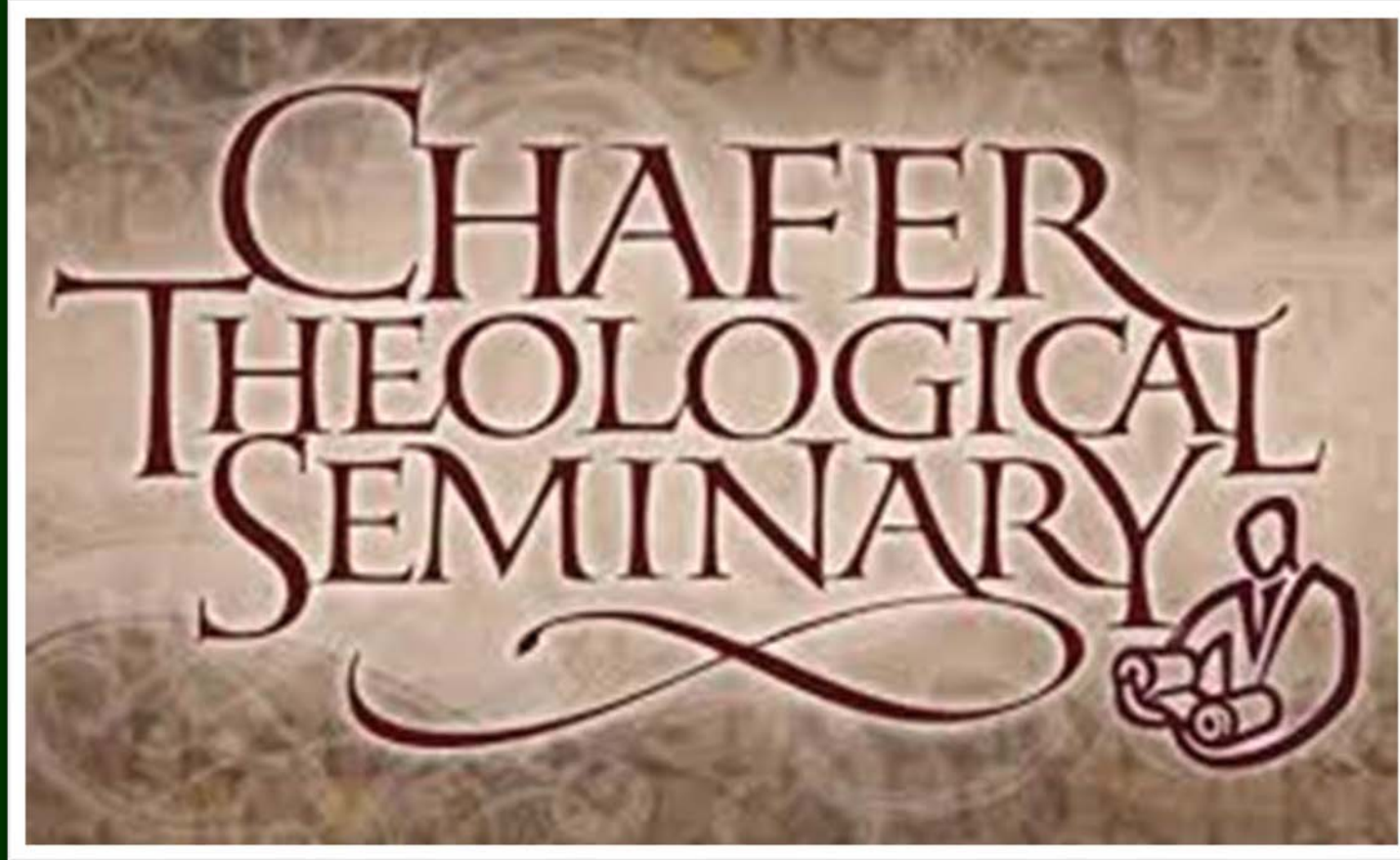


The Meaning of the Perfect in 1 Cor. 13:8-13



Dr. Andy Woods

Senior Pastor – Sugar Land Bible Church
President – Chafer Theological Seminary

The 7 Disputed Gifts

1. Apostle
2. Prophet
3. Worker of Miracles
4. Tongues
5. Interpretation of tongues
6. Healing
7. Knowledge



Two Camps

1. Charismatics – All the spiritual gifts are in operation today
2. Cessationists (selective)– Most of the spiritual gifts are in operation today



1 Corinthians 13:8-10

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The Revelatory Gifts

1. Prophet (Deut. 18:18; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Eph. 3:5; 1 Cor. 14:29-30; Acts 11:28; 21:10-11)
2. Knowledge (1 Cor. 13:2, 8-9; 14:6)
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3. Tongues & Interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 14:21-22 vs. 26-27)

1 Corinthians 14:21-22

“²¹ In the Law it is written, ‘BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,’ says the Lord. ²² **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 Corinthians 14:26-27

“²⁶ What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret.”



