ In the words of D. A. Carson, “It must be insisted that in Luke’s description of the utterances on the day of Pentecost we are dealing with xenoglossia—real, human languages never learned by the speakers” (*Showing the Spirit*, 138).

⁶ Cessationists are not convinced that modern glossolalia consists of real human languages. On this point, see additional discussion below.

⁷ As Keith Warrington explains, “Pentecostals are less interested in determining whether it [glossolalia] can function as a language, has linguistic forms or can be accurately translated. It is less important to define glossolalia and more important to experience and realize that which it does for the speaker and hearer” (*Pentecostal Theology* [New York: T & T Clark, 2008], 87). Warrington goes on to explain that, for modern Pentecostals, “The gift of tongues is best understood as an extemporaneous or spontaneous manifestation in a form that is quasi-language” (ibid.). Yet, some continuationists like Craig S. Keener acknowledge that Paul had real languages in mind in 1 Corinthians 12–14: “Against many interpreters today, Paul seems to believe that the gift employs genuine languages: he uses a term that normally means ‘languages’; speaks of ‘interpretation’ (12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26–28); and compares human and angelic languages (13:1)” (*First-Second Corinthians* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 113). Though he believes the Corinthian tongues were real languages (either human or angelic), Keener goes on to state that because the languages in Corinth were unknown, the Corinthian experience was still “comparable to the experience of many modern charismatics” (ibid.).

⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Making Sense of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 246. Emphasis added. David E. Garland agrees, insisting that the tongues of 1 Corinthians 12 does not “refer to the miraculous ability to speak in unlearned languages” (*1 Corinthians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 584).

How . . . may tongues be perceived? There are three possibilities: [1] disconnected sounds, ejaculations, and the like that are not confused with human language; [2] connected sequences of sounds that *appear* to be real languages unknown to the hearer not trained in linguistics, even though they are not; [3] and real language known by one or more of the potential hearers, even if unknown to the speaker. . . . [T]he biblical descriptions of tongues seem to demand the third category, but the contemporary phenomena seem to fit better in the second category; and never the twain shall meet.⁹

Those different possibilities are significant, because how one defines the New Testament gift of tongues significantly influences his position in the larger continuationist/cessationist debate. Those who limit tongues to verifiable and translatable languages (Carson’s third category) often reach cessationist conclusions, whereas those defining glossolalia as something broader (either of the first two categories) often embrace forms of continuationism.

Introducing the Issue

The gift of tongues was, in reality, the gift of languages. As Grudem, a continuationist, explains:

It should be said at the outset that the Greek word *glossa*, translated “tongue,” is not used only to mean the physical tongue in a person’s mouth, but also to mean “language.” In the New Testament passages where speaking in tongues is discussed, the meaning “languages” is certainly in view. It is unfortunate, therefore, that English translations have continued to use the phrase “speaking in tongues,” which is an expression not otherwise used in ordinary English and which gives the impression of a strange experience, something completely foreign to ordinary human life. But if English translations were to use the expression “speaking in languages,” it would not seem nearly as strange, and would give the reader a sense much closer to what first century Greek speaking readers would have heard in the phrase when they read it in Acts or 1 Corinthians.¹⁰

The question arises, however, as to what kinds of languages the gift of tongues produced. Were they authentic foreign languages previously unknown to the speaker? Or were they something else—variously described by contemporary charismatics as “heavenly languages,” “angelic languages,” “prayer languages,” or “ecstatic languages”?¹¹

⁹ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 84–85. Emphasis original. Carson is reflecting material from Vern S. Poythress, “The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 (1977), 131.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1069.

¹¹ Though described as “languages” by modern continuationists, it might be noted that such languages would not be recognized as authentic by modern linguists. Cf. William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

Throughout church history the gift of languages was ubiquitously considered to be the supernatural ability to speak authentic foreign languages that the speaker had not learned.¹² In the early church, the writings of Hippolytus, Hegemonius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrosiaster, Chrysostom, Augustine, Leo the Great, and others support this claim.¹³ Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–90) explained that those endowed with the gift of tongues “spoke with foreign tongues, and not those of their native land; and the wonder was great, a language spoken by those who had not learned it.”¹⁴ John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) expressed that same understanding of tongues in his homilies on 1 Corinthians 14:

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.¹⁵

Augustine (354–430) noted that the gift was called the “gift of languages” because it illustrated the fact that the gospel would spread throughout all the languages of the world:

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.¹⁶

¹² As Thomas C. Edwards explains, “The universal interpretation of the older expositors [i.e. the church fathers], with the exception of [the Montanist] Tertullian, appears to have been that the gift of tongues consisted in the power to speak foreign languages, without learning them in the ordinary way” (cf. Thomas C. Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1885; reprint: Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1979], 319). F. L. Godet agrees, “From the third century down to modern times, the prevalent idea in the Church has been that the gift of tongues was the power of preaching the gospel to different peoples, to each in its own tongue, without having learned it” (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. A. Cusin [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971], I:200).

¹³ Cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1; Hippolytus, *Apostolic Constitutions* 8.1; Hegemonius, *The Acts of Archelaus* 37; Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Oration on Pentecost* 15–17; Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*, see his commentary on 1 Cor 13:1; John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians* 29.1; Augustine, *The Letters of Petilian, the Donatist* 2.32.74; Leo the Great, *Sermons* 75.2. For more on the church fathers' view of the gift of tongues see Nathan Busenitz, “The Gift of Tongues: Comparing the Church Fathers with Contemporary Pentecostalism” *MSJ* 17/1 (Spring 2006), 61–78.

¹⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Oration on Pentecost* 15–17. Cited from Philip Schaff, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [hereafter, *NPNF*], Second Series, 7:384–85.

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 35.1. *NPNF*, First Series, 12:209.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 6.10. *NPNF*, First Series, 7:497–98. The English was slightly updated for readability.

In reaching this conclusion, the church fathers equated the tongues of Acts 2 with the tongues of 1 Corinthians 12–14, insisting that in both places the gift consisted of the supernaturally-endowed ability to speak genuine languages. As Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–c. 457) explained in his commentary on 1 Cor 12:7, “Paul chooses speaking in tongues as his example because the Corinthians thought that it was the greatest of the gifts. This was because it had been given to the apostles on the day of Pentecost, before any of the others.”¹⁷

The Protestant Reformers, similarly, regarded the gift of tongues as the miraculous ability to speak real foreign languages. By way of example, consider John Calvin’s treatment of 1 Cor 12:10:

The *interpretation of tongues* was different from the knowledge of tongues, for those who had the latter gift often did not know the language of the people with whom they had to have dealings. Interpreters translated the foreign languages into the native speech. They did not at that time acquire these gifts by hard work or studying; but they were theirs by a wonderful revelation of the Spirit.¹⁸

In other words, the gift of tongues enabled Christians to speak in foreign languages they had not learned. Those languages were then translated using the gift of interpretation.

To the Reformers the names of later theologians could be added, from Matthew Henry to Jonathan Edwards to Charles Spurgeon and many others.¹⁹ Even Charles Fox Parham, the itinerant minister generally regarded as the founder of modern Pentecostalism, believed the gift of tongues produced real foreign languages. Parham stated his position clearly in newspapers at the time.²⁰ As he told the *Hawaiian Gazette* in May of 1901,

There is no doubt that at this time they will have conferred on them the “gift of tongues,” if they are worthy and seek it in faith, believing they will thus be made able to talk to the people whom they choose to work among in their own language, which will, of course, be an inestimable advantage. The students of Bethel College do not need to study in the old way to learn the languages. They have them conferred on them miraculously . . . [being] able to converse with Spaniards, Italians, Bohemians, Hungarians, Germans, and French in their own language. I have no doubt various dialects of the people of India and even the

¹⁷ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 243. Cited from Gerald Bray, *1–2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary Series [Hereafter, “ACCS”] (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 121 (regarding 1 Cor. 12:7). Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians* 29.1; 35.1.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 263. Calvin is commenting on 1 Cor 12:10.

¹⁹ Cf. John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, 252–61.

²⁰ Such as the *Topeka State Journal* (January 7, 1901) and the *Kansas City Times* (January 27, 1901).

language of the savages of Africa will be received during our meeting in the same way. I expect this gathering to be the greatest since the days of Pentecost.²¹

Parham, and his students, were convinced by their study of the New Testament that the gift of tongues consisted of the miraculous ability to speak in human foreign languages the speaker had not previously learned.

But it soon became clear, at least to outside observers, that the tongues-speech of Parham and his students was something other than genuine foreign languages.²² (Interestingly, some early Pentecostals not only spoke in tongues, they also wrote in tongues, and photographs of their writings were published by local newspapers. But their writings bore no resemblance to genuine foreign languages.²³) The realization that modern tongues did not produce real languages led to a shift in the way later Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals defined glossolalia. As Michael Bergunder points out, “In the early days, Pentecostals thought that their glossolalia was actually foreign tongues for missionary purposes. This was hitherto rather overlooked, as the Pentecostal movement quietly gave up the idea of xenoglossia [speaking in foreign languages] later.”²⁴ The common charismatic interpretation of tongues that subsequently developed insisted that glossolalia consisted of something other than translatable foreign languages.

As noted above, modern continuationists acknowledge the possibility that tongues can *sometimes* be foreign languages. They point to anecdotal evidence claiming that on rare occasions foreign languages have been spoken by modern tongues-speakers.²⁵ But those anecdotes are ultimately unconvincing, at least to outside observers. As Carson observes: “Modern tongues are lexically uncommunicative and the few instances of reported modern xenoglossia [speaking foreign languages] are so poorly attested that no weight can be laid on them.”²⁶ When professional linguists

²¹ “New Kind of Missionaries: Envoys to the Heathen Should Have Gift of Tongues,” *Hawaiian Gazette* (May 31, 1901), 10. Online at, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025121/1901-05-31/ed-1/seq-8/>. Accessed September 10, 2014. Cf. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 92.

²² Cf. James R. Goff, Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 76. Cf. Jack Hayford and S. David Moore, *The Charismatic Century* (New York: Hachette, 2006), 42. See also, Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 90–91.

²³ For examples of writing in tongues, see Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 11–14; also James R. Goff, Jr., *Fields White unto Harvest* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), illus. 4, following p. 144. Cf. William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 53; William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 186–87.

²⁴ Michael Bergunder, “Constructing Indian Pentecostalism,” in *Asian and Pentecostal*, eds. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Costa Mesa, CA: Regnum Books, 2005), 181.

²⁵ Supporters of modern tongues, like George P. Wood of the Assemblies of God, acknowledge the infrequency of such reported occurrences. After commenting on occasional stories “where one person spoke in a tongue that a second person recognized as a human language,” Wood states the obvious: “Admittedly, such occurrences are rare” (George Paul Wood, “Strange Fire, Strange Truth, Strange Love” *Enrichment Journal* [Spring 2014],

http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201402/201402_106_Strange_Fire.cfm. Accessed October 2014).

²⁶ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 84.

study modern glossolalia, they conclude that contemporary tongues bear no resemblance to true human language. After years of extensive research, University of Toronto linguistics professor William Samarin wrote:

When the full apparatus of linguistic science comes to bear on glossolalia, this turns out to be only a façade of a language—although at times a very good one indeed. For when we comprehend what language is, we must conclude that no glossa, no matter how well constructed, is a specimen of human language, because it is neither internally organized nor systematically related to the world man perceives.²⁷

All of this raises critical questions as to whether or not the church, historically, has been right to conclude that the New Testament gift of tongues consisted of the supernatural ability to speak in foreign languages previously unknown to the speaker; or whether the modern charismatic movement is right to conclude that the gift of tongues encompasses something other than cognitive foreign languages.

To support their assertion that glossolalia is not limited to foreign languages, continuationists articulate a number of arguments primarily drawn from 1 Corinthians 12–14. These include at least four assertions: (1) that the tongues-speaking of Pentecost was of a different nature than the tongues-speaking described in 1 Corinthians; (2) that Paul’s description of “various kinds of tongues” (in 1 Cor 12:10) indicates that only some types of tongues-speaking involved real foreign languages; (3) that the “tongues of angels” (in 1 Cor 13:1) refers to a category of tongues-speech that goes beyond human foreign languages; and (4) that Paul’s description of tongues-speaking in 1 Cor 14:2 defines it as that which produces something other than real foreign languages (namely, mysterious speech that no one but God can understand). While recognizing that continuationists sometimes offer additional arguments,²⁸ this article will attempt to provide a brief response to those four assertions.

Continuationist Argument 1: The Tongues of Acts 2 Differ from the Tongues of 1 Corinthians

The majority of commentators, including continuationists, acknowledge that the tongues of Pentecost consisted of genuine foreign languages (cf. Acts 2:4, 9–11).²⁹ Yet, most continuationists insist that the tongues experienced by the church of

²⁷ William J. Samarin, *Tongues of Men and Angels*, 127–28. Earlier, Samarin defines modern glossolalia as “a meaningless but phonologically structured human utterance believed by the speaker to be a real language but bearing no systematic resemblance to any natural language, living or dead” (p. 2).

²⁸ For a survey of these arguments and several others, from a continuationist perspective, see Sam Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2012), 179ff. For an extensive rebuttal to the continuationist understanding, see Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 120–200.

²⁹ Cf. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 115. Schnabel writes, “The followers of Jesus started to speak in ‘other languages’ (ἑτέροι γλώσσαι), i.e. in languages other than their own (cf. vv. 6, 8, 11). The phenomenon that the believers experienced and that onlookers observed was xenolalia, the miraculous speaking in unlearned languages—here in the languages spoken in the regions mentioned in vv. 9–11, which Galilean Jews would

Corinth were something categorically different. Consequently, they drive a wedge between Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12–14; seeking to distance the passages from one another, rather than viewing them as parallel.

Continuationist author Sam Storms illustrates this point when he writes, “Acts 2 is the *only* text in the New Testament where tongues-speech consists of foreign languages not previously known by the speaker.”³⁰ Storms is convinced that passages like 1 Corinthians 14 describe a type of tongues that produced something other than human languages, and that such passages provide the precedent for contemporary charismatic practice. As Storms explains, “There is no reason to think Acts 2, rather than, say, 1 Corinthians 14, is the standard by which all occurrences of tongues-speech must be judged.”³¹

Storms’s view is not uncommon among modern New Testament scholars. Commenting on 1 Cor 12:10, Craig Blomberg suggests that “speaking in tongues’ (glossolalia) must not be confused with what happened to the disciples at Pentecost.”³² Raymond Collins agrees, asserting that “The gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is different from the disciples’ experience at Pentecost (Acts 2:5–13).”³³ Representing the modern Pentecostal position, Keith Warrington contends that “the NT, other than Acts 2.6, indicates that an earthly language is not being assumed by the writers when they refer to glossolalia.”³⁴ Convinced that Paul has something other than foreign languages in mind in 1 Corinthians 12–14, these writers insist that the tongues of Pentecost are inherently different from the tongues spoken in Corinth. As Gregory Lockwood explains:

Since the 1970s the dominant view in NT scholarship has been that the gift of tongues bestowed on the Corinthians was of a different nature from the gift described in Acts. Twenty-five years after Pentecost, the Spirit’s gift to the church—in Corinth at least—was no longer the pouring out of the Spirit-given ability to speak foreign languages. It consisted, according to this view,

not have spoken either as part of their upbringing (in a multilingual family) or as languages learned later in life (e.g. as traders).” Other commentators on Acts agree with Schnabel’s assessment, even if they suggest that what happened at Pentecost was not parallel to the Corinthian experience (cf. J. Bradley Chance, *Acts* [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007], 49; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 78; David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 134; John Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 100). As Derek Thomas observes, “Whatever we make of the tongues in Corinth, there can be no doubt that what is described here [in Acts 2] is the ability to speak in a foreign language (like French or Urdu in our day) that others could readily understand. The barrier of human languages (Babel’s curse) was, for a moment at least, broken down” (*Acts*, Reformed Expository Commentary [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011], 30–31).

³⁰ Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 180. Emphasis added.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 245.

³³ Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 456.

³⁴ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 93. Cf. Paul W. Barnett, *1 Corinthians* (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2000), 230. Cf. Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 261.

in the ability to utter ecstatic speech. The ascendancy of this view has coincided with the growth and popularity of the charismatic movement.³⁵

But exegetical evidence suggests that what some scholars dismiss as being categorically different, often with nothing more than a passing sentence, are in reality the same thing. A comparative study of Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12–14 indicates that the same basic phenomenon is being described in both places for at least five reasons.

First, both passages use the same terminology, employing combinations of λαλέω (*laleo*, “to speak”) and γλῶσσα (*glossa*, “language” or “tongue”) to describe the phenomenon of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4, 11; 1 Cor 12:10, 28; 13:1, 8; 14:2, 4, 5, 9, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 39; cf. Acts 10:46; 19:6).³⁶ Neither of those words imply ecstatic or unintelligible speech. Hence Thomas Edgar writes:

There is no evidence in secular Greek of classical or koine times, nor in pre-Christian Judaism, nor in the biblical Greek of the Septuagint that *glossa* was used to mean ecstatic unintelligible speech. Such speech, although common to pagan religion, was not described by *glossa* but by other terms such as *phtheggomai* which were available in the Greek language. . . . The New Testament [also] uses the word *glossa* in the normally accepted sense of the physical tongue or human language. . . . *Laleo* is used approximately 295 times in the New Testament; 60 of these are in the book of Acts. Excluding the 30 instances where *laleo* is used of “speaking in tongues,” 265 instances remain. None of these seem to refer to ecstatic unintelligible speech.³⁷

The vocabulary used by both Luke and Paul argue against the notion that tongues-speech consisted of something other than the articulation of a rational language. Moreover, given the close relationship between Luke and Paul (cf. Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 1:24), and the fact that Luke wrote Acts roughly five years *after* Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, it is difficult to imagine that Luke would describe Pentecost with the same terminology Paul used if he knew that what happened in Acts 2 was inherently different than the Corinthian experience.³⁸

Second, both passages directly associate speaking in tongues with foreign languages. In Acts 2, foreign dialects are clearly in view, and Luke lists a number of them in vv. 9–11. Luke also alludes to Isaiah 28:11 with his use of the phrase ἐτέραις

³⁵ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 435.

³⁶ It might be noted that, according to Peter’s testimony in Acts 11:15–17 (cf. 15:8), the tongues of Acts 10 (and by implication Acts 19) consisted of the same phenomenon as that displayed on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

³⁷ Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 126, 130.

³⁸ The converse is also true. As D. A. Carson points out, “If [Paul] knew of the details of Pentecost (a currently unpopular opinion in the scholarly world, but in my view eminently defensible), his understanding of tongues must have been shaped to some extent by that event. Certainly tongues in Acts exercise some different *functions* from those in 1 Corinthians; but there is no substantial evidence that suggests Paul thought the two were *essentially* different. We have established high probability, I think, that Paul believed the tongues about which he wrote in 1 Corinthians were cognitive.” (*Showing the Spirit*, 83).