Spiritual Gifts

(1 Corinthians 12–14)

1. Unity (1:11; 3:22; 6; 8–10; 11:18-19; 12:25; 15:12)

2. Corinthians 12–14

a. Many gifts for use in one Body – 1 Cor. 12

b. The needed emphasis of Love – 1 Cor. 13

c. Priority and Order – 1 Cor. 14

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- 1) Necessity of love (13:1-3)
- 2) Nature of love (13:4-7)
- 3) Endurance of love (13:8-13)



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3) Endurance of Love Emphasis

(1 Cor. 13:8-13)

- a) Unlike Love, the revelatory gifts will cease (8-10)
- b) Two illustrations (11-12)
 - i. Immaturity to maturity (11)
 - ii. Limited to full sight (12)
- c) Unlike love, Faith (2 Cor. 5:7) and Hope (Rom. 8:24) will cease (13)

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Three Interpretations

1. Eschaton or End
2. Maturity of the Church
3. Completion of the NT canon

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D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Prove All Things*, ed. Christopher Catherwood
(Eastbourne, England: Kingsway, 1985), 32–33.

“It means that you and I, who have the Scriptures open before us, know much more than the apostle Paul of Gods truth...It means that we are altogether superior...even to the apostles themselves, including the apostle Paul! It means that we are now in a position which...‘we know, even as we are known’ by God...indeed, there is only one word to describe such a view, it is nonsense.”

“The Perfect” [teleios] in 1 Cor. 13:10

Three Interpretations

1. Eschaton or End
2. Maturity of the Church
3. Completion of the NT canon

1. “The Perfect” [*teleios*] in 1 Cor. 13:10 = The Eschaton or End

- a) Most popular view
- b) Something ideal, perfect, unblemished
- c) Death, rapture, 2nd advent, eternal state (vs. 12; Rev. 22:4)
- d) “Now” (vs. 12) = revelatory gifts continuing until the end
- e) “Then” (vs. 12) = revelatory gifts ceasing after the end

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Problems with the Eschaton View

1. 'Teleios' never means perfection but maturity
2. 'Teleios' never used of Eschatological events
3. Perfection (quality) does not provide a suitable antithesis to "in part" [*ek meros*] of verses 10, 12 (quantitative)
4. Eschatological events happen immediately making the analogy of vs. 11 difficult
5. 'Teleios' is neuter while the personal coming of Christ would require a masculine adjective
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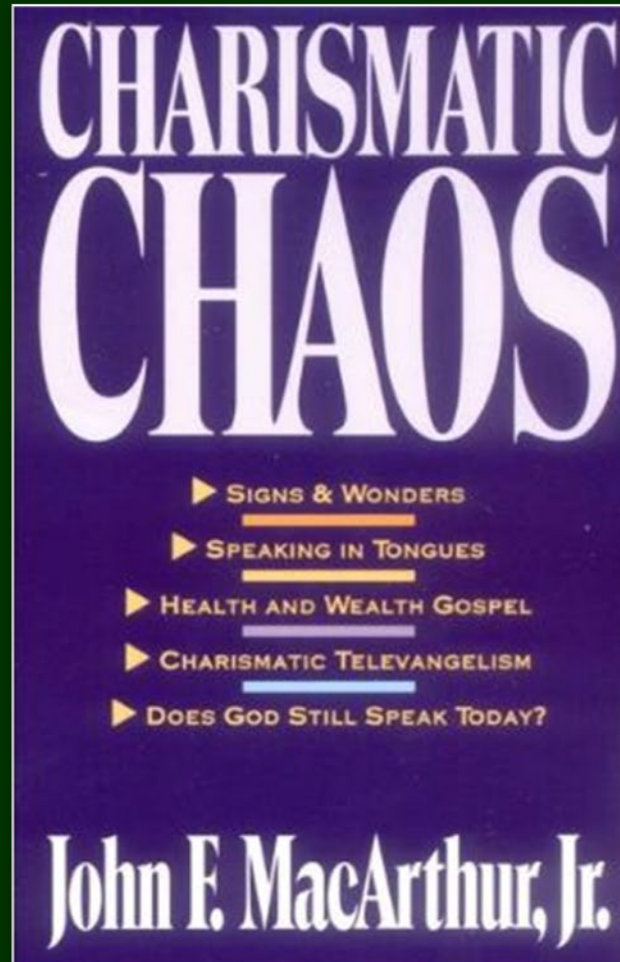
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John MacArthur

Charismatic Chaos, p. 66-84



Montanism

Roman Catholicism

Neo-orthodoxy

Mormonism

“The Perfect” [teleios] in 1 Cor. 13:10

Three Interpretations

1. Eschaton or End
2. Maturity of the Church
3. Completion of the NT canon

2. “The Perfect” [teleios] in 1 Cor. 13:10 = Church’s Maturity

- a) Closer to the truth than the Eschaton view
- b) Canon, unity, independence, death of the apostles, AD 70
- c) “Now” (vs. 12) = revelatory gifts continuing until end of first century
- d) “Then” (vs. 12) = revelatory gifts cease in the second century

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Strengths of the Maturity View

1. Consistent with “infants” and “adulthood” (vs. 11)
2. Fits context of 1 Corinthians (3:1-3)
3. “Teleios” = maturity in 1 Corinthians 2:6 and 14:20
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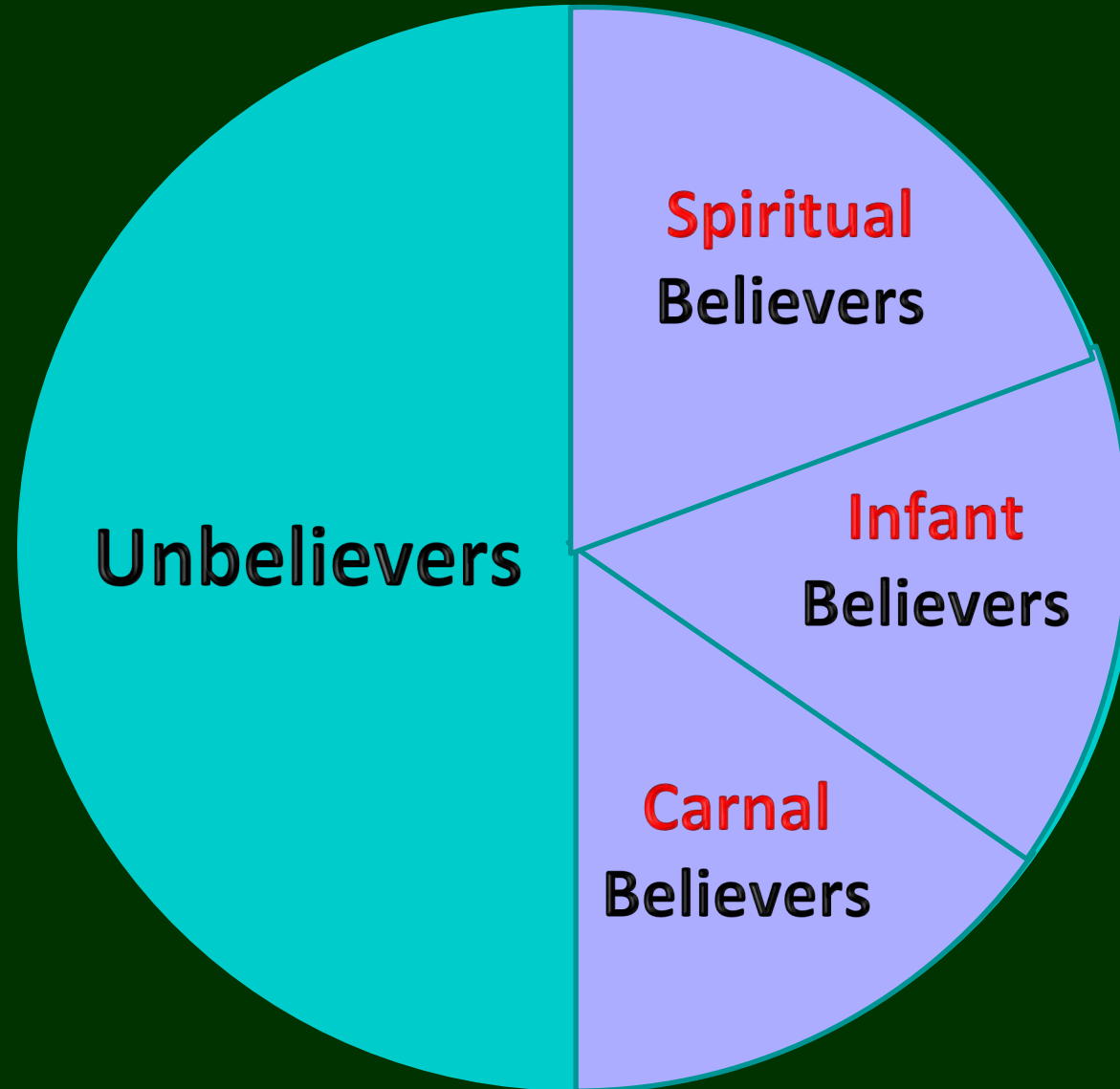
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1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to **spiritual people** but as to **carnal**, as to **babes** in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; ³ **for you are still carnal**. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, **are you not carnal** and behaving like *mere men*?