γλώσσας (“other tongues”) in Acts 2:4. That expression is derived from LXX translation of Isa 28:11, where it is found in the singular (γλώσσης ἐτέρης).³⁹ In 1 Cor 14:10–11, Paul associates tongues with the “many kinds of languages in the world.”⁴⁰ Moreover, Paul’s explicit reference to Isa 28:11–12 in 1 Cor 14:21 is a strong indication that he had foreign languages in mind. In the words of one commentator:

In its original context, the text Paul adduces from Isaiah to describe the nature and purpose of the Corinthians’ gift (Is 28:11, quoted in 1 Cor 14:21) can only be interpreted as a reference to foreign languages, particularly the language of Assyria. . . . If Paul were to use γλῶσσα to denote something other than known foreign languages, that would constitute a significant departure from a long-standing tradition in the OT and other Semitic literature.⁴¹

Third, in both passages the languages spoken were translatable. On the day of Pentecost, Jewish pilgrims from various parts of the world did not need an interpreter to understand words spoken in their own mother tongues (cf. Acts 2:8–11). But in the congregation in Corinth, a translator was needed so that anyone who did not know the language being spoken could be edified. Thus, the gift of interpretation confirms that the nature of tongues in 1 Corinthians consisted of authentic foreign languages (cf. 1 Cor 12:10; 14:5, 13).⁴² The word διερμηνεύω (*dihermeneuo*, “to interpret”), which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 12–14 is used elsewhere in the New Testament to mean “to translate.” As Lockwood explains,

The verb often rendered “to interpret” in 1 Cor 12:30; 14:5, 13, 27 is διερμηνεύω, which in Acts 9:36 simply means “to translate” from one ordinary language into another. . . . In 1 Cor 14:28 διερμηνευτής could mean “translator” just as easily as “interpreter.” Paul also uses ἐρμηνεία in 1 Cor 12:10; 14:26 for “interpretation” or “translation”; the term could denote either, as the verb ἐρμηνεύω in Jn 1:42 and Heb 7:2 means “to translate.”⁴³

Norman Geisler summarizes the significance of this point with these words:

³⁹ Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 99.

⁴⁰ Because Paul is employing an illustration about tongues-speaking, he uses a different word for “languages” (φωνῶν) in 14:10. For a cessationist understanding of 14:10–11, see Robert L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 37, 93–94. On page 37, Thomas suggests that Paul used different terms (*glosson* and *phonon*) to distinguish the miraculous ability to speak in foreign languages from the natural acquisition of such languages.

⁴¹ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 436. Cf. Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 141–42.

⁴² The fact that an interpreter was needed in Corinth and not at Pentecost does not imply that the nature of the languages being spoken was different. At Pentecost, many of the people in the crowd already knew the foreign languages being spoken, and thus no translator was necessary. In Corinth, none of the believers in the church understood the foreign language. Consequently, translation was essential if they were to be edified. Cf. Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 149.

⁴³ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 436. It might be noted that even in English, the word “interpreter” often means “translator.”

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.⁴⁴

Fourth, in both passages, unbelievers reacted similarly to those who spoke in tongues. In Acts 2, some of the unbelieving Jews at Pentecost accused the apostles of being drunk when they did not understand the dialects that were being spoken (v. 13). Similarly, in 1 Corinthians, Paul warned that unbelievers would accuse the Corinthians of being insane if the foreign languages they spoke were not interpreted (14:23). Although being drunk and being mad are not identical, they represent similar reactions from unbelievers who, when they did not understand the language being spoken, mocked those who spoke in tongues. Commenting on 1 Cor 14:23, R. C. H. Lenski notes the parallel with Acts 2:13 when he writes,

Suppose . . . that a number of pagans, who have in some way been attracted by the church, enter into this assembly, people who are unlearned in tongues and unbelievers. They sit down and listen to all of these church members as they are talking in tongues [foreign languages], an unintelligible torrent of sounds. What will, what must be the effect upon them? “Will they not say that you are mad?” Why, even in Jerusalem where tongues first appeared this was the effect upon the unbelievers: “But others mocking said: ‘They are filled with new wine,’” Acts 2:13.⁴⁵

Both passages describe a similar response from unbelievers to tongues they did not understand. Such supports the notion that the same phenomena are being described.

Fifth, both passages draw a close connection between tongues-speech and prophecy. On the day of Pentecost, the gift of tongues was closely connected with prophecy (Acts 2:15–18; cf. 19:6) and with other signs performed by the apostles (2:43). In 1 Corinthians, as in Acts, the gift of tongues was closely connected to prophecy (1 Cor 12:10; 13:1–2, 8; 14:1–40) and other extraordinary gifts (cf. 12:28–30). While continuationists acknowledge that the New Testament gift of prophecy is essentially the same in both Acts and 1 Corinthians, they simultaneously contend that the gift of tongues in each book is inherently different.

Several additional areas of similarity between the description of tongues in Acts and 1 Corinthians 12–14 might be noted. John MacArthur observes:

In both places, the Source of the gift is the same—the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4, 18; 10:44–46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:1, 7, 11, et. al.). In both places, the reception

⁴⁴ Norman Geisler, *Signs and Wonders* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1998), 167.

⁴⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 602.

of the gift is not limited to the apostles, but also involved laypeople in the church (cf. Acts 1:15; 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:30; 14:2, 5). In both places, the gift is described as a speaking gift (Acts 2:4, 9–11; 1 Cor. 12:30; 14:2, 5). . . . In both places, the gift served as a miraculous sign for unbelieving Jews (Acts 2:5, 12, 14, 19; 1 Cor. 14:21–22; cf. Isa. 28:11–12). . . . Given so many parallels, it is exegetically impossible and irresponsible to claim that the phenomenon described in 1 Corinthians was any different from that of Acts.⁴⁶

Finally, at the interpretive level, a basic principle of hermeneutics mandates that the clearer passage of Scripture help interpret the less-clear passage. In this case, Acts 2 is undoubtedly the clearer passage. It is therefore appropriate for students of Scripture to allow their understanding of Acts to inform their interpretation of 1 Corinthians.⁴⁷

The biblical (and historical) evidence leads cessationists to conclude that there is only one gift of tongues: namely, the Spirit-endowed, miraculous ability to speak authentic foreign languages that one had never learned.⁴⁸ Thomas Edgar reiterates that conclusion forcefully:

There is perfect consistency between the terminology and description of tongues wherever they are mentioned in the New Testament. They are always foreign languages; they are one and the same in nature. Items of the same name and description which have no statements of explanation but are assumed to be recognized by the readers are normally considered to be the same. In this case, those who see two different kinds of tongues in the New Testament have arrived at this position on the basis of their theological presuppositions rather than from biblical evidence. There is only one kind of tongues in the New Testament, the miraculous ability to speak foreign languages.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, 141. Cf. As Robert Gromacki explains, “The phenomenon of tongues in both [Acts and 1 Corinthians] was the same in character. . . . Both consisted of speaking in known languages and of magnifying God. Both were spoken by men under the control of the Holy Spirit and both had significance as signs” (Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972], 136).

⁴⁷ Cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, *Speaking in Tongues* (Berrien Springs, MI: ATS Publications, 1991), 55. Hasel writes: “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?”

⁴⁸ R. C. H. Lenski typifies the cessationist stance when he writes, “We must ask whether a difference exists between the ‘tongues’ spoken in Jerusalem and in Caesarea and those spoken in Corinth. The answer is that they are the same” (*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 504).

⁴⁹ Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 150.

Such a conclusion has significant ramifications for contemporary charismatics: by acknowledging that modern glossolalia does not consist of actual foreign languages, they are simultaneously admitting that their contemporary experience does not match the New Testament precedent.⁵⁰

Continuationist Argument 2: First Corinthians 12:10 Implies Different Categories of Tongues

A second continuationist argument is built on Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 12:10 that there are “various kinds of tongues” (γένη γλωσσῶν). Based on that phrase, continuationists assert there are at least two categories of tongues speech: human (earthly) languages and non-human (heavenly) languages.⁵¹ Storms articulates the argument like this, “Note also that Paul describes various kinds [or ‘species’] of tongues (*gene glosson*) in 1 Corinthians 12:10. . . . His words suggest that there are different categories of tongues-speech, perhaps human languages and heavenly languages.”⁵² Pentecostal authors Guy Duffield and Nathaniel Van Cleave echo that assertion:

The term “kinds” doubtless refers to the fact that there are “new tongues,” and “tongues of men and angels” (1 Cor. 13:1). Some tongues are human languages, as on the Day of Pentecost (to show that the Gospel was for all races and nations); some tongues are of heavenly origin. . . . If one employs tongues only in private devotion, the kind is not important; they will probably be new tongues or Spirit-given heavenly tongues.⁵³

The categorization of different kinds of tongues enables continuationists to classify the tongues of Acts 2 as different in nature from the tongues of 1 Corinthians 12–14.

But a closer examination of the phrase “various kinds of tongues” suggests that Paul is not distinguishing between *human* and *heavenly* languages at all. Rather, he is noting that there are different kinds (or families) of human languages (similar to the way Luke uses “other tongues” [ἑτέραις γλώσσαις] to describe various dialects in Acts 2:4). For example, a person with the gift of languages might speak in Persian

⁵⁰ Richard Gaffin points out the inconsistency of some continuationists who argue that the modern gifts are not *identical* to the New Testament gifts, but only *analogous* to them. As Gaffin explains, “What we have today [according to the continuationist view] are no more than analogues displaying certain similarities with their presumed New Testament counterparts” (Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “A Cessationist View,” 25–64 in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, ed. Wayne Grudem [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 60).

⁵¹ Some interpreters, such as R. Scott Nash suggest that “they are different *kinds* because they are given to different people. Each person who receives the gift of tongues receives his or her own special tongue. Each tongue reflects the unconscious verbalization of the unconscious of each speaker. Since no two persons are alike, no two tongues are the same; they are each a different kind (*gynos*)” (*First Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009], 360).

⁵² Storms, *A Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 180.

⁵³ Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1987), 337.

or Egyptian or Arabic (cf. vv. 9–11). At least two considerations support this conclusion.⁵⁴

First, the word γένος (or γένη in 1 Cor 12:10) means “kind” in the sense of “family,” “posterity,” “people” or “species” (cf. Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:26; Acts 7:19; 1 Pet 2:9).⁵⁵ It is the Greek word from which the English term *genus* is derived. As one author explains, “Linguists often refer to language ‘families’ or ‘groups,’ and that is precisely Paul’s point: there are various families of languages in the world, and this gift enabled some believers to speak in a variety of them.”⁵⁶

Second, Paul uses γένη two chapters later to refer to various kinds of earthly, human languages. In 1 Cor 14:10–11, Paul writes:

There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages [γένη φωνῶν] in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.

Here again, Paul uses the word γένη (“kinds”) just as he did in 1 Cor 12:10. This time, he pairs it with a synonym of γλωσσῶν (“tongues” or “languages”), using the word φωνῶν (“sounds” or “languages”).⁵⁷ The phrases γένη γλωσσῶν (12:10) and γένη φωνῶν (14:10) are grammatically identical, synonymous in meaning, and used in the same context. The majority of commentators, including continuationists, acknowledge that the phrase “kinds of languages” in 14:10 refers only to different families of human foreign languages.⁵⁸ The subsequent phrase “in the world” makes that conclusion inescapable. Yet, in 12:10, when Paul uses the same form of γένος to articulate “kinds of languages,” continuationists arbitrarily assume he meant something radically different.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that the word “various,” or the word “different,” though found in several modern versions, is not in the Greek. Literally, Paul says, “to another, kinds of tongues” (ἐτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν). Thus, no interpretative emphasis should be placed on the insertion of the English word “various” or “different.”

⁵⁵ Cf. Friedrich Büschel, “γένος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 684–85. Though he applies the term differently than what is argued for here, Anthony Thiselton notes of γένος: “Its semantic field relates more closely to *races, families, relatives, tribes, descendants, and species* than to *types, classes, and categories*” (Acts, 970).

⁵⁶ John MacArthur, *Strange Fire*, 141.

⁵⁷ Examples of φωνῶν referring to human language include 2 Peter 2:16 and in the LXX, Gen. 11:1, 7; Deut. 28:49.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 664–65; David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 637; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993], 486; Richard Oster, *1 Corinthians*, The College Press NIV Commentary [Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995], 319; *et. al.*

If Paul's statement in 14:10 is allowed to inform his intended meaning in 12:10, then "kinds of languages" simply refers to the various families of human languages.⁵⁹ When one considers the normal meaning of the Greek word γένος (as *family* or *race*), Paul's use of the word γένη ("kinds") in 1 Corinthians 14:10, and the parallels between 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Acts 2 (discussed above), the continuationist interpretation of 1 Cor 12:10 becomes less than convincing.

Continuationist Argument 3: The "Tongues of Angels" Refer to Heavenly Languages

A third continuationist argument arises from Paul's statement in 1 Cor 13:1, in which the apostle refers to speaking in the "tongues of men and of angels." While many continuationists such as Gordon Fee interpret this verse to mean that Paul and the Corinthians conversed in angelic (or heavenly) languages,⁶⁰ it seems better to understand the expression as a hyperbolic expression used by the apostle for the sake of rhetorical effect.⁶¹ John Calvin explained Paul's intent with these words, "In speaking of tongues of angels he is using hyperbole for something remarkable or rare."⁶² Lenski similarly notes:

Paul puts the thought into the superlative, beyond which it is impossible for a creature to go: Suppose that I as the Lord's apostle have the highest possible gift of tongues, those that men use, and those even that angels use—how you Corinthians would admire, even envy me and desire to have an equal gift!⁶³

Because Paul does not explain what he means by the tongues of angels, the immediate context is critical in discerning his intent. The verse literally reads: "If with the tongues of men I speak and of angels" (Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων). That construction is unique and occurs only here in the New Testament. Paul seems to be intentionally separating the tongues of

⁵⁹ As Robert Thomas points out: "A probable explanation [of 12:10] derives from a similar phrase in 1 Cor 14:10, where the 'kinds of languages' in essence has the sense of 'different languages' (*Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 37). Thomas notes that in 14:10–11, Paul is describing languages that were learned through natural means (a point suggested by his use of a synonym for *glossa*). Whereas in 12:10, the apostle is discussing languages that were endowed by God through supernatural means.

⁶⁰ Cf. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 630. Fee contends that "'tongues of angels' would reflect an understanding that the tongues-speaker was communicating the dialect(s) of heaven." Sam Storms articulates this argument when he writes, "While he [Paul] may have been using hyperbole, he just as likely may have been referring to heavenly or angelic dialects for which the Holy Spirit gives utterance" (*The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 181).

⁶¹ Edward A. Engelbrecht, "'To Speak in a Tongue,': The Old Testament and Early Rabbinic Background of a Pauline Expression." *Concordia Journal* 22/3 (July 1996), 297, n. 7. Engelbrecht writes, "[Paul] may just be offering up polar extremes to illustrate the absurdity of a Christian without love (as he does throughout the rest of the chapter in a most hyperbolic manner)."

⁶² John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 274.

⁶³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 545.

men from the tongues of angels, articulating the normal expression of the gift of languages before emphatically inserting a hypothetical hyperbole.

First Corinthians 13:1 contains the first of several hypothetical statements emphasizing the priority of love over even the most superlative exercise of spiritual gifts. The following chart illustrates the parallel between these statements:

Normal Experience	Superlative or Extreme Expression (That which transcended Paul's personal experience)	Love's Superiority
<p>Tongues: If I speak with the tongues of men</p> <p>Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ</p>	<p>and of angels</p> <p>καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων</p>	<p>but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or clanging symbol</p> <p>ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἢ ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον</p>
<p>Prophecy: If I have the gift of prophecy</p> <p>κἂν ἔχω προφητείαν</p>	<p>and know <u>all</u> mysteries and <u>all</u> knowledge; and if I have <u>all</u> faith so as to remove mountains</p> <p>καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν κἂν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάνειν</p>	<p>but do not have love, I am nothing</p> <p>ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθὲν εἰμι</p>
<p>Giving:⁶⁴ And if I give all my possessions [to feed the poor]</p> <p>κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντα μου</p>	<p>And if I surrender my body to be burned</p> <p>καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυθήσομαι</p>	<p>but do not have love, it profits me nothing</p> <p>ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι</p>

⁶⁴ That Paul gave away all of his possessions for the sake of gospel ministry is perhaps implied in several texts: Phil 3:8; cf. 1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 11:23–27; 12:15; Phil 4:12; 1 Thess 2:8. Edgar argues that Paul probably exercised such sacrificial giving, but even “if he did not, then both of these actions would

As the above chart illustrates:

Each of the parallel statements begins with “if” and ends with the expression “but have not love. . . .” Each is a hyperbole or exaggeration referring to a spiritual gift or quality and then to an extreme or theoretical example of its application. The statement, therefore, points out that not only the normal exercise of the gift apart from love is profitless to the exerciser, but even if it could be used to such an exaggerated or extreme (theoretical) use, it would still be profitless.⁶⁵

Paul’s statement regarding the “tongues . . . of angels” is parallel to his statements regarding knowing “all mysteries and all knowledge” (an obvious impossibility, since only God is omniscient), possessing “all faith” (another clear superlative), and surrendering his “body to be burned” (something that, although possible, Paul did not personally experience).⁶⁶ Based on these parallel expressions, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul intended the “tongues of angels” to be similarly understood (as a hyperbolic expression that transcended even his experience).

If one insists on taking the phrase “tongues . . . of angels” as a reference to the languages of heaven, it is important to note that whenever angels spoke in the Bible, they spoke in a real language that people could understand (cf. Gen 19; Exod 33; Joshua 5; Judges 13). Consequently, this phrase does not support the notion of non-cognitive speech. As one commentator explains:

The phrase “languages of men and angels” shows that foreign intelligible languages are meant. The “tongues” of 1 Corinthians are not gibberish. Gibberish can hardly be classified as one of the tongues or languages of men; nor could any suppose that the righteous angels speak unintelligibly and irrationally. If sinful man is a rational being, the righteous angels are more so. God is a God of truth, wisdom, and knowledge. His chosen messengers (angels) are not demented. Even if the phrase “of angels” is taken hyperbolically, as [Theodore] Beza did, the sober and literal truth about angels prevents the hyperbole from reducing their conversation to nonsense syllables.⁶⁷

Also, it is hard to imagine that the “tongues of angels” (in 13:1) can refer to heavenly languages if tongues will cease (v. 8) when believers get to heaven (v. 12).⁶⁸

be actions that Paul had not performed, thereby supporting our basic thesis” (*Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 160 n. 62).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶⁶ Robert Thomas argues for an alternate reading in 13:3, “if I surrender my body that I may boast.” According to Thomas, “The latter reading has better manuscript support; besides, burning as a method of persecuting was unknown in the first century [at the time this letter was written]. In this light, the statement goes beyond surrender of an entire fortune (v. 3a) and suggests selling one’s total person into slavery to have material substance to give to those in need. Historically, Paul never did this” (*Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 70). If this alternate reading is accepted, it still fits the rhetorical pattern Paul is using.

⁶⁷ Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians* [Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1991], 205.