4 Kinds of People from 1 Corinthians 3:1-3



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1. Maturity (quality) does not provide a suitable antithesis to “in part” [*ek meros*] of verses 10, 12 (quantitative)
2. Criteria for depicting the church’s maturity is arbitrary
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Ephesians 4:13-14

“¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;”



“The Perfect” [teleios] in 1 Cor. 13:10

Three Interpretations

1. Eschaton or End
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3. “The Perfect” [*teleios*] in 1 Cor. 13:10 = The Completed Canon

- a) 1st century revelatory gifts were “in part” [*ek meros*] (vs. 10, 12)
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2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

**God's Word's
SUFFICIENT**



2 Peter 1:3-4

³ “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything** pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. ⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent **promises**, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”



Jude 3

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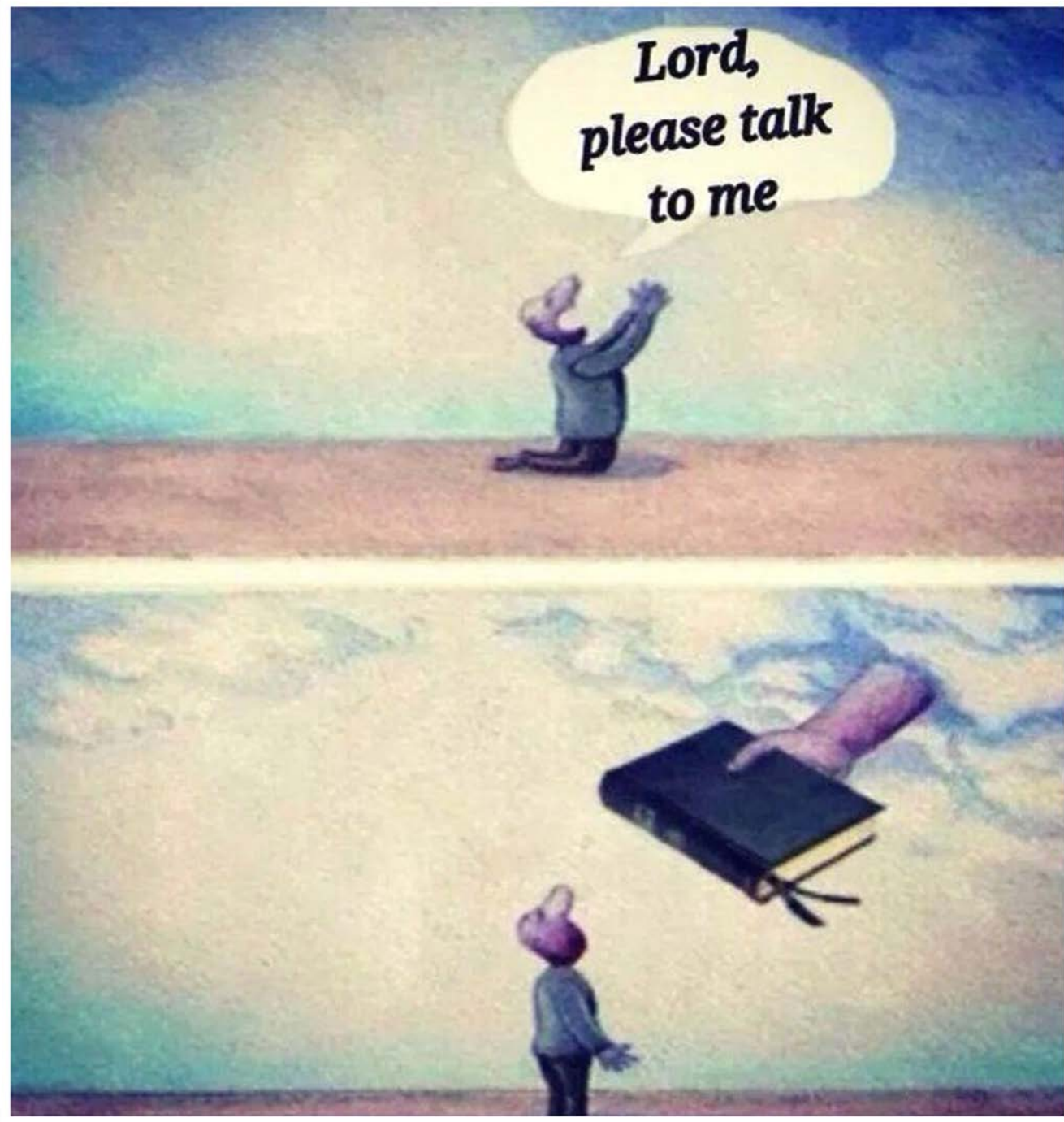


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**Lord,
please talk
to me**



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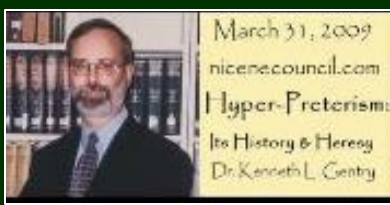




Robert Dean

Robert Dean, "Three Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues"
(paper, Conservative Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, 2002), 9.

"[T]he child represents the incomplete knowledge available to the infant, pre-canon church. Just as a child has inadequate knowledge to live as a mature adult, so the pre-canon church lacked a sufficient canon and doctrine to lead the spiritual life of the new Church Age. An adult reaches maturity when he is complete with the knowledge and skills necessary for life. So, too the post canon church has the completed canon of Scripture which is sufficient for every need, every problem, every difficulty in life. Through the learning of the doctrines of the Word under the filling of the Holy Spirit the believer is able to pursue spiritual maturity."



Kenneth Gentry

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“When Paul was in his childhood, he thought as a child was expected to think. But when he became a mature man, he naturally put away childish thought modes. Similarly, when the church was in her infancy, she operated by means of bit by bit piecemeal revelation. But when she grew older, she operated by means of finalized Scripture. Thus, tongues were related to the Church in her infancy stage (cp. 1 Cor. 14:19, 20).”

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Strengths of the Completed NT Canon View

1. Completed NT canon (quantitative) provides a suitable antithesis to “in part” [*ek meros*] of verses 10, 12 (quantitative)
2. “Teleios” is used in James (AD 44–47) for Scripture (1:25)
3. The canon view handles well the mirror [*esoptron*] analogy of verse 12 (Jas. 1:23) since Scripture furnishes us with realistic self assessment (Gal. 3:24; Rom. 5:20; 7:7; Jas. 1:23-25)
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1 Corinthians 13:8-10

“⁸ 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. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect [teleios] comes, the partial will be done away.”





A Completed NT Canon is a Suitable Antithesis to Revelation “In Part”

“Is it possible to determine the nature of the partial gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge? Yes. The answer is that they are revelational in quality. Since this is so, then ‘the perfect’ must also be revelational.”

A Completed NT Canon is a Suitable Antithesis to Revelation “In Part”

“‘That which is complete’ should logically be of the same kind as ‘that which is partial’ and is therefore most naturally understood as a reference to the completion of revelation for the Church Age.”

Strengths of the Completed NT Canon View

1. Completed NT canon (quantitative) provides a suitable antithesis to “in part” [*ek meros*] of verses 10, 12 (quantitative)
2. “Teleios” is used in James (AD 44–47) for Scripture (1:25)
3. The canon view handles well the mirror [*esoptron*] analogy of verse 12 (Jas. 1:23) since Scripture furnishes us with realistic self assessment (Gal. 3:24; Rom. 5:20; 7:7; Jas. 1:23-25)
4. The canon view handles well the immediate “now” [*arti*] of verse 12 and the distant “non” [*nyni*] of verse 13

James 1:25

“But one who looks intently at the perfect [teleios] law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”