⁶⁸ Cf. Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 138. D. A. Carson recognizes this problem, but ultimately avoids dealing with its implications: “I suppose a pedant might argue that they cannot be the tongues of angels, because in that case it would be silly for tongues to cease when perfection comes

As a historical footnote, the fourth-century church father, Severian of Gabala (d. c. 408) interpreted the “tongues of angels” as a reference to human languages. Commenting on 1 Cor 13:1, he wrote:

The tongues of angels refer to the different languages spoken on earth since the destruction of the tower of Babel. As Moses says in Deuteronomy [32:8]: “God has set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of angels.” It is therefore the task of each angel to defend the distinction of nations. The tongues of men on the other hand are languages which we learn; they do not come to us naturally.⁶⁹

In another place, he reiterated this belief, noting that “there is no language without meaning because all languages are human.”⁷⁰ According to Severian, if a person cannot exercise self-control over his tongues-speaking, or if he does not know what he is saying, his tongues-speech has more in common with paganism than with orthodoxy:

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.⁷¹

In defense of heavenly languages from 1 Cor 13:1, continuationists sometimes point to an ancient document known as the *Testament of Job* (likely written by a group of mystical Jews in Egypt shortly before the time of Christ) which mentions singing in the language of the angels.⁷² Several problems arise with this possibility, however. First, evidence suggests that “the originally Jewish work about Job was edited by the Montanists in the second century, adding the references to angelic languages.”⁷³ Second, by at least the second century A. D., “Hebrew was considered the holy or heavenly language. In the Babylonian Talmud Hebrew is specifically called the language of angels [see *Hagigah*, 16a]. While these sources are later than Paul, they may reflect early tradition.”⁷⁴ Such suggests the Jews of Paul’s day did not generally associate the language of angels with the *Testament of Job*. Finally, there is no reason from the text of 1 Corinthians 12–14 to assume that Paul was influenced by

since that is precisely when we are more likely to encounter angels! But I shall leave the question as to what language or languages we shall speak in the new heaven and on the new earth to those more gifted in speculation than I” (*Showing the Spirit*, 58–59).

⁶⁹ Severian of Gabala, *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church*. Cited from *1–2 Corinthians*, ACCS, 130–31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Cited from *1–2 Corinthians*, ACCS, 130–31 in reference to 1 Cor 14:10.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Cited from *1–2 Corinthians*, ACCS, 144 in reference to 1 Cor 14:28.

⁷² Cf. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 630; Sam Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 181.

⁷³ R. Spittler, *The Testament of Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1971), 58–59. Cited from Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 459, n. 7.

⁷⁴ Edward A. Engelbrecht, “To Speak in a Tongue,” 297, n. 7.

the *Testament of Job* or that his readers knew anything about it. Accordingly, it does not seem wise to build exegetical conclusions about Scripture on the basis of such a highly imaginative, mystical, non-Christian, apocryphal account. A safer course is to interpret the phrase in its immediate context, as an example of hyperbole used for rhetorical effect to accentuate the superiority of love, rather than insisting that Paul was employing the phrase in the same way as a group of heterodox Jewish mystics in Egypt.⁷⁵

**Continuationist Argument 4:
Because Tongues Are Only Understandable to God
They Are Not Human Languages**

In 1 Cor 14:2, Paul writes, “For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.” Continuationists look to that verse to find additional support for their position that tongues need not consist of human languages. Storms reflects that perspective with these words:

Paul asserted that whoever speaks in a tongue “does not speak to men but to God” (1 Cor. 14:2). But if tongues are always human languages, Paul is mistaken for “speaking to men” is precisely what human language does! If tongues-speech is always a human language, how could Paul say that “no one understands” (1 Cor. 14:2)?⁷⁶

In response to Storms’s assertion, and in order to understand Paul’s point in verse 2, at least four questions need to be addressed, albeit briefly. First, what did Paul mean when he stated that he who speaks in an uninterpreted tongue “does not speak to men but to God” (οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ Θεῷ)? The apostle clarifies his statement in the very next phrase, “for no one understands.” The conjunction γὰρ (“for”) connects the two phrases together, indicating that the first phrase is explained by the second. Paul is saying that if a person were to stand up in the congregation and speak in a language no one in the audience knew, only God would understand what was being said.⁷⁷

That leads to a second question. To whom was Paul referring when he said “for no one understands” (οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει)? According to the common continuationist

⁷⁵ Derek Thomas, *Acts*, 30, n. 4. Thomas writes, “Some have suggested from Paul’s use of the expression ‘tongues of angels’ that the Corinthian tongues might have been a form of ecstatic (angelic) language designed to aid in prayer and devotion. Since Paul does not attempt to explain tongues as anything different from what occurred at Pentecost, it is more likely that tongues were also foreign languages, which in this instance necessitated interpreters, since all the Corinthians were probably Greek-speaking.”

⁷⁶ Sam Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 180. Cf. Sam Storms, “A Third Wave View” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 220–21.

⁷⁷ As Calvin aptly quipped, “[Paul’s] first point is that a person ‘speaking in a tongue is speaking not to men but to God.’ In other words (as the proverb goes), ‘he preaches to himself and the walls’” (John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 286). Cf. Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 174–75.

interpretation of this verse, the “no one” is universal and absolute. (After all, a heavenly language might not be understandable to any human being on earth.) But that assertion ignores the context, in which Paul explicitly limits his focus to the assembling together of the local church (vv. 5, 12, 19, 23, 26, 28, 33–35).⁷⁸ Thus, the “no one” is not universal in scope, but applies specifically to the members of the congregation who heard the message in tongues being spoken.⁷⁹

By way of illustration, consider the following hypothetical example. If someone stood up in a typical American church service and said, “Jeeshu aapna ke bhlo bashen,” it is likely that no one present would understand him, except for God who knows all languages. In order for the congregation to be edified, the phrase would require an interpreter to translate it. In this case, the phrase (transliterated from Bengali) means, “Jesus loves you.” Only after the foreign language has been translated is it edifying to those who hear it. Left untranslated, no one understands it.⁸⁰

Third, what are the “mysteries” (μυστήρια) denoted in 14:2? Some continuationists suggest that by using this term, “Paul was referring to anything that lies outside the understanding of both the speaker and the hearer.”⁸¹ But that interpretation leaves the content of the mysteries ambiguous and dangerously open-ended. A better explanation comes from Paul’s use of the word μυστήριον in other places, including earlier in this section (1 Cor 13:2; cf. Rom 11:25; 16:26; 1 Cor 2:7; 15:51; Eph 3:3–4; 5:32; Col 1:26). As Robert Thomas explains,

Everywhere in Paul’s writings ‘mysteries’ were truths about God and His program that for a time remained hidden, but were at that moment revealed through the inspired writer. . . . The divine mysteries making up the content of tongues messages were the same as divine revelations and prophecies referred to in 14:6, the only difference being that in the present case successful communication did not transpire because of a language barrier.⁸²

When Paul spoke of “mysteries” he was not referring to mystical or ecstatic experiences, but to revelatory content. Unless the foreign language was translated, the truth it contained would remain obscured, because the congregation would not understand what was being said.

⁷⁸ Cf. Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 140. Edgar writes, “The entire context refers to a church situation where others are present, where an interpreter may or may not be in the group, where others may sing or speak (or pray or say “amen”), where more than one may speak (so that rules must be laid down for speaking), and where the unbeliever and “unlearned” may visit.”

⁷⁹ Cf. Robert Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 87. Thomas explains, “The ‘no one’ of verse 2 is, of course, limited by the surrounding discussion of chapters 11–14. It means that ‘no one’ in the local gathering was of the particular linguistic background represented by the tongues message.” Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 577; Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 478.

⁸⁰ During the apostolic age, the gift of tongues gave the speaker the supernatural and instant ability to speak fluently in foreign languages that he had never learned. That is what made it miraculous. In the modern age, the ability to speak other languages requires years of study and hard work.

⁸¹ Sam Storms, *The Beginner’s Guide to Spiritual Gifts*, 158. Cf. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 656.

⁸² Robert Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 87–88.

A final question is this: Did Paul look positively on tongues that were not interpreted and thereby left the congregation confused and unedified? Within the context of chapters 12–14, the answer is clearly no. That is why he elevated the value of prophecy (in a language everyone could immediately understand) over speaking in foreign tongues (14:1, 3, 5–6, 18–19, 23–24). Furthermore, his insistence that tongues ought to be interpreted (14:5, 13, 27–28), and his emphasis on using the gifts to edify others within the church (12:7, 27–30; 13:1–7; 14:5, 12, 26), demonstrate that the apostle viewed speaking in uninterpreted tongues negatively. It was an error he sought to correct, not a practice he intended to condone.⁸³

Rather than supporting unintelligible speech as a valid expression of tongues-speech, 1 Cor 14:2 actually does the opposite. Those who utter things no one can understand fail to edify the church, thereby ignoring a primary purpose for the gifts (12:7).

Conclusion

It has not been the intention of this article to address every continuationist argument that arises from the text of 1 Corinthians 12–14. However, in response to the four arguments discussed above, linguistic and contextual considerations from the text of 1 Corinthians, as well as a comparison with pertinent passages in Acts, demonstrate that a strong case for the cessationist understanding of tongues (as authentic foreign languages) can be made. To cite Thomas Edgar once more:

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.⁸⁴

Based on the biblical and historical evidence, cessationists remain convinced that the gift of tongues consisted of the miraculous ability to speak fluently in previously unlearned, foreign human languages. When that exegetically-based definition is compared to modern charismatic and continuationist practices, it becomes evident

⁸³ For an extended explanation as to why Paul was not promoting the use of tongues-speaking for self-edification, see Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 169–74. As Robert Thomas asserts, “Paul was emphatic in not advocating tongues or any other gift for the purpose of private use or self-edification. The edification for which the loving member of Christ’s body seeks is that of the other members (cf. 14:12)” (*Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, 89).

⁸⁴ Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit*, 147.

the two are not the same.⁸⁵ Though continuationists apply New Testament terminology to their contemporary version of glossolalia, the latter cannot compare to the phenomenon described on the pages of Scripture.

⁸⁵ Noting the difference between the biblical gift and the contemporary practice, Norman Geisler concludes: "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" (*Signs and Wonders*, 167).

STRANGE FIRE REDUX

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* * * * *

Southern California has always been a hub of Pentecostal influence. Although the first experiments with modern tongues-speaking took place in rural Kansas in 1901, Pentecostalism became an actual *movement* with the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, in a dilapidated section of downtown Los Angeles.

The first spark was ignited in a private home some two miles northwest of the Azusa Street location. An African American holiness preacher named William J. Seymour was preaching to a small group that had broken away from a nearby church after the elders of that church rejected Seymour's teaching. Indeed, Seymour's knowledge of Scripture and his grasp of essential gospel truth seemed marginal at best. Even the Holiness Church Association with which he was affiliated (no paragon of evangelical orthodoxy itself) considered his teaching dangerously unbiblical. But Seymour was obsessed with the Pentecostal gifts, and one morning, after praying all night long, he began speaking in tongues.

Pandemonium ensued. In the words of one observer, "They shouted three days and three nights. It was Easter season. The people came from everywhere. By the next morning there was no way of getting near the house."¹

The revival meetings soon moved to Azusa Street, where they continued for nine years. People from all over North America and various parts of the world came to investigate the phenomenon. Many became convinced that the glossolalia of Azusa Street signified a genuine revival of the New Testament gift of tongues. Seeds of Pentecostal doctrine thus spread quickly from Southern California all across the nation and beyond.

Early Pentecostalism remained a fringe group, akin to the holiness movement and cousin to most of the perfectionist sects. Pentecostals stood apart from any major stream of historic evangelicalism. The first Pentecostal luminary to gain nationwide

¹ Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 49.

recognition was Aimee Semple McPherson, a Canadian-born faith healer and traveling evangelist.

In the early 1920s, Sister Aimee settled in Southern California. She saw the potential of radio for propagating Pentecostal teaching. She also understood the strategic value of Los Angeles as a media center. In 1923, she built (and filled) the 5,300-seat Angelus Temple in the Echo Park district of Los Angeles. A year later, she was granted a broadcasting license by the FCC. She ran a 500-watt powerhouse radio station (KFSG), broadcasting through two tall radio towers on the Angelus Temple roof. She thus became the first female broadcast mogul, the first media-driven Pentecostal celebrity, and the first woman to pastor a megachurch. Sister Aimee's popularity spawned a major Pentecostal denomination, The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. Today the denomination boasts 60,000 congregations worldwide. The group's headquarters are still located in Los Angeles.

Chuck Smith was a Foursquare Pastor in Santa Ana before moving to Costa Mesa, where in 1968 he founded the Calvary Chapel movement. That fellowship now comprises 1,600 congregations worldwide, with hundreds of Calvary Chapels scattered throughout Southern California, and new ones being planted almost weekly.

The Association of Vineyard Churches spun off from Calvary Chapel in Yorba Linda in 1977. Although the denominational office has since moved to Texas, the flagship congregation is still the Vineyard Church of Anaheim. There are reportedly more than 1,500 Vineyard churches worldwide.

All those denominations have strong Pentecostal roots. By 1960, Pentecostal teaching and Pentecostal practices had begun to move out of Pentecostal denominations and infiltrate mainline and independent churches. With the broadening of boundaries the word *Pentecostal* gave way to the expression *charismatic*. The former name was laden with parochial connotations; the latter was a term that intentionally crossed denominational and ecumenical boundaries.

Like Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement traces its roots to an unexpected event during Easter season in an unlikely location in Southern California. St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys is just 16 miles as the crow flies from Azusa Street. In 1960 the church was a typical left-leaning Episcopalian parish, not evangelical in any historic sense. Both doctrinally and liturgically, it was at the opposite end of the spectrum from all the Pentecostal churches in Southern California.

But on April 3 (Easter Sunday) in 1960, during the first of three morning services at St. Marks, Rector Dennis Bennett announced to his congregation that he had been baptized with the Holy Spirit and received the gift of tongues. The backlash among congregants and other staff members at St. Mark's was immediate and profound. One of Bennett's assistant priests peeled off his vestments and stormed out of the church in protest. Members of the vestry quickly met and demanded Bennett's resignation that very morning. The controversy escalated as the morning progressed, and during the third service, Bennett tendered his resignation. His presiding bishop later reassigned him to a church in Seattle.

But the excitement in Van Nuys took root and spread. Most charismatic historians see that tumultuous Sunday morning as the start of the modern charismatic movement. It was now evident that Pentecostalism was moving beyond the Pente-

costal denominations and beginning to infiltrate mainline denominations and independent churches. To this day the charismatic movement remains a dominant influence—perhaps the single most powerful culture-shaping element—in Southern California’s evangelical community.

Non-charismatic churches on the West Coast have been surrounded and under siege by the movement for years. That isn’t necessarily true of all communities in the US. Older pastors in the Presbyterian Church of America or the Southern Baptist Association, for example, haven’t necessarily been forced to deal with aggressive charismatic influences throughout their whole ministries. They may wholeheartedly share our commitment to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, our belief that the canon of Scripture is closed, and our unshakable conviction that prophesying falsely in the Lord’s name is evil. But in the regions where they minister, the challenge to those principles typically comes from the world, not from within the church. Perhaps it’s hard for someone in a context like that to appreciate the difficulty of keeping one’s sheep faithful to biblical principles while facing a relentless onslaught of charismatic pressure, propaganda, proselytizing, and hype. I suspect that explains why there was a degree of diffidence from certain corners with respect to the need for a conference the size and scale of *Strange Fire*.

Prior to the 1960s, biblically-based critical analyses of Pentecostal teaching were fairly commonplace and easy to come by. But over the past four or five decades, non-charismatic evangelicals have gradually adopted a laissez-faire stance with regard to charismatic claims. It has been twenty years or so since a significant critique of the movement was published—even though some of the most visible and influential charismatic figureheads (including Joel Osteen, Bill Johnson, T. D. Jakes and an army of the best-known televangelists) are rapidly drifting from anything resembling basic Christian orthodoxy—and they are taking millions of people with them. Charismatic falsehoods (ranging from the rank heresy of the prosperity gospel to patently false miracle claims) have all but silenced the gospel on the movement’s leading edge. The full catalogue of charismatic errors is colossal. The worst false teachers in the movement have become its biggest celebrities. Since the heretical districts are where the most numerical expansion occurs, the proliferation of heresy from within has gone virtually unchecked for decades. It is now a massive global problem.

Among more conservative charismatic leaders (and many non-charismatic evangelicals) embarrassed silence has become the standard response to most of the movement’s patently false and spiritually deadly teachings. The consensus seems to be that the problem must be swept under the rug in the name of brotherhood and harmony. As critics have been silenced (or silenced themselves) the charismatic movement has been gaining a frightening amount of momentum. (The *Strange Fire* Conference was an attempt to sound a clear warning in hopes of slowing the movement enough to give as many passengers as possible an opportunity to jump off.)

The charismatic movement makes its appeal to people at the visceral and emotional level. The promise of the supernatural is a lure that will always draw crowds of people, whether or not they are authentic believers. People crave miracles and paranormal wonders, but that craving is no true sign of faith. (This is one of the central lessons of John 6.) Eastern religions are rife with the very same kinds of phenomena that are touted as gifts of the Holy Spirit in the charismatic movement.

My desire in writing *Strange Fire* and hosting the conference was to make those points, to expose the vast amount of chicanery that has been given a pass by gullible charismatics, and to encourage people to evaluate these issues critically by measuring charismatic claims against Scripture—to be like the Bereans. In that respect, we have certainly seen a significant measure of success. The statement we made was long overdue. Some people were offended, of course, not only because the issue itself is divisive, but also because the charismatic movement has enjoyed such a long moratorium without any significant critique. These days, any word of caution would come as a shock. And let's face it: the truth is usually divisive. Nevertheless, those charged with guarding the flock cannot afford to avoid issues just because they are controversial. The truth must be exalted and error must be exposed. We must teach what is positive and warn our people against that which is destructive (Col 1:28).

For every person who was offended, many other people were greatly helped. In the months since the conference, we have heard from countless pastors (and evangelical lay leaders) who say *Strange Fire* was a great help and encouragement. Our prayer is that they will be emboldened not only to hold the line but also to speak and teach with a whole heart and deep conviction on this difficult issue. If not, charismatic and continuationist doctrines will continue to spread without any significant challenge, and that would be a far greater travesty than the temporary chagrin of charismatics whose feelings may have been hurt because someone who disagrees with them spoke out.

It should also be noted that the direct response we have received by way of mail has been mostly positive. That surely is to some degree a reflection of the constituency we generally reach. But it is a fact that virtually all the negative response we received from readers and listeners was simply heat without light. Our critics for the most part did not even attempt to give answers grounded in solid biblical exegesis. They did not deal with the major issues we raised. The most common objection was that the conference attacked the whole charismatic movement with too broad a brush.

One of the most visible and vocal critics who first made that charge was Dr. Michael Brown. But just eleven weeks after the *Strange Fire* Conference, Dr. Brown announced that he had made a series of four television broadcasts with Benny Hinn. Over the years, Hinn has been the subject of countless exposés by investigative reporters regarding his fakery and false prophecies. In 2010, he also made headlines with a moral scandal involving fellow televangelist Paula White. (Both of them were in Rome at the time, reportedly to meet with Vatican officials.) Despite many factors that clearly mark Hinn as a charlatan and false teacher to be avoided (see 2 John 7–11), Brown greeted Hinn on the air with an enthusiastic high five, establishing a tone of mutual affirmation and agreement that was carefully maintained throughout all four broadcasts. Pressed by critics and supporters alike to explain his involvement with Benny Hinn, Brown later insisted that he knew of no reason to consider Hinn a false teacher or charlatan.

Brown has likewise either commended or defended the ministries of Cindy Jacobs, Mike Bickle, Reinhard Bonnke, Kenneth Hagin, and other false prophets and prosperity preachers. He cites the explosion of ministries such as those worldwide as “evidence of the work of the Spirit.” Confronted with specific abuses and false teachings, Dr. Brown downplays the prevalence of problems in the charismatic movement.

It's simply inconsistent to tolerate (or worse, defend) false prophets and gospel-corrupters while boasting that the ultra-broad boundaries of charismatic fellowship are a good thing—but then complain that critics are painting the movement with too wide a roller.

The main problem with the broad-brush complaint is whatever variegations appear on the charismatic spectrum are differences in degree, and not type. All essentially affirm the same theology, but they apply it with differing levels of intensity. There are no clear and obvious dividing lines. Even the most conservative charismatics do not seem to want to draw any lines of division. They can't, for fear that they might unintentionally subvert some "new move of the Holy Spirit."

Cessationism through Church History

Looking back over the history of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, it is significant to note that Pentecostalism's distinctive teachings have always been outside the historic mainstream of Protestant and Reformed conviction. All the Reformers and their heirs were cessationists. They believed and taught emphatically that God is intimately involved and providentially in control of every detail of everything that happens in the universe. They also held the firm conviction that apostolic sign-gifts ceased when the apostolic era passed. They saw no conflict between those two articles of faith. Nor did any cessationist imagine a conflict there until three pernicious trends began to turn the tide of twentieth-century evangelicalism.

One was the rise of a utilitarian approach to church growth, paired with the false notion that numerical increase is the best gauge of God's blessing. Evangelicals intentionally set doctrine aside in favor of pragmatic and populist ideals. Theology gave way to entertainment. Bible teaching was deemed insufficiently "seeker-sensitive," and evangelicalism gradually moved further and further away from historic evangelical doctrine. Within a generation, evangelical churches were filled with people who were largely untaught, biblically illiterate, and unprepared to resist false teaching.

A second factor was the increasing aggressiveness with which charismatic phenomena are promoted in evangelical circles. Dennis Bennett's Easter Sunday bombshell seemed incredibly bold at the time. Such an announcement would pass without much notice in the typical evangelical church today. Nowadays, what is unusual (to the point of seeming freakish) is anyone who openly challenges charismatic claims. The public backlash against the *Strange Fire* Conference demonstrated that.

A third trend (the most troubling of all) is the escalating outlandishness of charismatic exhibitionism. Around the late 1980s speaking in tongues was supplanted as the chief sign-gift. In some circles, tongues were no longer even deemed a necessary sign of Holy Spirit baptism. Instead, it seemed the whole charismatic world was suddenly touting private prophecies and being "slain in the Spirit." That shift was soon followed by the so-called Toronto Blessing, which in turn gave way to unbridled orgies of ersatz drunkenness under the direction of Rodney Howard-Browne as the self-styled "Holy Ghost Bartender." Charismatics today seem enthralled with activities like "grave sucking" (visiting the graves of early charismatic heroes in order to soak up an anointing); "taking the Ghost" (inhaling an imaginary reefer and pretending to be high on the Holy Spirit); and ridiculous experiments with walking on water, raising the dead, or even old-school occult phenomena. Meanwhile, prophecies, false

claims, and novel doctrines are steadily becoming more and more grotesque—but they are rarely challenged.

None of this comes out of our Protestant and Reformed heritage. Indeed, extrabiblical prophecies, fanciful claims about miracles, and other supernatural phenomena were features of medieval Roman Catholic superstition that the Reformers emphatically rejected. The only other doctrinaire continuationists in church history belonged to fringe groups, such as the Montanists in the second century and the Zwickau prophets (and other radicals) in the early sixteenth century. One of the main reasons the magisterial Reformers held Anabaptist groups in high suspicion was the prevalence of new revelations and other charismatic-style beliefs among the Radical Reformers. Moreover, those radical groups that placed the most emphasis on extrabiblical revelation were basically fruitless and short-lived. There is no clear line of continuity between the miraculous phenomena touted by the early Radical Reformers and the charismatic practices of the twentieth century.

In other words, continuationism is a contemporary (twentieth-century) phenomenon, and it embraces a point of view that until sometime after 1960 was universally rejected by the historic Protestant and evangelical mainstream.

Cessationism from Scripture

There is, however, a much stronger reason to reject charismatic teaching. In order to affirm the continuation of sign gifts, it is necessary to invent novel, fanciful, or whimsical interpretations of certain biblical texts. Passages that have never been in question must now be reinterpreted. For example, until the charismatic movement found it necessary to explain why modern glossolalia bears no relationship to any known language, no one ever suggested that the language spoken by angels might lack structure or sense. No credible commentator ever thought the “groanings which cannot be uttered” spoken of in Rom 8:26 *can* actually be uttered in repetitive non-sense syllables. No student of Scripture would ever have concluded that the known, translatable languages manifested at Pentecost would ultimately be superseded with unintelligible gibberish.

The tongues that were spoken on the Day of Pentecost, as well as the gift of tongues in the early church had a specific purpose. The phenomenon was a fulfillment of Isa 28:11–12. That prophecy is closely paraphrased by Paul in 1 Cor 14:21: “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people.” In other words, tongues were given to show Israel that God was turning his attention to the Gentiles. People from all nations would now be embraced under a New Covenant. The languages spoken at Pentecost are listed in Acts 2:9–11. Without exception, they were Gentile languages. Jews from all over the world were present in the city of Jerusalem. They had never heard God being praised in a Gentile language. The language of worship was Hebrew, exclusively. Even in the Dispersion, praise to YHWH was always offered in the sacred language. So when the apostles began speaking Gentile languages, the people of Jerusalem were hearing something completely new and shocking. The meaning was unmistakable: this was a declaration that God was turning from an apostate, Christ-rejecting nation to open the way of salvation for the

wider world. Speaking in tongues signified that “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24) had begun.

What do the tongues of today signify? To what does this phenomenon point? There is no answer to that question. Modern tongues have no meaning, no significance. They are in every sense incomprehensible.

In short, the continuationist position requires a complete redefinition of the apostolic gifts. Modern charismatics depart from a biblical definition of the gifts in order to accommodate a far-fetched explanation for what we see happening today.

Continuationist claims are self-refuting for anyone who takes Scripture at face value. Consider, for example, the multitude of failed prophecies and words of knowledge spun out constantly by modern charismatics. Deuteronomy 18:22 and Jeremiah 29:8–9 clearly teach that if someone speaks in the Lord’s name and his prophecy does not come to pass, that person is not to be regarded as a true prophet. Modern charismatics who are honest will freely admit that all their prophets are more often wrong than right. In order to get around the Bible’s clear, emphatic instructions regarding false prophets, they have concocted a dogma, *nowhere taught in the Bible*, that the New Testament gift of prophecy is supposed to be fallible. New Testament prophecy is a lesser form of revelation than Old Testament prophecy, they say. The standard has been lowered (or more precisely, eliminated) so even a long string of false prophecies would not necessarily make someone a false prophet.

The silliness of that idea and the dangers it invites ought to be obvious to anyone with common sense. What is the point of fallible prophecy? Is God mumbling? Why would God, who gave us a more sure word of prophecy, confuse His people by appending His revelation with something so indefinite? But modern charismatics build their whole case for modern prophecy on that foundation of sand. They simply have not met the burden of biblical proof.

The truth is that those who call themselves continuationists don’t really believe in the continuation of the gifts. The gifts they embrace are different, lesser-quality phenomena than the apostolic outpouring of miracles. Honest charismatics must face and own up to that fact.

The *charismata* were, after all, apostolic gifts. Paul expressly classifies signs, wonders, and mighty works as “the signs of a true apostle” (2 Cor 12:12). Every miracle, healing, and supernatural phenomenon ever manifested in the early church was done by someone closely related to an apostle. The apostles and prophets themselves served a foundational purpose (see Eph 2:20). In other words, those roles pertained to the founding of the church, and once the church was fully established, the apostolic era began to draw to a close. Miracles play a diminishing role even in the biblical record of the early church. The church grew and spread while the New Testament was being written and circulated. Gradually and by God’s own design, biblical authority eclipsed apostolic authority, ultimately eliminating any need for either the apostolic office or further revelation. By the end of the first century, the apostles and prophets had fulfilled their foundational purpose and passed from the scene. Likewise the gifts and phenomena that served as “signs of a true apostle” faded from the record. Those are simple facts of history, starting with the biblical record of the early church.

So the scriptural basis for the cessation of the gifts as they were seen in the New Testament is robust. Without completely ignoring historic theology, reinterpreting

passages of Scripture, and redefining the Pentecostal gift of tongues, there is no way to maintain a continuationist position.

The Absence of Miracles

One cannot honestly evaluate the modern charismatic movement without noticing the absence of any true miracles today. God *can* heal. He *does* answer our prayers. He is of course free to do whatever He chooses. But it is a rather obvious fact (true by definition) that miracles are not the normal means by which He works. Paraplegics do not get out of wheelchairs and walk. Dead people are not being raised to life again at funerals. People in the final stages of terminal cancer don't experience instant healing. Miracles are simply not normative, even in the most devoted charismatic communities. No one today, including the most revered charismatic celebrities, has the power to summon miracles by a simple command the way the apostles did in Acts 3:6 or 9:34.

A Departure from the Inerrant Word

A final point to consider, specifically with reference to modern prophecy, is that by eliminating the simple biblical standard by which false prophets may be identified, modern charismatics have opened the door for chaos and doctrinal confusion in the church. Fake healings and false tongues are bad enough, but when someone claims to have private revelation from God, the sufficiency and singularity of Scripture is instantly clouded, and the authority of Scripture is undermined. It is a terribly dangerous breach of a fundamental principle of evangelical Protestant and biblical conviction.

The Bible is authoritative revelation. It sets forth truth in words and propositions. The authors of Scripture wrote down those words exactly as God ordained—"not . . . words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:13). That's why a prophet was judged by the accuracy of what he said. If he said, "Thus said the Lord," and the Lord didn't really say that, he was to be stoned.

When someone claims to have received an "impression" from God—a non-verbal revelation—the door is opened wide for all kinds of confusion. Personal impressions are inherently enigmatic, vague, and frankly dubious. Non-verbal sensations cannot articulate truth. But charismatics are taught to accept their impressions and hope that somehow this legitimate revelation of God doesn't get messed up when we try to verbalize it. Frequently, when they verbalize or act on what they believe God has told them, it is absurd—sometimes even reckless in the extreme. But a strong impression is never to be doubted on those grounds, they insist, because God moves in mysterious ways. That is why charismatics are so prone to embrace rather than question all kinds of strange and innately irrational phenomena like drunken behavior and uncontrollable laughter.

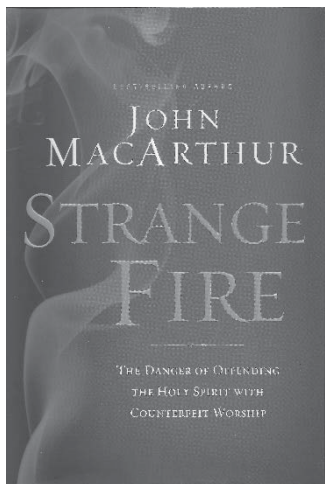
When you believe God is trying to communicate through some non-verbal, intellectually vacant means, all meaning inevitably gets lost in translation. This is not how God reveals truth. Seeking messages from God in one's own feelings and imagination is a practice rooted in pagan superstition, and it wreaks havoc in the lives of

anyone who thinks that impression in his mind or feeling in his gut is a message from God. Scripture says, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool” (Prov 28:26).

True believers in Jesus Christ must return to the basic truths of the sufficiency, authority, verbal inspiration, and inerrancy of God’s Word. Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is true. That is the principle of biblical inerrancy. The charismatic notion of “fallible prophecy” directly undermines it. The more casual the church becomes in these categories, the more her people will falter, and the weaker her testimony will be. The evidence of this is already all too obvious across the entire evangelical movement.

The Shepherds’ Conference next March will be a major summit on the topic of inerrancy. Ten keynote speakers have been invited to address the issue. Our commitment to biblical inerrancy is the core principle that defines and delimits everything else we confess and teach at The Master’s Seminary. This is what we want to be known for. We affirm without reservation the authority, sufficiency, and reliability of Scripture, and we believe the Bible supersedes and stands in judgment over all other truth claims, all other worldviews, and all beliefs that are rooted only in general revelation or natural theology. For the honor of the Lord and the safety of His people, we must hold settled, biblically sound views on these issues, and we must be able to proclaim the truth with clarity and genuine conviction. That means no matter how popular and widespread an erroneous doctrine may be, we nevertheless *must* point it out and offer biblical correction.

Listen to some of the pundits and trend-setters among the evangelical elite, and you might think the only options left for conservative evangelicals are to fall in line with the prevailing evangelical drift or else become a pariah because you represent a threat to peace and unity. Scripture points us in a totally different direction: “Be steadfast, immovable” (1 Cor 15:58)—“ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). “Retain the standard of sound words [and] guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim 1:13–14). “Preach the word . . . in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction”—even when people just want to have their ears tickled (2 Tim 4:2–3). And “be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Pet 3:17–18).



Strange Fire

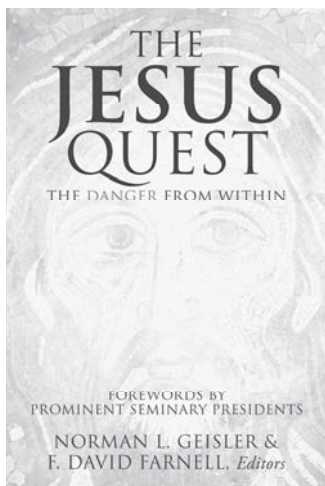
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**THE WRITINGS OF DR. RICHARD L. MAYHUE:
1974 TO PRESENT**

Dennis M. Swanson,
Vice President for Library, Accreditation, and Operations
The Master's Seminary

In a personal conversation with Dr. Mayhue some years ago, he remarked to me that becoming a briefer (which involved writing complex summaries) for Admiral Elmo Zumwalt was more stressful for him than his previous assignment commanding a combat vessel in the Vietnam War. Beginning with a Master of Divinity Thesis at Grace Theological Seminary in 1974, a man who by his own admission never thought he would ever be a writer of any type, has become one of the important writers and editors in the evangelical world.

Certainly, the most significant project of his career to date has been with Dr. John MacArthur on the *MacArthur Study Bible*. The winner of two Gold Medallion awards from the Evangelical Publishers Association with over 1 million copies in print, the completion of the *MacArthur Study Bible*, in three years, according to Dr. MacArthur, “would not have been possible without the efficient precision of Dick’s considerable skills.”¹

This bibliography is divided into genre categories that reflect the array of writing and editorial projects Dr. Mayhue has been involved with during his career with The Master’s Seminary and throughout his ministry.

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Christian Doctrine (with John MacArthur). Crossway, 2016.

Commentary on Ephesians. Mentor/Christian Focus, TBD.

REVIEWS

Book Notice

F. David Farnell and Norman L. Geisler (eds.). *The Jesus Quest: The Danger from Within*. Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2014. 722 pp. (paper) \$32.99.

Reviewed by Richard L. Mayhue, Research Professor of Theology.

This work carefully examines the historical and philosophical strengths and/or weaknesses of current evangelical approaches espousing some form(s) of post-modernistic historiography and its resultant search for the “historical Jesus.” It demonstrates the marked undermining impact these efforts have had on understanding the biblical text, especially the Gospels, as well as inerrancy issues. It compares the Jesus Seminar’s approach with current evangelical practices of searching in terms of their evidential apologetic impact on the trustworthiness of the Gospels. A number of well-known, contemporary evangelical scholars are involved in the so-called “Third Quest” for the historical Jesus. This book raises serious questions about such an ill-advised endeavor.

Three major American seminary presidents have endorsed this monumental volume: Dr. John MacArthur (*The Master’s Seminary*), Dr. R. Albert Mohler (*The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*), and Dr. L. Paige Patterson (*Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*). The contents (seventeen chapters, six appendices, and two indices) have been supplied by seven men. The most notable contributors (Geisler and Farnell) provided over ten chapters (about 60 percent of the contents).

The Prologue (Geisler) asserts that the recently published book, *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (Zondervan, 2013), is really only about two views—one contributor affirming the undeniable, unlimited inerrancy of Scripture contrasted with four contributors actually espousing some form of limited inerrancy. The Epilogue (Geisler and Farnell) expresses a strong affirmation of the inerrancy stance of ICBI (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy–1978 and 1982).

In between the beginning and the end, important issues addressed include:

1. The New Perspective on Paul (Farnell)
2. The Downgrade Controversy in Spurgeon's Era (Swanson)
3. The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy (Nix)
4. First, Second, and Third Quests for the Historical Jesus (Farnell)
5. The Historical Reliability of the Gospels (R. Howe)
6. The Problem of Philosophical Thought in Biblical Studies (Geisler)
7. Issues in Hermeneutics (T. Howe)

The Jesus Quest is formidable, well researched, compelling, and thoroughly biblical. It condemns, it commends, and it challenges. Farnell and Geisler watch and warn (like Ezekiel and Paul of old) that the enemies of the Bible lurk both without and within the camp of those who are committed to a high view of God and Scripture and therefore unapologetically, unreservedly, without doubt, without hesitation, and with undaunted conviction believe and teach that God's Word remains unblemished, impeccable, and inerrant just as the Scripture teaches about the Divine Author and itself.

This timely call-to-arms should strengthen and stiffen the doctrinal backbone of true believers who are committed to the Lordship of Christ and the Word of God without compromise, whether of ancient and/or contemporary origin.

Book Reviews

J. Allen, *Daniel Reconsidered: The Key to the Divine Timetable*. Cookstown, Ireland: Scripture Teaching Library, 2013. 689 pp. (cloth) \$19.99.

Reviewed by J. E. Rosscup, Adjunct Professor of Bible Exposition.

This massive work is on many points diligently researched, knowledgeable, detailed, and energetically competent verse by verse. It staunchly defends the historical reliability of the book as from the sixth century B. C., and a premillennial stance on prophecies, against some amillennial reasoning. In interactions with Revelation, it even integrates a pretribulational rapture of the church, though much is assumed more than supported by firm, compelling argument. Before this work, Allen published commentaries on 1 Timothy and Revelation in the John Ritchie "What the Bible Teaches" series. He brings more than sixty years in biblical studies to the effort.

Allen sees Daniel as eighteen at the outset, not around fourteen to seventeen as some writers suppose, and argues briefly against critical reasoning that assails the book's accuracy. In Daniel 2, 9–12 he is for the most part in step with many premillennialists (MacArthur, Miller, Pentecost, Walvoord, Whitcomb, Wood, etc.). But in Daniel 7 he differs from the more normative premillennial view when he does not see the same four empires as Daniel 2, under different symbols, spread through centuries. Rather he sees all four in chapter seven in the Tribulation period. His reasons for such a sharp difference really do appear to this reviewer as misunderstanding adequate reasons why Daniel is speaking of the *same* four empires (as chap. 2), but

with supplementary details. Probably many will be unconvinced not only by his totally *future* view, but even the elaborate speculations he combines with this. He identifies chapter seven's lion as Great Britain joined with the United States (the eagle wings), the bear as the modern-day Russian bear, and the leopard as China (the tiger), etc. He insists that the fourth (nondescript beast) is only a *future* power seen only in the seven-year Tribulation Antichrist (the "little horn," 7:8) in union with ten other nations.

Allen also speculates and is vague and generalized on the Daniel 2 image's feet and toes of iron and clay. For him the clay is Islam (104–10), mixed with but not compatible with firm (iron) government. In chapter eight, after quite persuasive historical detail to explain Antiochus Epiphanes up through verse 22, he sees a long gap before vv. 23–26. He is sure only the future Antichrist fits the latter details. That will remain a problem for many, who feel that all of the descriptions quite realistically were true of Antiochus, who ruled in the latter period of the kings in this context, the Grecian dominance (175–164 B.C.), long after Alexander the Great (cf. for example S. Miller). Also, even if he is right about a gap and a leap on to a final, future Tribulation leader, it will be likewise difficult for some to see another Allen idea. To him, this king is the *second* beast, out of the land, in Revelation 13:11ff. But why not, *if* there is a jump to the future Tribulation, fit the king as the *foremost* king (Rev 13:1–10)? For the second beast is a helper, and pointing the world to the *first* beast as preeminent?

Many premillennialists will, however, agree that Allen's reasoning is justified for a gap at *some* points in Daniel (9:27; 11:35–36, etc.). He sees 2:44, "in the days of these kings" when God sets up His own kingdom as meaning this as still during, but particularly in the *end time days* of the final phase to which the image's four empires eventuate after centuries. This is when the fourth empire extends into the future Tribulation and undergoes a confederacy of nations under the Antichrist (Rev 13, 17). Allen urges his viewers, often in great detail, to correlate Daniel and Revelation. An example is in his integrating the final great world ruler in Rev 13:1–10 (see also, 17:9ff and 19:11ff) into his concept of Daniel 7 meaning only empires at the *final end time* up to Christ's Second Advent.

The book's color chart of the Daniel 2 image's four empires (115) seems fair, except for strangely coloring in the future Tribulation as not just in the end-time, feet and toes stage, but even down from just below the image's knees. The commentary becomes at times unnecessarily wordy, as in an Excursus ending Daniel 2 (116–28). One could adequately enough cover the issues in far less space.

Allen explains Daniel's absence at the dedication (Daniel 3) several miles *outside* Babylon leading to the fiery furnace punishment as due to duties keeping him in the city. This is possible, but one still wonders why Daniel was absent due to duties elsewhere when others were careful to be present even though they left duties elsewhere.

Allen helpfully explains the furnace's being "seven times hotter" in a proverbial sense, "as hot as possible." He sees the fourth person in the furnace as the Angel of Jehovah, even the pre-incarnate Son of God. He explains many details very well, for example the king's insanity in Daniel 4 as boanthropy, imagining himself to be an ox. He reasons in accord with Miller, Walvoord, and Wood that Nebuchadnezzar came to saving faith/repentance at the end of the seven periods; he fits the seven

periods around 570–563 B.C. before Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562. Like Boutflower and others Allen cites Herodotus, Xenophon, and Berossus for a Daniel 5:30 scene of Cyrus' troops draining Euphrates River waters off into a lower area outside Babylon to lower the level under the city walls so as to allow wading soldiers to enter and conquer the city. And while giving reasons for different views to identify Darius the Mede (5:31), he holds that this king was Gubaru, an appointee of Cyrus the overall empire leader as a sub-leader to head up the Babylonian sector.

The commentary is very worthy on many verses, handled in careful detail. Still, it is bound to meet objections even from Allen's fellow premillennialists. Many will feel his logic arbitrary about several things on which he insists. This reviewer commends him for zealous diligence and much good insight, yet cannot confidently recommend *Daniel Reconsidered* overall due to many speculations that seem to be special pleading. These, as said, are on such things as identifying the four empires of chapter 7, or seeing the king of 8:23ff as the Revelation 13 underling beast. It does seem best to conclude that on Daniel's prophetic detail, more often, more convincing perspectives exist, even if not stated in as great detail. These are by Miller, Pentecost, Walvoord, Wood, and in a briefer way MacArthur (commentary on the Bible) and Whitcomb.

Daniel I. Block. *Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH*. Hearing the Message of Scripture, Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2013. 128 pp. (hardcover) \$19.99.

Reviewed by Mark A. Hassler, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament Studies.

Since 2005, Block has served as the Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. As a commentator, he produced studies on Deuteronomy (NIVAC, Zondervan, 2012), Judges (ZIBBC, Zondervan, 2009), Judges and Ruth (NAC, B&H, 1999), Ezekiel (2 vols., NICOT, Eerdmans, 1997–98), and Ezekiel 38–48, co-authored with Jacob Milgrom (Wipf & Stock, 2012). He also contributed to the *New Living Translation* (rev. ed., Tyndale House, 2004).

Block's *Obadiah* and Youngblood's *Jonah* initiate the publication of Zondervan's new commentary series, "Hearing the Message of Scripture, A Commentary on the Old Testament." Block assumes the responsibility as the general editor of the series. Since this series targets serious students and Bible expositors as the audience (10), the hard copies of each volume should display the Hebrew text rather than simply relying upon transliteration. Only the electronic edition includes the Hebrew font (12).

At the outset, the commentary sets forth a "Select Bibliography" (17–18), the author's "Translation of Obadiah 1–21" (19–20), and an "Introduction to Obadiah" (21–46). Each main section of the commentary unfolds according to the following headings: "The Main Idea of the Passage," "Literary Context," "Translation and Outline," "Structure and Literary Form," and "Explanation of the Text." Then comes a discussion of Obadiah's "Canonical and Practical Significance" (105–16). Finally the

indices of the Scriptures, subjects, and authors cap the volume (117–28). Numerous diagrams and tables populate the pages.

This reviewer could not agree more with Block’s observation that “This short book offers a magnificent study in intertextuality” (38). The book of Obadiah exhibits characteristics of both prose and poetry (36). In Block’s estimation, the climax of the book emerges in verse 17 (43), and the envoy of verse 1 refers to an angel (37, 53). Two hermeneutical weaknesses stand out: Esau represents all the nations in verses 15–16 and 21 (102, 106–8), and Edom represents all humanity (108).

Concerning textual critical issues, Block claims that a Hebrew scribe committed dittography in verse 19, resulting in the MT’s “territory” instead of the LXX’s “mountain” (95). Whereas the NAU reads “the exiles of this host” (v. 20), Block deems the MT corrupt, and goes with “the exiles of Halah,” speculating that the site of Halah rests along the Balikh River (95, 100).

According to Block, Obadiah received his prophecy within a thirty-three year window—between Nebuchadnezzar’s decimation of Jerusalem in 586 BC and Nabonidus’ sack of Edom in 553 BC (24, 27, 110). A later editor fashioned the canonical book between 550 and 350 BC (23). Thus, Obadiah’s prophecy transpired in the sixth-century BC. However, four drawbacks hamper this perspective. First, minimal historical evidence exists concerning a defeat of Edom in the mid-sixth century. As Block concedes, “We lack clear and unequivocal evidence for this event” (27).

Second, both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel exterminate the Edomites (v. 18). Block struggles to explain how this could happen while both kingdoms are in exile. He concludes that the destroyers of Edom were the poorest people of Judah and Israel who remained in the land after the respective exiles (92).

Third, the Edomites bolster an attack of Jerusalem (v. 11). In Block’s opinion, this pertains to Nebuchadnezzar’s attacks of Jerusalem in 598 and 586 BC (74). But that makes for an awkward reading of the eight imperatives in verses 12–14, requiring them to allude to prior events (Abner Chou, “Obadiah, Book of,” *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, 2012, n.p.). Block admits as much: “if our interpretation of the context for Obadiah’s ministry is correct, this makes no sense, since the atrocities involve past tense actions” (77). Nevertheless, one can read the imperatives as “prohibitions with ongoing force” (*ibid*).

Fourth, Block’s view forces him to locate Sepharad (v. 21) in Babylon since that is where Nebuchadnezzar deported the Judahites in 598–597 and 586 BC. In his words, “The context requires a location in Babylon” (101). That rules out the more popular proposals for the location of this elusive site, namely, Spain, Sardis, Separda, and Hesperides.

Nowhere in the commentary does Block deal with the arguments that support an exclusively eschatological fulfillment of the entire book. He discounts the end-time interpretation of verse 15 because the prophet describes the Day of Yahweh as “near” or imminent (83–84). However, declarations of imminency in Bible prophecy do not necessitate a fulfillment within the century or even millennium (Irvin Busewitz, *Joel and Obadiah*, Mentor, Christian Focus, 2003, 48). If they did, how might we explain Peter’s prophecy, “the end of all things is near” (1 Pet 4:7)?

By reading Block's latest commentary, expositors can explore the viewpoint that the prophecy of Obadiah received its fulfillment in the sixth-century BC. The author articulates his position clearly, and presents the material in an appealing way.

Gregory A. Boyd. *Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013. 269 pp. (paper) \$16.99.

Reviewed by Bradley Klassen, Instructor in Bible Exposition.

Christians throughout the centuries have struggled with doubt. Some of the first disciples doubted the appearance of the resurrected Jesus (Matt 28:17), and Jude indicates it was a problem in the first-century church (Jude 22). It remains today an issue of significant importance in both theological discussions and practical ministry. What is doubt? Is it sin? Is there a remedy?

Gregory Boyd, well-known author and pastor of Woodland Hills Church (St. Paul, MN), seeks to recast the discussion about doubt. His central argument is that evangelicalism's modernistic, naïve emphasis on certainty and its negative view of doubt is harmful, delusional, and unbiblical. Describing it as a "house of cards" and the symptom of psychological illness, Boyd believes a faith that emphasizes certainty is doomed for failure in our postmodern world. "To be certain about anything," Boyd argues, "is unattractive at best, a complete nonstarter at worst" (16). Authentic faith, on the other hand, places emphasis on a loving relationship, is content with ambiguity, sees no need for an absolute foundation on which to stand, and prizes acting faithfully above believing faithfully.

Boyd divides his work into three parts. Part 1 ("False Faith") develops Boyd's argument against certainty. After recounting his own failed pursuit in chapter 1, he turns in chapter 2 to provide eight reasons why certainty is unwarranted and undesirable. As Boyd sees it, "we are all just little, ignorant, and fallen human beings living in a highly ambiguous world doing the best we can to figure out what the heck the whole thing is about" (52). In chapter 3, Boyd then turns to the problem of idolatry, describing how the preoccupation with certainty wrongly shifts man's affections away from God onto things like Scripture and theological convictions. The only belief necessary in the end is "Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2), for it is in the cross that God has proven his unconditional love to humanity. Yet even belief about this certainty is not necessary. We only need "to feel *confident enough* to act on the belief, *as if* it's true, in order to enter into the committed relationship with God" (71).

Part 2 ("True Faith") articulates Boyd's definition of authentic faith. Chapter 4 provides his summary of God's response to the doubting faith and ruthless honesty of OT heroes. Chapter 5 is of particular importance, as Boyd recounts his own "conversion" testimony. After struggling with ADHD, pornography, and lack of assurance in his teenage years, Boyd finally gathered the courage to unleash his anger. He states: "I then proceeded, in a very Job-like manner, to vomit a several-minute-long diatribe against God that was utterly vile, if not blasphemous" (103). Boyd then recounts his "prayer of faith"—a prayer filled with expletives, accusations, and objections (103–4). Though admitting some inappropriate words, Boyd concludes such a

prayer certainly glorified God: “I believe God *applauded* it I’m convinced that the first time I ever exercised authentic biblical *faith* in God was when I *proclaimed my angry disdain toward him!*” (107). Chapter 6 further develops Boyd’s authentic faith vs. cognitive belief distinction, arguing, “the biblical concept of faith involves a commitment to *trust* and to *be trustworthy* in a relationship with another person” (113). The analogy of marriage becomes for Boyd the most helpful analogy, for it emphasizes loyalty regardless of mental convictions. The Bible is not to be treated as a legal—or theological—textbook, but as a book on loyalty in relationship. Chapter 7 then details Boyd’s understanding of the relationship between faith and works. Works—or faithful, covenant living—receives strong emphasis, for faith has much more to do with works than beliefs.

Part 3 (“Exercising Faith”) contains Boyd’s counsel for how Christians should live with ambiguity. He begins in chapter 8 with his epistemology. For Boyd, the Bible does not serve as the starting point for belief in Jesus. It is rather faith in the ideal of Jesus that allows us to affirm that the Bible as God’s Word. Faith is therefore not based on divine revelation, but on the general reliability of philosophical, existential, historical, and biblical investigations taken together. The doctrine of inspiration cannot serve as the sole basis for making faith assertions, for Scripture “cannot bear the weight, nor was ever intended by God to bear the weight, of being the foundation for *why* we believe in Jesus” (163). Consequently, errors and discrepancies in the Bible are not threatening, for even if the Bible is proved inaccurate—and Boyd assumes this to be the case—our faith in Jesus still remains steadfast since it is not tied primarily to Scripture.

Chapter 9 then explains Boyd’s hermeneutic. The ideal of Jesus, discovered on the basis of existential, philosophical, and historical investigation, then becomes an interpretive grid. All Scripture must be interpreted in such a way as to support this ideal of Christ—a practice that he admits uncovers and corrects incorrect perceptions of God and accounts of His works in the OT especially. But this does not threaten the doctrine of inspiration, since for Boyd inspiration works in harmony with divine accommodation, and accommodation must include error if the end product of Scripture is to be truly human. Chapter 10 is dedicated to explaining some of the biblical texts that supposedly speak disparagingly about doubt, while chapters 11 and 12 explain what believers are to expect from God since certainty is not one of his gifts. Boyd emphasizes again that the cross contains all that Christians need to substantiate their hope. God’s boundless love, manifest in the cross, is the hope for the believer’s future.

Boyd concludes his work by describing how he lives by faith: “Am I *certain* that history will wrap up with the glorious finale I just outlined in the concluding chapter? And the answer, you should by now expect, is *of course not.*” (253). Doubt is not a problem to be solved, but a blessing to be embraced. It cultivates honesty, investigation, and imagination. It leads him to embrace cataphatic prayer: “I therefore regularly carve out time to sit alone in a darkened room, put on classical music that is best able to soften my heart and open up my imagination, and ask the Holy Spirit to open up the eyes of my mind and heart (2 Cor 3:14–15) to envision Jesus. I see, hear, and sense, as vividly as possible, Jesus personally telling me all the things that the New Testament reveals about me” (255). This is the essence of Boyd’s faith.

There are a few benefits to Boyd's book. Many of his criticisms with respect to the Word-faith movement and its understanding of faith are apropos. The book's autobiographical nature also allows the reader deeper insight into the context of Boyd's other controversial positions—such as open theism. The book also serves as a good survey on postmodern epistemology.

The problems with Boyd's work, however, are substantial. First, the book does not provide a thorough analysis of doubt from the standpoint of Scripture. Though Boyd exposit some (though certainly not all) of the pertinent texts, the conclusions he reaches are often strongly distorted by his presuppositions. In fact, while Boyd calls on readers to smash their idols of certainty, quite a few remain in his own worldview as he relies heavily and confidently on his own experience and reason. He often appears oblivious to the number of positive and negative truth assertions he makes, assertions that can be made only with a degree of assumed certainty.

Second, and more importantly, Boyd's definition of certainty as a self-produced act of the brain—and a psychologically unhealthy one at that—utterly misrepresents the issue. There is a massive difference between certainty placed in one's own understanding and certainty established by God's Word. This is a watershed issue that cannot be ignored. Scripture is clear that while the former is sin at its basest, the latter is essential to faith. Biblical certainty is inseparable from divine authority; doubt and skepticism from human autonomy.

Third, Boyd rejects a straightforward reading of Scripture's self-witness and instead repeats the same skepticism advanced by nineteenth-century Protestant liberalism over doctrines such as inspiration, accommodation, and inerrancy. This leaves Boyd open to the charge of duplicity for criticizing contemporary evangelicals as being products of modernism, while appearing oblivious to the roots of his own views.

Fourth, any serious treatment on doubt and certainty cannot ignore the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His inner witness. Yet Boyd never seriously deals with this issue, revealing that his work is really not a theological treatment but a philosophical one.

Fifth, while claiming the high road of humility by attacking self-confidence, Boyd himself pejoratively depicts and even misrepresents his opponents. The sarcasm at times is intense as he takes aim at proponents of divine sovereignty, creationism, inerrancy, literal interpretation, dispensationalism, substitutionary atonement, the doctrine of eternal punishment, and heterosexual marriage. So much for the hermeneutics of humility.

Sixth, Boyd insists that his effort to reveal the benefit of doubt is for a good reason—to present the message of Christ more effectively and palatably to our post-modern culture. This seems admirable, but fails on numerous counts, just as the history of liberalism illustrates with respect to modernism.

Many more serious faults could be listed here, but it is fitting to close with Augustine's observation concerning the connection between certainty, faith, and love: "For 'we walk by faith, not by sight' [2 Cor 5:7], and faith will falter if the authority of holy scripture is shaken; and if faith falters, love itself decays. For if someone lapses in his faith, he inevitably lapses in his love as well, since he cannot love what he does not believe to be truth" (*On Christian Doctrine*).

Angelo Di Berardino (General Editor). *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity, Produced by the Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2014. Volume One (A–E) xxxviii + 937 pp; Volume Two (F–O) xxxvi + 1020 pp; Volume Three (P–Z) xxxiv + 994 pp (cloth), \$450.00 (set).

Reviewed by Dennis M. Swanson, Vice President for Library, Accreditation, and Operations.

As a librarian, one of the most frequent questions this reviewer receives is for a recommendation as to how a pastor might configure his library. My working principle over the years has been to emphasize “reference” as the core of a library. To find and stock a library with sources of excellent articles on particular subjects that have been through a rigorous academic review (as opposed to Wikipedia or other popular online sources) is key for quick research for the busy pastor.

For many years there has been a significant need for an updated Patristic era reference, especially in English. The 1992 English edition *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* (Oxford Press) was a straight translation of the Italian *Dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane* (Marietti, 1983–88). The *Nuovo dizionario* was completed in 2010. This edition represents more than a straight translation as the general editor, Angelo Di Berardino has overseen the addition of many new articles to a total of 3,220. All of the articles were revisited and updated. Di Berardino, for many years the director of the Hewitt Library at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA and currently Professor of Patrology at the Augustinian Patristic Institute in Rome and has served as an editor for several other works including *We Believe in One Catholic and Apostolic Church* in the Ancient Christian Doctrine series (IVP 2012).

The three volumes roughly cover the era of AD 90 to 750. Consulting editor, Thomas Oden, states that the volumes cover, “key topics in early Christian studies with special attention to authors, texts and contexts of the first through eighth centuries” (ix). The articles range in length from a single paragraph to several pages. Owing to Di Bernadino’s considerable skills as a librarian and researcher, this set is a model of reference organization and detail. The articles all have useful bibliographic references to introduce the reader to additional material. The only organizational criticism this reviewer would advance is the lack of “see also” notations to assist the researcher.

It is impossible to highlight all of the articles deserving of mention but a sample of notable articles would include Trapé on “Justification” (2:490–92) is an important read noting that the discussion of justification by faith was a dynamic conversation in the early church. Crouzel and Odrobina’s entry on “Celibacy of the Clergy” (1:478–79) is valuable in sorting out the development and geographic progression of this concept. The treatment of “Kingdom of God” (2:504–07) by dal Covolo and “Millennialism” (2:802–03) by Simonetti are excellent contributions. Filoramo’s “Eschatology” (1:837–40) is particularly helpful in detailing how the works of Origen and Augustine precipitated the shift in early church doctrine from literal to spiritualized concepts in eschatology. The lengthy entry on “Baptism” (1:321–26) has a very stimulating discussion on the “iconography” of baptismal scenes. The discussion of the early baptismal controversies, especially in the cases of the Novatians and

Donatists, is quite helpful. Interestingly, there is no discussion on the issue of infant baptism or its development in the early church. Hanson's "Creeds and Confessions of Faith" (1:630–33) is excellent, especially in the discussion of the evolution of "style" of creedal statements.

One of the longest articles in the set is the important discussion of "Preaching" (3:273–93). Federico Fatti details the *homily*, "used in reference to sermons in which exegetical interest prevailed" (3:274) and *sermon*, which "was used in reference to sermons on a theme" (ibid). He details the development of both substance and style in preaching and a fascinating discussion of the introduction of *presbyters* as preachers (3:284–86). Another fascinating discussion is the role that audience and congregation participation in the sermon in this era. Any student of preaching will benefit from this article, especially the extensive bibliography that takes four full columns.

The *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* is highly recommended as a front line source for information on all aspects of the early church. The cost (\$450 list) will be prohibitive to some individuals, but it is a must have for any seminary, training school, or other educational institution. Those specializing in church history will want to have this reference set within arm's reach at their desk.

John D. Currid. *Against the Gods: The Polemical Theology of the Old Testament*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 153 pp. (paper) \$17.99.

Reviewed by Bryan Murphy, Associate Professor of Old Testament Studies.

John D. Currid is Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte where he has taught for more than 20 years. He is also the Senior Pastor at Ballantyne Presbyterian Church (ARP). He has published a number of works related to OT studies, including seven volumes in the Evangelical Press Study Commentary series. He has done two volumes on both Genesis and Exodus, and additional volumes on Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Most significantly, as it relates to this review and to ANE studies and the Bible, his earliest work is *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997. In some ways, the present volume could be considered an advancement on the implications and initial discussions presented in that helpful work.

Currid's latest effort discusses the relationship between the OT and other ANE (Ancient Near Eastern) literature. It focuses on the influences ANE beliefs and literature had on the writing (and writers) of the OT, and vice versa. The work itself sprang from a series of lectures entitled: *Crass Plagiarism: The Problem of the Relationship of the Old Testament to Ancient Near Eastern Literature*. It was first given at the Fall Conference at RTS in Charlotte in 2007. The work's brevity in several points still bears the marks of its origination. However, at roughly 140 pages of actual text, this effort is clearly not intended to be exhaustive. He also affirms that it is not written with "scholars" as its target audience. It seems that Currid's pastoral experience serves him well in this regard. *Against the Gods* is written in a very approachable style and language that makes it a good introduction for any student or educated layman to the subject of OT polemical studies. There are several tables provided which

serve to illustrate ANE and biblical text comparatives (e.g., 37–38, 39, 55, 56–57, 69–70, 81–82, 93–94). These would be very helpful as teaching tools, or for those unfamiliar with the ANE literature. One could wish a few more of these had been included. But those provided are adequate—esp. given the stated objective of the work—i.e., that it is intended to be an introduction to the subject of polemical theology. Those familiar with the subject (and current discussions) will likely not find anything new here. However, Currid’s conclusions at the end of each chapter and justification for his decisions are worth consideration—even for those with real expertise in the field.

The work itself begins with a brief history of ANE studies (11–23). This chapter alone is worth assigning as required reading for all OT Introduction classes. It gives an excellent summary of the history of ANE studies—esp. as it relates to biblical studies. His discussion includes the place of several key archaeological finds: from the excavations at Pompeii (13); to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone (14); and even to the discovery of the Nuzi tablets (20). The greatest benefit to new students is the explanation he gives of the significance of each of these finds. The chapter closes with a clear and pointed illustration of the contemporary evangelical drift which challenges the independence of the OT historical record (23).

Chapter 2 is a very brief introduction to Polemical theology. He rightly and strongly disagrees with the view that the OT should be classified as legend (26). He defines Polemical theology as a way in which biblical writers demonstrate the essential distinctions between Hebrew thought and ANE beliefs and practices. He divides it into two categories: Polemical Expressions (i.e., common expressions borrowed from contemporary ANE contexts), and Polemical Motifs (i.e., comparatives that go beyond borrowed phrases or statements).

Chapters 3–5 contain three primary contexts: Creation, the Flood, and the Joseph narrative. In these chapters, Currid introduces the reader to a number of the key ANE comparatives (e.g., *Enuma Elish*, 36–38; the Egyptian cosmogonies, 38–40; the Sumerian Flood Story, 48–49; the Epic of Atrahasis, 50–52; the Egyptian Flood Account, 55–57). He shows a number of parallels between each of these and the biblical narratives. He also points out that there are equally observable distinctions between the biblical narrative and all other ANE myths. E.g., in chapter 3 he catalogs the cosmological distinctions as follows: monotheism vs. polytheism (40); the omnipotent, righteous, incomparable Creator of the Bible vs. the limited and depraved gods of the myths (41); creation out of nothing vs. creation out of something (42); and the various distinctions in the method of creation (41–44). While his cataloging is a mere summarization and limited to a sampling of Egyptian and Mesopotamian myths, it adequately presents the case. The most significant distinctive cited by Currid is the style of the various cosmogonical texts in contrast to the biblical record. The non-biblical accounts are “best described as ‘mythic narrative.’ . . . [i.e.,] legendary stories without determinable basis in fact or history. . . Genesis 1–2, in contrast, bears all the markings of Hebrew historical narrative” (43). To this can be added a hearty Amen!

Chapters 6–10 deal primarily with the Exodus text. Though ANE comparatives are examined from other contexts, the primary ones Currid mentions are taken from Egyptian sources. He covers the biblical accounts of the birth of Moses (ch. 6), the flight of Moses from Egypt (ch. 7), the Name of God (ch. 8), the Rod of Moses (ch. 9), and the parting of the Red Sea (ch. 10). The primary comparatives are between

the biblical texts and Egyptian beliefs, practices and writings. The discussions are kept at an introductory level. The ANE comparatives are very briefly covered. But enough is given to either give a student an entrance into the discussion, or bring a scholar to the place where Currid's conclusions can be considered.

Chapter 11 primarily relates Psalm 29 to ancient Canaanite motifs. Currid rightly interprets the polemical sense of Psalm 29 as a direct refutation of Canaanite beliefs. However, this chapter opens more questions for student and scholar alike than it answers. There is a real distinction between Psalm 29 (Hebrew poetry which is laced with ANE comparative language) and the biblical narratives of Genesis and Exodus (which have been the primary focus thus far).

Overall, two primary critiques are offered. First, Currid nowhere directly states his position on biblical authorship. He consistently uses terminology that refers to biblical authors, but does not give his view on actual authorship. For example, he seems to deny Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch when he refers to the "biblical authors" (plural) after citing a series of passages from Exodus (26–27). He refers to the "biblical author of Isaiah" (28), which at least implies it was not Isaiah—but he does not state his position. This is unfortunate in Currid's case, because his position in favor of Mosaic authorship is firmly declared in his commentaries (e.g., cf. *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, Evangelical Press, 2004, 20–22). One could wish that there was as firm a stance taken in this work on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as Currid takes on the historicity of the narrative itself. It seems a given (in a work like this) that the writer's view of authorship is somewhere directly stated since it has a direct bearing on many of the issues being discussed. Declaration of one's view is essential for a student's assessment of and interaction with a writer as academically sound and accessible as Currid.

A second critique relates to the lack of discussion on the non-polemical views. For example, when discussing the biblical creation and flood narratives and ANE comparatives, Currid does an excellent job of showing both similarities and distinctions. He also rightly points out that common historical experiences could readily account for those commonalities. However, he does not mention even the possibility that the creation and flood narratives were written as historical fact by Moses. There was no primary polemical intention. It came straight from God to Moses who wrote it down for the nation of Israel to prepare them for life as God's people as they prepared to enter into the Promised Land. There are many places in the OT that give direct challenges to pagan gods. There are contextual indicators that show these are meant to be polemical (e.g., Psalm 29). But the Genesis creation and flood narratives are not like these. Currid points out many of these features. But he fails to state (apart from his prologue) that as narratives these could simply be taken as just that—historical narratives, with no direct polemical intentions. This is not to suggest that Currid fails to present his case. It just means that he has not acknowledged the existence of an alternate position that from this reviewer's perspective can be argued just as strongly.

Overall, Currid provides a nice introduction to the subject of Polemical studies. He stands firmly opposed to views that challenge the doctrine of inspiration—e.g., demythologizing. While one could wish that he: (1) took a more direct stand on things like Mosaic authorship; (2) presented the possibility that in many cases there is no

biblical evidence for a direct polemical intention; and (3) provided a wider or more exhaustive set of ANE comparatives (even at an introductory level)—i.e., that the other myths were covered as fully as the Egyptian mythos; the book is well worth reading. Currid provides a nice introduction to the subject for students. He also provides some thought provoking arguments for the greater evangelical academic community.

Colin Duriez. *C. S. Lewis: A Biography of Friendship*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2013. 255 pp. (paper) \$16.95.

Reviewed by Gregory H. Harris, Professor of Bible Exposition.

Colin Duriez has written a new work on C. S. Lewis based greatly on the important role of friendship played in his early life, development into a man, and later into a mature Christian that he became famous for being:

Throughout Lewis' life, key relationships mattered deeply to him, from his early days in the north of Ireland and his schooldays in England, as a teenager in the trenches of the First World War, and then later in Oxford. The friendship he cultivated throughout his life proved to be vital, influencing his thoughts, his beliefs, and his writings (7).

Much of Duriez' book comes from original source letters, some relatively recently discovered, as well as some unpublished material. The author writes in a smooth, easy-to-read manner. He states, "My book is not aimed at the scholar, but the general reader who may have read a Narnia book or two, or perhaps *The Screwtape Letters*" (8).

The book divides into fourteen chapters: (1) A Northern Irish Childhood; (2) Schooldays and Arthur Greeves: Watford, Belfast, and Malvern; (3) "The Great Knock": Bookham, Surrey; (4) Oxford and France: "This Is What War Is Like. . ."; (5) Student Days: Oxford, and Mrs. Jane Moore; (6) The Aspiring Poet and Scholar in Hard Times: The Inspiration of Owen Barfield; (7) The Young Don: Meeting J. R. R. Tolkien; (8) The Most Reluctant Convert; (9) The Company of Friends; (10) Storytelling and Reflections: Through the Changing Thirties with Tolkien; (11); The Wartime Years and After: Enter Charles Williams; (12) A New Era and A Change of Strategy: The Narnia Factor; (13) The Surprising American: Mrs. Joy Davidman Gresham; and (14) Leaving the Shadowlands. A brief chronology of Lewis's life and works are included as well.

In Chapter 8, "The Most Reluctant Convert," Duriez writes of Lewis:

In his exploration of belief in God, and attempts to come to terms with the fact that he faced Someone tangible and utterly concrete rather than an abstraction, Lewis got held up over the Christian belief Christ as a sacrifice for the whole world, and indeed for an individual. He couldn't grasp, he confessed, how the

life and death of someone 2,000 years ago could help or save us today, except perhaps as an example. But the New Testament, he clearly saw, spoke of Christ's death as far more than an example (130).

The pages that follow contain the conversion of C. S. Lewis, mostly in his own words. If you know someone who is lost who is also wrestling with these same issues, this may be a good, friendly witnessing tract to give to someone.

In the final chapter, "Leaving the Showdownlands," Duriez recounts the physical decline that followed the death of his beloved wife:

The truth was that Lewis never really got over the loss of Joy. Some weeks after her death, on 5 August, however, he affirmed his Christian hope in the resurrection of the body in a letter to a correspondent. He confessed, though, that he found the state until the resurrection of those who have died unimaginable. He wondered if Joy was in the same time as those left alive; if she was not, it made no sense to wonder where she was now. His grief was compounded by constant worry about his unassuming brother's alcoholism and increasingly frequent binges (216–17).

Duriez adds about Warnie Lewis only months before the death of C. S. Lewis:

Warnie, too, has been heartbroken over the loss of Joy. To him she was a close friend and a much-loved sister-in-law. He could not face the loss of his brother, if he was to die before him. While in Ireland, he had "drunk himself into a hospital," as Lewis put it in a letter to Arthur Greeves (219).

Warnie did return for the last few months before C. S. Lewis died. For those dealing with grief or know someone who is dealing with it, this book may very well be an encouragement for that person.

C.S. Lewis: A Biography of Friendship would be good, light reading for those who enjoy Christian biographies (versus a much heavier reading such as *Planet Narnia*). Most teenagers could easily handle this excellently written book. Also, this could be a good introduction or introductory book to someone who is just beginning their study on the life of C. S. Lewis.

Bart D. Ehrman. *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. x + 628 pp. (cloth) \$39.99.

Reviewed by Kelly T. Osborne, Associate Professor of New Testament.

By now regular readers of this journal should have some familiarity with the name of Bart D. Ehrman (hereafter BE), James A. Gray Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In fact the present work is a longer, scholarly version of *Forged: Writing in God's Name, Why the Bible's Authors Are*

Not Who We Think They Are (Harper One, 2011). The earlier work was well reviewed by Dr. Dennis Swanson, in the Fall 2011 issue of this journal (*MSJ* 22, no. 2, 305–8), but that volume was oriented to a wider reading public, while this new, more detailed treatment of the subject (628 vs. 307 pages) is addressed to a more academic audience, with footnotes throughout and a proper bibliography. According to the dust jacket, this book “is the first comprehensive study of early Christian Pseudepigrapha ever produced in English,” while the Introduction’s opening sentence throws down the gauntlet for conservative evangelicals with BE’s claim that “[a]rguably the most distinctive feature of the early Christian literature is the degree to which it was forged” (1).

Although the thoroughness of the previous review allows me to pass over some of the biographical and bibliographic information given in BE’s 2011 book (*Forged*) and the Journal’s review, nevertheless the importance of this new scholarly treatment of the subject (2013; *Forgery*) requires highlighting a number of items for the Journal’s readers, even at the risk of some repetition.

A brief Introduction (chapter 1, 1–7) gives a rationale for the work by noting the paucity of publications on this overall topic of forgery in early Christian literature, and by stating that the “ultimate goal of the study is not to determine if this, that, or the other writing is forged, but to examine the motivation and function of forgery, especially in polemical contexts,” specifically as found in the first four centuries of the Christian era (4). BE then divides the work into two uneven parts: “Forgery in the Greco-Roman World” (11–145), containing chapters 2–5, and “Early Christian Polemics” (149–548), comprising the remaining 11 chapters (and three-quarters of the text). A complete Bibliography of works cited (549–74), followed by an Index of Ancient Sources (575–89), an Index of Subjects (591–622), and an Index of Modern Scholars (623–28), rounds out the work.

Fair warning must be given. This book is not for the faint-of-heart. The print of the text is small, and that of the footnotes, of which abound on almost every page, even smaller. The good news is that the documentation is very thorough so that almost every point BE makes or defends against can be traced to its appropriate source(s). The bibliography reflects this kind of research and is a model of consistency in that regard. Further good news for many is that BE yielded to his editors’ wisdom (x, in “Acknowledgments”) and provided translations of the German and French scholarship which he often quotes at length throughout. This does not always hold true for the primary (=ancient) sources like Greek and Latin, however. With these he usually cites the exact words, phrase or sentence in question, but not necessarily the immediate context. This then requires one to look up the relevant, as when he compares passages and eschatology from 1 Thessalonians 4–5 and 2 Thessalonians 1–2, where the immediate context of any given statement usually has significant exegetical impact. Thus it frequently became necessary to look up texts in the standard reference works, most offering translations of the ancient sources being dealt with, such as Elliott’s *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Robinson’s *The Nag Hammadi Library*, and Charlesworth’s *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, as well as the old standards of Roberts’ and Donaldson’s *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, and Schaff’s *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* to name a few.

There is no question but that BE is a scholar of the first rank, and this work demonstrates his credentials in no uncertain terms. In many respects it is also a model

of scholarly research, and how to present it. He commands material from classical and Hellenistic authors of the Greco-Roman world (Thucydides, Plato, Diogenes Laertius, Galen, *Historia Augusta*, etc.) to the New Testament (mainly Acts and virtually all of the epistles) to Greek and Latin patristic writers (Clement, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, etc.) to NT apocryphal and Gnostic texts (*Gospel of Peter*, *Acts of Pilate*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Melchizedek*, etc.), not to mention a massive quantity of secondary literature, with particular emphasis on German scholarship.

There are real strengths to this work, though one must constantly be on guard against BE's interweaving of legitimate instances of forgery (e.g., pseudepigraphic patristic writings) with what most conservative evangelicals consider genuine works from the NT canon. Examples of positive points can be found in chapter 3 "Terms and Taxonomies" (29–67), where BE details different types of ancient literary forgery and related phenomena, literary fictions, the use of pen names, homonymity (a work ascribed to another person of the same name), anonymity (no author named), false attributions (something generally attributed to one author, but actually by someone else), plagiarism (use someone else's words as one's own), fabrications (invention of, e.g., speeches or false documents in historical narratives) and falsifications (alterations to or interpolations into existing texts). Chapter 4 ("Forgery in Antiquity: Aspects of the Broader Phenomenon," 69–92) sketches the widespread problem of forgery and related activities in the ancient world, the ancients' understanding of what today we call intellectual property, the frequent complaints about various types of forgery, the responses to the phenomena and the idea that "the person of the author provided the authority for the account [and] at the same time, the contents of the account established the identity of the author" (86). There follows a fifth chapter entitled "Forgery in Antiquity: Motives, Techniques, Intentions, Justifications, and Criteria of Detection" (93–145), in which BE analyzes forgers' motivations (97–120), their techniques of writing (121–28), and their intentions (128–32). All of these chapters (3–5) provide invaluable information for anyone tackling the mountain of genuine and falsely attributed works in the corpora of patristic, apocryphal NT and Gnostic writings now extant.

For readers of this journal the major contribution of Part I, and indeed of the whole book, is that it succeeds in demolishing the notion that pseudepigraphic writings in general, and NT pseudepigraphy in particular, were somehow harmless deceptions to which almost no one in antiquity, pagan, Jewish or Christian, would object. BE deals with the major scholars who argue for some variant of this position, including Wolfgang Speyer, Kurt Aland, David Meade, I. Howard Marshall (30–43). In this respect, BE has done a true favor to those who insist that pseudepigraphy was unacceptable to the first generations of Christians and that no such work would ever have been allowed to circulate among any first-century believers who remained faithful to apostolic teaching. Of course, BE also maintains that Acts, six of Paul's letters as well as all the catholic epistles were forged, but each of these has been defended as genuine on more than adequate grounds, as shown by Carson and Moo (*Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed., Zondervan, 2005). That BE does not really interact in detail with conservative evangelical viewpoints constitutes one of the book's real short-comings.

Lest anyone think that this review is missing the “big picture” of BE’s work, I must point out that for everyone who accepts all twenty-seven of the NT writings as God-breathed inerrant Word, most of what BE serves up to his readers is laced with deadly poison. And it is well disguised at that, because BE begins the major argument of the book in chapter 2 by reciting several anecdotes, one from pagan and two from patristic literature, in order to illustrate the widespread nature of the problem of forgery in antiquity (11–24). Then, in the next section of the chapter, without signaling any warning as to any change in the category of writing under discussion, nor adducing any evidence for his assertions, he immediately continues with “other Christian forgers who attack forgery” (24). He presents 2 Thessalonians as a typical example of Christian forgery and gives the impression that the forged nature of the letter is a matter of common knowledge. True, he will argue the case later (156–71), but by then the damage has been done, and BE has intermingled the poison with some of the helpful elements to be found in chapters 3–5, thus creating the impression for the unwary or inexperienced that, since “everyone” may be assumed to know that there were forgeries among the NT writings, he can now spend the bulk of the next two chapters (7 and 8) laying out the arguments for why 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and 2 Peter are all forgeries which focused to a great extent on eschatology (155–229).

Particularly revealing of BE’s apparent agenda is that for each of these NT letters, with the exception of 2 Peter, he chooses to begin his presentation with 19th century German scholarship and the letters’ internal evidence, such as vocabulary and style, and not with the substantial external evidence to be found in the earliest patristic writings which unequivocally supports the genuineness of all these letters of Paul. Of course, BE disputes some of the external evidence, noting, for example, the absence of the Pastorals in 3rd century Bodmer papyrus p⁴⁶ (192–93), but never even mentioning that the existence of external evidence overwhelmingly confirms the genuineness of 2 Thessalonians and Colossians. This omission of external evidence cannot be merely a careless oversight on his part, because BE demonstrates in the rest of the book that he is a most thorough researcher. But for him to include such strong external evidence for these “deutero-Pauline” letters would mean so severely undermining his own case in favor of their forged nature that many of his readers might conclude that BE “the historian” is writing something other than history. In fact, as he himself is quick to point out, in his critique of the Secretary Hypothesis, “History proceeds on the basis of evidence....Scholars must constantly ask themselves whether evidence matters, that is, whether they prefer history or romance” (222). One can only say that BE is convicted out of his mouth (or pen)! Such strong external evidence favoring the genuineness of these letters of Paul gives the complete lie to BE’s position.

Chapter 9 (“Forgeries in Support of Paul and His Authority,” 239–82) considers canonical 1 and 2 Peter and Acts all as forgeries written to support Paul. BE’s main argument against the authenticity of either of the two canonical letters? Peter was an illiterate Galilean peasant (242–47), a view which is properly countered by Carson and Moo (*ibid.*, 645). Additionally, BE claims that Acts was basically forged in order to gloss over the (allegedly) irreconcilable differences between the Pauline and Petrine versions of Christianity (281–82). One could be forgiven for seeing here the return of the “Tübingen School” with a vengeance, a true F. C. Baur *redivivus!*

In continued exaggeration of the differences between the theological emphases of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, and those of apostles like Peter and James who ministered more typically to the Jews and Jewish Christians, BE continues in chapter 10 (283–321) by arguing that the anti-Pauline “lobby” of NT James and Jude, as well as the non-canonical *Epistula Petri*, the *Epistula Clementis* and the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature, really constitute attacks on “the tradition associated with Paul” (290). Conversely, “Anti-Jewish Forgeries” are the subject of the eleventh chapter which traces the beginnings of the anti-Semitic sentiment leading eventually to both supersessionism (the idea that there will be no future in God’s plans for ethnic Israel) and laying the groundwork for persecution of the Jews in later centuries (323–66). In order to sketch this ominous development in Christian theology, BE discusses only apocryphal works (the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the Pilate “cycle” of works). Here, though one must concede the growing tendency of later (post-fourth-century especially) Christian theologians in the direction of anti-Semitism, yet the NT writings never justify or condone the kind of anti-Semitic prejudice which, according to BE, began to exert itself amongst the church fathers as early as the second century (e.g., *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Justin Martyr in his *Apology*) with regard to the nation’s complicity in the death of Jesus and the subsequent persecution of Christians.

If he is determined to underline the supposed chasm separating Pauline and Petrine versions of the faith in the time of the apostles, BE is equally eager to rewrite the history of early Christianity regarding church practice and structure (chapter 12, “Forgeries Involving Church Organization and Leadership,” 367–406). Without going into detail, one finds that BE pits the “deutero-Pauline” Pastorals against genuine 1 Corinthians on women’s roles in the church and the hierarchical nature of church organization (374–79). The details of such misinterpretations or misrepresentations have been very well addressed by others (e.g., W. D. Mounce, *The Pastoral Epistles*, WBC, Thomas Nelson, 2000).

In addition to his revisionist treatment of the opening decades of the church, however, BE utilizes the “guilt by association” technique of treating later post-canonical and clearly pseudonymous works such as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions* as merely continuing the practice of forgery and reinforcement of non/anti-apostolic teachings begun with the earlier “deutero-Pauline” Pastorals. The latter, of course, were included in the NT canon, while the later patristic church manuals were not (384–98). By this associative technique apparently BE wants readers to infer that any “fair” modern reading of the NT will distinguish the apostolic teaching in genuine writings (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon) from what contradicts it in either the “deutero-Pauline” (e.g., the Pastorals, Ephesians, etc.) or other forged NT documents (i.e., 1-2 Peter, James, etc.). His proposed distinction between genuine apostolic and pseudepigraphic origin and contents of the various NT works will, BE believes, show that in the beginning Christianity was much more egalitarian, less organized, emphasizing charismatic giftedness (not church offices and authority), and more open to divergent doctrines/theologies than it subsequently and strictly enforced in a male-dominated, unbendingly hierarchical, narrowly rigid practice and theology. The only answer to this must be

that, if, like BE, one is selective enough with the biblical evidence, such as by claiming that more than half the NT is forged, it is possible to prove just about anything one wants from the text of Scripture.

Later theological controversies about the value of the physical body, whether Christ's (the reality of the incarnation) or the believer's (asceticism), comprise chapter 13 ("Forgeries Involving Debates over the Flesh," 407–54). Here BE begins with writings which teach a "separationist Christology" or "a clear demarcation between the fleshly shell of the Savior and his true inner essence," including the *Coptic Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Book of Thomas the Contender* and the *Gospel of Thomas* (408–18). Next BE recounts the orthodox response to such ideas in canonical 1 John (418–25), as well as various pseudepigraphic works critical of the separationist doctrines (e.g., *3 Corinthians*, *Letter to the Laodiceans*, *Apocalypse of Peter*, etc.; 425–54).

In this chapter too BE's treatment is problematic, first, simply because he insists on the expression "proto-orthodox" (by my count at least 30 times in the chapter) as the *only* way to refer to the normative beliefs and practices which are generally recognized as "orthodox" Christianity. BE thus implies that there was no such thing amongst apostolic congregations as an agreed upon body of doctrine or practices until at least the late 2nd century when "orthodoxy" began to gain the upper hand and stamp out competing versions of the faith. Secondly, the order in the chapter in which BE treats these different works—Separationist writings of the second-third centuries first, followed by a "response" of the canonical first epistle of John, which he neglects to date at all—suggests both the epistle's non-apostolic origin, a late (= post-apostolic) date, and therefore, that separationist teachings either preceded or originated simultaneously with the "proto-orthodox" doctrine of the full humanity of Jesus. Although there is no question but that many false teachings arose almost immediately after, and often in response to, the founding of apostolic churches and the orthodox doctrine which their converts were taught (cf., Gal 1:6–10), BE's suggested reconstruction is a fiction of his own imagining.

In Chapter 14 ("Forgeries Arising from Later Theological Controversies," 455–80) the discussion of forgeries written to combat later heresies such as Manicheism or Arianism should engender less controversy. It is nonetheless again revealing that, even here, when seeking to identify a certain Julian as the author of both the Pseudo-Ignatius interpolations and an early Greek commentary on Job (465), BE shows that only one author could have written both works by using the same argumentation which he previously employed to demonstrate that Paul could not have written both 1 and 2 Thessalonians (158–60). By the same logic one might be tempted to think that one of these two passages in BE's book was forged!

The fifteenth chapter ("Apologetic Forgeries," 481–527) enumerates eleven works as forgeries, from NT Acts and 1 Peter to the mid-fourth-century *Letters of Paul and Seneca*, which serve to defend in some way either the focal character of the work (Polycarp in *Martyrdom of Polycarp*) or its alleged author (the Sibyl in the *Sibylline Oracles*). As is his practice throughout the book, BE avoids drawing any distinction between canonical and post-NT works and (wrongly) assumes the case against Acts and 1 Peter to have been proven beyond doubt.

Finally, BE offers his conclusion in Chapter 16 ("Lies and Deception in the Cause of Truth," 529–48), claims that "[i]n the early centuries of the church Christians produced a large number of literary forgeries" (529), and reiterates that "[t]his

was deceit in service of the truth” (532). BE then describes the very different attitudes taken by Augustine of Hippo, who condemned lying under any circumstances, and John Cassian in his work entitled *Conferences*, where a certain Abba Joseph maintains that at times it is necessary for Christians to resort to lying, a sentiment generally acceptable in pagan society (534–41). BE claims that Cassian’s position was shared by patristic authors like Origen, John Chrysostom and Jerome (542–46), numerous OT worthies such as King David’s wife Michal, Saul’s son Jonathan (547–48), but also by a NT author like Paul (542), and even Jesus Himself (548)!

The obvious response in some of the biblical examples is that both testaments record many nefarious words and actions without necessarily approving them. In other examples, from the lives of Jesus (John 7) and Paul (Acts 16), BE’s interpretation of the incidents is so highly questionable (contrast, e.g., L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, rev. ed., Eerdmans, 1995, 349–54 and F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed., Eerdmans, 1990, 352), that it is hard to know whether to laugh or cry. In the end BE opts for the idea that Christian forgers from canonical to late fourth-century materials essentially believed in the Noble Lie, that “they had a truth to convey and . . . may have been willing to lie in order to convey it” (548).

Enough has already been said in this review both generally and in detail to challenge the position(s) BE adopts in this book with regard to the authenticity of the NT writings. Much more could and should be said in order to respond point by point to the many charges which he has laid out against both the human writers of the NT Scriptures, but also and ultimately against their Divine Author, the Holy Spirit Himself.

The danger posed by this book is that, despite its major positive contribution noted above, it will not merely mislead others as to who actually authored the 27 books of the NT, but that in so doing both BE and those who believe him will end up like the Manichean heretic, Faustus. Against him, Augustine of Hippo wrote: “Sinfulness has made you so deaf to the testimonies of the scriptures that you dare to say that whatever is brought forth from them against you was not said by the apostle but was written by some interpolator or other under his name” (*Contra Faust.* 33.6, trans. Roland Teske, cited in BE, 92; cf. 87n63). “Deafness” to God’s revelation is a catastrophe in the making (cf., Rom 1:18–32, Heb 3:7–19), while the irony of the presence of Augustine’s remark in this book should escape no one.

May we not, then, apply the truth of the apostle Paul’s words regarding the faithfulness of God (Rom 3:4) also to the reliability of all the canonical Scriptures in contrast to BE’s book, γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης (Let God be true but every man a liar)?

Douglas J. Moo. *Galatians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013. xxx + 469 pp. (cloth) \$44.99.

Reviewed by Mark A. Hassler, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament Studies.

Douglas J. Moo serves as the Kenneth T. Wessner Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College Graduate School. Previously he taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1977–2000). He wrote commentaries on Colossians and Philemon (PNTC, Eerdmans, 2008), Romans (NIVAC, Zondervan, 2000; NICNT, Eerdmans, 1996; WEC, Moody, 1991), James (PNTC, Eerdmans, 2000; TNTC, InterVarsity, 1985), and 2 Peter and Jude (NIVAC, Zondervan, 1996). With D. A. Carson, Moo co-authored *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed., Zondervan, 2005). In addition, he headed the Committee on Bible Translation (CBT), a group of scholars responsible for revising the New International Version (NIV) and producing Today's New International Version (TNIV).

According to the series editors, Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein, the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) aims to “blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, and attention to critical problems with theological awareness” (ix). For each main literary unit, gray shading highlights the commentator’s introductory remarks and concluding summaries (x). The reoccurring heading, “Exegesis and Exposition,” sets forth the interpretive and illustrative comments, while the textual and subsidiary comments are relegated to the sections entitled “Additional Notes.” In the back, a list of “Works Cited” (407–38) accompanies a full set of indexes: “Index of Subjects” (439–43), “Index of Authors” (444–51), “Index of Greek Words” (452), and an “Index of Scripture and Other Ancient Writings” (453–69).

Regarding the destination and date of the letter, Moo slightly favors the South Galatian theory (8). Paul penned the epistle in AD 48 shortly before the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, thereby making it his earliest surviving epistle (18). Moo associates Paul’s visit to Jerusalem in Gal 2:1–10 with the famine relief visit of Acts 11:27–30 rather than the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 (11–15, 118). He states, “the relationship between Gal. 2:1–10 and Acts 15 is crucial to dating Galatians and has significant implications for our interpretation of Galatians” (12).

In dealing with the theological motifs of Galatians, ten pages of argumentation (38–48) lead to the conclusion that the “faith of Christ” phrases (2:16 [2x], 20; 3:22) employ objective genitives (“faith in Christ”) rather than subjective genitives (“the faithfulness of Christ”). Fourteen pages (48–62) concentrate on the theological concept of justification and engage the New Perspective on Paul. For Moo, most of Paul’s references to justification in Galatians do not allude to initial justification at the moment of conversion, but they take a timeless or future nuance (60). This opinion represents a development in Moo’s thinking from his Romans commentary (NIVAC, 2000), which declares, “justification is the entry point into our Christian experience” (174).

Like Chrysostom and the Protestant Reformers, Moo believes that sinners achieve righteousness by faith in Christ rather than by the works of the law or human “doing” in general (27, 325). In fact, he calls verse 16 of chapter 2 “one of the most important and debated in the Letters of Paul” (157). Moreover, “union with Christ is

a key (perhaps *the* key) idea in the letter” (155, emphasis original). And again, “union with Christ in 3:26–29 functions as “the heart of Paul’s argument in chapters 3–4 . . . and perhaps the letter as a whole” (248).

How does Paul use the OT according to Moo? The apostle’s interpretation of the “seed” as singular in 3:16 probably reflects some kind of rabbinic interpretive practice (229–30). In 4:21–31, Paul gives the Sarah and Hagar narrative, “without denying its intended historical sense, an additional or added meaning” (296). Speaking of the five OT quotes in 3:8–13, Moo puts things in perspective: “perhaps nowhere else in the Letters of Paul do we more insistently confront the hermeneutical issues raised by his use of the OT” (195).

At 3:17 Moo suggests that the 430 years began when God established the covenant with Abram, and it ended when God gave the law at Sinai (245). But if the covenant came in approximately 2090 BC, and the law came in approximately 1446 BC, that yields a time span of 644 years. As a more viable solution, the 430 years covers 1876–1446 BC, from the final reaffirmation of the Abrahamic promise to Jacob (Gen 46:1–4) to the giving of the law at Sinai.

In step with nondispensationalism, Moo takes the *kai* in 6:16 as expegetical and “the Israel of God” as the church (403). The theology and context of Galatians overrides the syntactical evidence and the NT usage of “Israel,” he argues. For a different interpretation, see S. Lewis Johnson Jr., “Paul and ‘the Israel of God’: An Exegetical and Eschatological Case-Study,” *MSJ* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 41.

What other interpretive conclusions does Moo reach? The Judiazers who Paul opposes were Christians because, according to 1:6–9, they preached a gospel message (22). In verses 6–7, no semantic difference exists between ἕτερον (“another”) and ἄλλο (“another”) (79).

The James of 1:19 he identifies as a leader of the early church, the brother of Jude (Jude 1), the writer of James (Jas 1:1), and an apostle (110). In 2:11–14 Paul rebukes Peter for breaking fellowship with the supposedly impure Gentiles (142). Baptism in 3:27 is by water rather than by the Spirit (251). The elements of the world (4:3, 9) refer to the fundamental components of the universe (e.g., air, earth, fire, and water) that were associated with idolatry (260–62, 277). Moo equates Paul’s “weakness of the flesh” (4:13) with his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7), possibly some type of eye problem (282–83). Although the law of Christ in Gal 6:2 retains some continuity with the law of Moses, the two are distinct, the former encompassing “the broadly ethical demand of the gospel” (378). Further, “each one will bear his own load” (6:5) refers to eschatological judgment, thus avoiding a seeming contradiction with “bear one another’s burdens” in verse 2 (381). Paul himself wrote 6:11–18 in large letters, while his amanuensis penned the rest of the epistle (391–92).

In summary, Moo offers a high-quality commentary for NT expositors. He interacts with the Greek text thoroughly and presents other views fairly. As with another recent commentary on Galatians (Schreiner, ZECNT, Zondervan, 2010), this contribution promises to enrich and edify God’s people for years to come.

C. Marvin Pate. *Apostle of the Last Days: The Life, Letters, and Theology of Paul*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2013. 320 pp. (paper) \$22.99.

Review by William D. Barrick, Director of Doctor of Theology Program, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament.

Marvin Pate serves as the chair of Christian Theology at Ouachita Baptist University. He has authored and edited a number of volumes including *Romans* in Teach the Text Commentary Series (Baker Books, 2013), *The Writings of John: A Survey of the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse* (Zondervan, 2011), *What Does the Future Hold?: Exploring Various Views on the End Times* (Baker Books, 2010), *The End of the Age Has Come: The Theology of Paul* (Zondervan, 1995), and many more.

Apostle of the Last Days represents Pate's most recent work on Pauline eschatology. The volume attracts the reader by its topic, by its many superb charts, and by the author's fervor for Pauline theology anchored in the context of the epistles' texts. In the "Introduction" (9–34) Pate establishes the foundational concepts concerning Pauline authorship, the apostle's core theological constructs, and the variety of eschatological viewpoints that Paul encountered and to which he responded in his letters. Paul's conflict with four major eschatological systems comprises the main point of Pate's volume (cf. 20–26). He identifies those systems as Hellenistic/Syncretistic Religion, Roman Imperial Eschatology, Merkabah Judaizers, and Non-Merkabah Judaizers. His chart (21) presents the overview of these differing viewpoints paralleled to Paul's eschatology and its five principal components. Readers will find it handy to refer back to it again and again.

Utilizing Galatians 1, Romans 1, and Acts Pate argues that eschatology drove Paul's conversion and call (37–49). In Part 1 (35–282), the author chronologically develops the apostle's eschatological conflict with those eschatological systems he identifies as his principal opponents in each geographical location: Galatians (51–76), 1 and 2 Thessalonians (77–102), 1 and 2 Corinthians (103–59, Chap 5, the latter being a summary), Romans (161–81), Philippians (183–95), Colossians (197–223), Philemon (225–31), Ephesians (233–49), and the Pastorals (251–82). Part 2 (283–318) then summarizes Pauline theology under seven categories (Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology) by means of key word counts related to each topic or category. A brief "Conclusion" (319–20) closes the volume. After discussing the conflicting eschatology's involved with each epistle or set of epistles, Pate proceeds to provide a section-by-section summary of each epistle (e.g., Galatians: 68–76; Romans: 169–81).

Throughout the book Pate uses charts with great effectiveness to convey key concepts and display contrasting views. Those that present the OT backgrounds for new covenant content in Romans provide excellent material for such a study (170–73). In addition to his treatment of the OT, he presents well-organized materials suggesting solutions to key NT interpretive issues: the apostle Paul's negative portrayal of Mosaic law in 1 Corinthians (113–29), identification of the Colossian heresy (198–218), slavery in the NT and the *Haustafeln* (225–30), and the chronology of Paul's ministry (54–55, 104, 251–52).

Reading this volume as an OT scholar, this reviewer appreciates Pate's efforts to demonstrate the relationships of Romans' organization and content to the book of Deuteronomy (162–64). His series of charts associating the theological concepts of Romans with the OT prophetic writings comprise a valuable contribution (170–74). By paralleling 1 Tim 1:9b–10 with Exodus 20, Pate demonstrates that Paul's vice list relies upon the content of the moral law in the Decalogue (270–71). Since the topic of the historicity of Adam has become a hot button topic (see Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday, eds., *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, Zondervan, 2013), Pate's chart summarizing his presentation of the two Adams/ages construct (305) contributes to the ongoing examination of the historical Adam's theological significance.

Late in the volume Pate identifies Paul as a "premillennialist" (298), but he fails to specify the apostle's timing for the rapture (97). The author does not believe that Paul speaks of a secret rapture of the church in 1 Thess 4:13–18 (98). His view that "true followers of God will first undergo the messianic woes/great tribulation before entering the kingdom of God" (96) seems to indicate a post-tribulation viewpoint. He creates uncertainty for readers by seeming to treat the "great tribulation" as something that Christians who do right will endure, rather than focusing on the concept that it consists of a period of divine judgment upon the unbelieving who reject the Messiah (78, 93, 314). Pate's own eschatology appears at times to approximate replacement theology (see 178 and the author's seeming replacement of Israel by eschatological humanity). However, his statements regarding the future conversion of Israel a few pages later (180) indicate his historical premillennial stance (which this reviewer confirmed by email with the author). His view that the kingdom of God is already here but not yet complete occurs in some amillennial viewpoints and creates some of the tension in this topic of discussion. Occasionally the volume suffers from a lack of clarity—as when Pate's statement about the absence of a suffering Messiah in the OT (47, n13) can be understood as either his own view or the view of Judaism.

Unfortunately, Kregel editors fail to provide readers with any indexes with which to enable them to locate key concepts or topics, modern authors, and Scripture references throughout the book—making it virtually unusable as a classroom textbook or serious study aid. The reviewer's copy also suffers from typos (55, "(a)" should be "(1)"; 56, spacing problems in final paragraph; 83, "Mark 12:5–23" should be "Mark 13:5–23"; 120, "complimentary" should be "complementary"; 136, a numbered heading when previous such headings are not numbered; 145–46, erroneous outline identifications under the third point; etc.) and editorial problems such as two repeated pages of material (31–34). Pate indicated via email correspondence that the copy he had in his possession did not seem to have some of these problems.

Regardless of one's eschatological preferences, Pate's volume stimulates theological thinking against the backdrop of the apostle Paul's first-century setting. Readers will come away with a greater understanding of the apostle's defense of the faith against its enemies.

JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal (eds.). *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaokampf Hypothesis*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013. xx + 332 pp. (cloth) \$54.50.

Reviewed by William D. Barrick, Director of Doctor of Theology Program, Adjunct Professor of Old Testament.

Fifteen of the seventeen essays contained in this volume were presented in the February 2011 meeting of the Midwest branches of the American Oriental Society at Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais, IL. Hermann Gunkel published his *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (translation: *Creation and Chaos in Primeval Time and End Time*) in 1895. He proposed that the ancient Near Eastern myths identified by Assyriologists formed the background for the biblical accounts of creation, chaos, conflict, and eschatology. In recent times, however, scholars have begun to question Gunkel's thesis, at least in part. These essays present the work of current scholars who have found it more prudent to modify Gunkel's hypothesis on the basis of a more thorough analysis of the extant data.

Following a brief "Introduction" by JoAnn Scurlock (ix–xiv), the editors divided the essays into six groups. First, "Creation and Chaos" containing Karen Sonik's "From Hesiod's Abyss to Ovid's *rudis indigestaque moles*: Chaos and Cosmos in the Babylonian 'Epic of Creation'" (1–25), Dennis R. M. Campbell's "On the Theogonies of Hesiod and the Hurrians: An Exploration of the Dual Natures of Teššub and Kumarbi" (26–43), W. O. Lambert's posthumously published "Creation in the Bible and the Ancient Near East" (44–47), and JoAnn Scurlock's "Searching for Meaning in Genesis 1:3: Purposeful Creation out of *Chaos* without *Kampf*" (48–61). All of these essays focus on various creation narratives, especially Hesiod's *Theogony*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Kumarbi Cycle*, and the Babylonian *Enuma eliš*. Sonik points out that a weakness in Gunkel's hypothesis involves his emphasis on the cosmogonic nature of Chaos, associated with creation of a *kosmos*, rather than recognizing that Chaos most often relates to a political power struggle in an ancient Near Eastern state or civilization. In other words, Chaos is kratogenic (5, 18, 25). Two of the essayists concur that Tiamat should not be associated with the biblical *tehom* ("deep") in Gen 1:2 (Sonik, 3n8; Lambert, 44). This collection of essays provides no support for some evangelical scholars who continue to associate *tehom* with Tiamat.

Second, "Monster-Bashing Myths" including Douglas Frayne's "The Fifth Day of Creation in Ancient Syrian and Neo-Hittite Art" (63–97), Amir Gilan's "Once upon a Time in Kiškiluša: The Dragon-Slayer Myth in Central Anatolia" (98–111), Joanna Töyräänvuori's "The Northwest Semitic Conflict Myth and Egyptian Sources from the Middle and New Kingdoms" (112–26), and Brendon C. Benz's "Yamm as the Personification of Chaos? A Linguistic and Literary Argument for a Case of Mistaken Identity" (127–45). In this part, four essays explore the depictions of mythic monsters or dragons and the biblical references to Behemoth and Leviathan. Images of Leviathan in ancient Near Eastern iconography form the main body of evidence presented by Frayne (70 Fig. 1, 74 Fig. 4, 79 Fig. 5, 81 Fig. 6, 84 Fig. 7). Unfortunately, he fails to distinguish between a sphinx, a cherub, a seraph, a griffin, and

Leviathan—which might not all represent the same living creature. In her essay, Töyräänvuori raises a significant question: Shouldn't the biblical account of creation (written by Egyptian trained Moses) contain more associations to Egyptian mythology than to Babylonian? One possible response could be that the Egyptians borrowed from the Hebrews' western Asiatic narratives instead of the other way around (113).

Third, "Gunkel and His Times" with Steven Lundström's "Chaos and Creation: Hermann Gunkel between Establishing the 'History of Religions School,' Acknowledging Assyriology, and Defending the Faith" (147–71), Peter Feinman's "Where Is Eden? An Analysis of Some of the Mesopotamian Motifs in Primeval J" (172–89), and Aaron Tugendhaft's "Babel-Bibel-Baal" (190–98, the shortest essay title of all seventeen). These essays evaluate the political and religious influences of Gunkel's day upon his hypotheses, as well as looking at ways to compare the various myths to one another. The historical development of the *Babel-Bibel Streit* (Babel-Bible-Debate) pitted conservatives against liberals. Lundström reveals that Gunkel stood among the former, because he and others like him "required every culture's history and religion to originate with God's revelation, not just the Old Testament and Israelite history" (152). The seeming success of the liberals appears to have resulted from the biblical scholars' failure to go public with (viz., by publishing) their research (152). The debate pitted the liberal Friedrich Delitzsch against his own father, Franz Delitzsch. If Friedrich Delitzsch's insistence that the Fall in Gen 3 originated with a Babylonian myth, then Gen 3:15 fails as the *Proto-Evangelium* and the historicity of Adam and Eve can be denied (155). In the practical outworking of belief systems, Friedrich Delitzsch's anti-Semitism stood in stark contrast to his father's Jewish evangelism (156–57). Lundström observes that "Gunkel was deeply concerned with [Friedrich] Delitzsch's move away from theology" (158). Feinman's essay relies much to heavily on the Documentary Hypothesis (esp. 188–89), but does stimulate thinking with regard to the potential identity of the four rivers of Eden (esp. 185–87). He makes a superb point that it is high time that scholars cease treating the early chapters of Genesis as a "free-floating, immature, hazy, primitive, oral geographic tradition" (184). Instead, the narrative deals with a real world (186). Tugendhaft's essay presages the later Melvin essay regarding the association of the repetition of protology in eschatology ("As in the beginning, so too in the end," 197).

Fourth, "Power and Politics" with Wayne T. Pitard's "The Combat Myth as a Succession Story at Ugarit" (199–205) and Robert D. Miller II's "What Are the Nations Doing in the *Chaoskampf*?" (206–15). Pitard and Miller examine the religiopolitical factors at work behind the original myths. The first of these two essays concludes with a valuable reminder for the comparative analysis of ancient Near Eastern myths and the biblical record: "the appearance of a similar motif in more than one story does not mean an identical function of the motif within the stories" (205). In other words, similarity does not mean identity. Miller's essay moves into the realm of the biblical book of Psalms. He recognizes the theological significance of Psalm 87's statement that non-Israelites can be counted among God's people by means of His own sovereign working (209–11). His identification of *yullad* in vv. 4–5 as "a periphrasis of God's action" (212; i.e., a divine passive) highlights an observation too often missed by exegetes of the Hebrew text. Again, however, an otherwise significant contribution to biblical studies gets sidetracked and twisted by means of

higher critical methodology and denial of Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy (214–15 and n. 75).

Fifth, “*Kampf and Chaos*” including Bernard F. Batto’s “The Combat Myth in Israelite Tradition Revisited” (217–36) and Richard E. Averbeck’s “The ‘Three Daughters’ of Ba’al and Transformations of *Chaoskampf* in the Early Chapters of Genesis” (237–56). As with every debated issue, agreement or disagreement turn upon terms and definitions of terms. Batto makes a distinction between *Chaoskampf* and “Combat Myth” (218). In his critical appraisal and response to Rebecca S. Watson’s *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of “Chaos” in the Hebrew Bible*, BZAW 341 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005) he makes some interesting and crucial observations, but also falls into some problems of his own. For example, he insists on harmonizing Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22, rather than letting each stand on its own as legitimate versions of the same original song (221). He assumes privileged knowledge of the intent of the biblical writer when he asserts that Israel’s use of the Combat Myth motif “was done consciously to promote Israel’s own national deity, Yahweh” (230)—in other words, a conscious adaptation of an older Babylonian tradition. The Documentary Hypothesis plays a major role in Batto’s view of Genesis as well (232–36), demonstrating that word of the apparent scholarly demise of this questionable hypothesis has been slightly exaggerated. His reference to allusions in the Priestly author of Gen 1:1–2:3 reminds this reviewer that allusions (233) can be illusions, or at least elusive. Averbeck’s essay turns out to be one of the best of the seventeen in this volume. He describes the parallelism between Baal’s three daughters (representing light, rain, and earth/dry ground) and the three main elements of creation that provide the necessary environment for vegetation and other life forms (esp. as found in Gen 1 and Ps 104; 245–47). He, along with several other essayists, sees a basis to identifying *Chaoskampf* in the biblical creation account (247–50). As he points out, the real conflict in the biblical record comes in the account of the Fall in Gen 3 (252–55). Methodologically, he rightly cautions that “careful analysis of the biblical passages and their innerbiblical parallels should always take precedence over comparisons with external texts” (254).

Sixth, “Chaos and (Re)Creation” containing JoAnn Scurlock’s “*Chaoskampf* Lost—*Chaoskampf* Regained: The Gunkel Hypothesis Revisited” (257–68) and David Melvin’s “Making All Things New (Again): Zephaniah’s Eschatological Vision of a Return to Primeval Time” (269–81). Scurlock notes that *Chaoskampf* is absent in Gen 1:1–2:4a (258). She focuses on identifying the gods most appropriate for creation (El) vs. restoration (Marduk), demonstrating that the biblical creation account doesn’t really fit well with the Marduk-centric *Enuma eliš* (266–67). The reader might wonder why she did not immediately identify Marduk as a more fitting counterpart to the Flood narrative in Gen 6–9. She too falls prey to higher critical methodology and denial of Mosaic authorship when she questions a preexilic date for the biblical creation account (259). Melvin explores the relationship of Zephaniah to Gen 1–11 in a fascinating discussion of the relationship of protology to eschatology (what this reviewer has often referred to by the rubric “Eschatology recapitulates protology in reverse order”). This final essay joins that of Averbeck as the two best in the volume.

Some readers might find this collection of essays somewhat esoteric. However, they clearly demonstrate the ongoing development of the scholarly examination of

the Genesis creation account. A better understanding of the issues comes about through a good historical background to the debate and its individual protagonists. Readers can see that the extremes of the past need amelioration and revision. Evangelical references to and identifications of *Chaoskampf* in the Genesis record need serious reconsideration, if not outright correction. The greatest weaknesses within these essays are (1) the absence of serious consideration of the role of divine revelation in regard to the biblical record and (2) the potential that all of the ancient Near Eastern myths might represent independent flawed and skewed memories of either the original divine revelation of creation or of the original events of the Flood and the tower of Babel.

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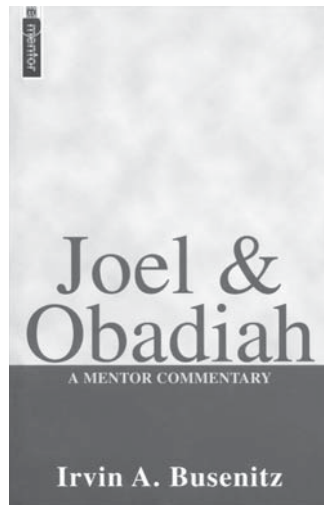
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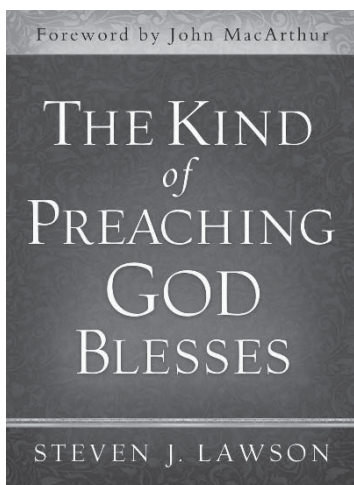
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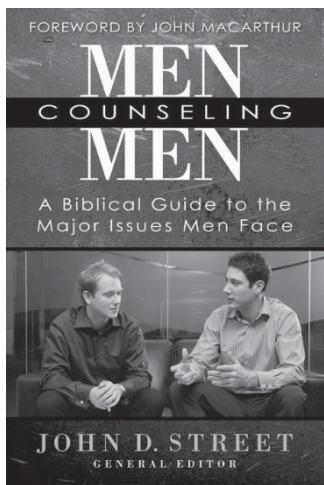
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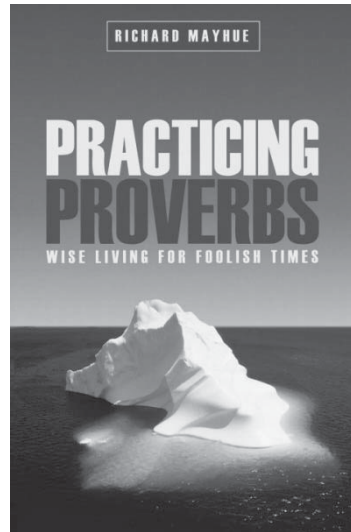
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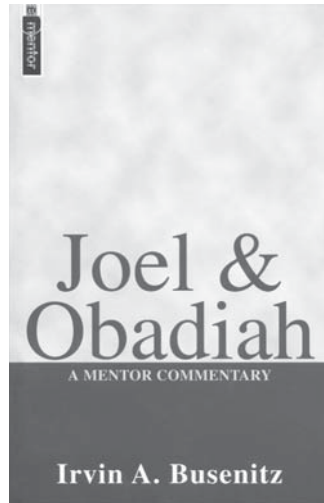
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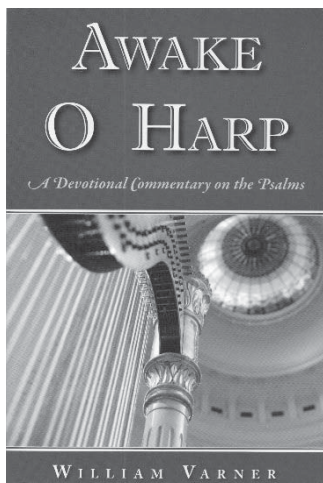
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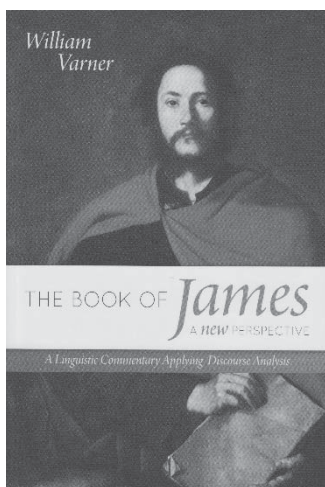
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