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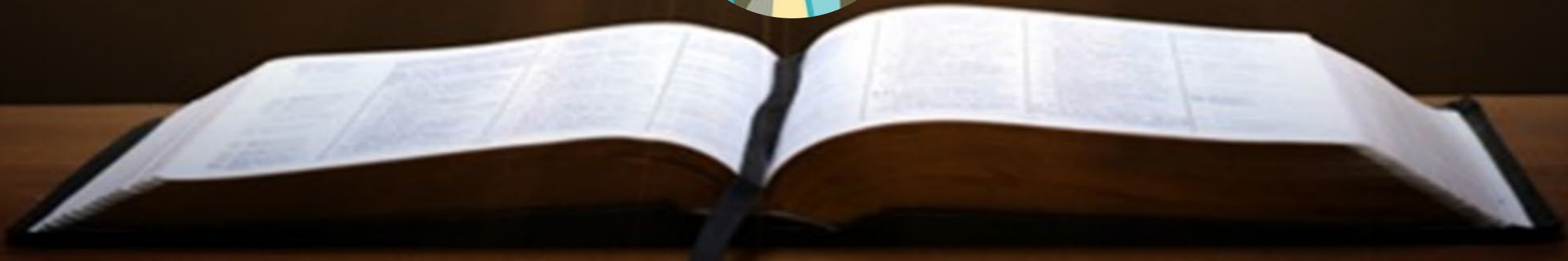
1 Corinthians 13:11-13

“¹¹ 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. ¹² For now we see in a mirror [*esoptron*] 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. ¹³ But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”



James 1:22-23

“²² But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror [esoptron].”





Robert Dean

Robert Dean, "Three Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues"
(paper, Conservative Theological Society, Fort Worth, TX, 2002), 11.

“Paul envisioned a time, yet future when believers would have the entire realm of mystery doctrine to objectively know themselves as never before and be spiritually self sustaining. Only God has a complete knowledge of the believer and only with a complete canon can the believer have sufficient, objective knowledge of himself. Through learning and applying doctrine from the completed and sufficient Scripture a mirror is constructed in his soul. This mirror of truth enables the believer to accurately and objectively evaluate his own life and circumstances from the divine viewpoint. Prior to the . . .



Robert Dean

Robert Dean, "Three Arguments for the Cessation of Tongues"
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... the completed canon the believer could only have an incomplete understanding of who he is and what he possesses as a member of the royal family of God, and all the vast assets that God has provided for him. It is the completed Word of God that provides this sufficient, perspicuous understanding of ourselves as we truly are. Prior to the revelation of the mystery doctrine the believer looked into the mirror of God's Word dimly and saw a riddle, due to incomplete revelation."

Mirrors at Corinth

“Corinth was famous as the producer of some of the finest bronze mirrors in antiquity.”...“But even the best mirrors reflected images imperfectly.”



Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 480;
Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 647-48.



Myron J. Houghton

“A Reexamination of 1 Corinthians 13:8–13,” BibSac 153 (July-September 1996): 353.

“Because believers today possess complete revelation, they are able to understand what God’s Word teaches about themselves, their potential, their limitations, and the means that God has made available for them to obtain victory over sin in a clear and detailed manner **that was not possible before the completion of the canon**. The Scriptures equip a believer for every good work by being profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training (2 Tim 3:16–17).”

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3) Endurance of Love Emphasis

(1 Cor. 13:8-13)

- a) Unlike Love, the revelatory gifts will cease (8-10)
- b) Two illustrations (11-12)
 - i. Immaturity to maturity (11)
 - ii. Limited to full sight (12)
- c) Unlike love, Faith (2 Cor. 5:7) and Hope (Rom. 8:24) will cease (13)

1 Corinthians 13:11-13

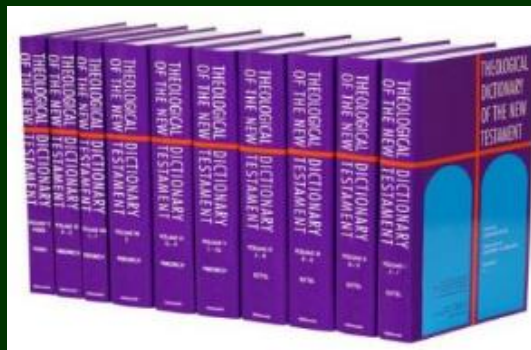
“¹¹ When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. ¹² For now [arti] we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now [arti] I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. ¹³ But now [nyni] faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”



Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)

G. Stählin, "Nyn (arti)," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:1107 n. 8, and p.111

“How closely ἄρτι and νῦν approximate may be seen from a whole series of expressions which have their roots in either the one or the other. ...On the other hand, in the koine ἄρτι may, with νῦν, denote the present strictly as a pt. of time...or as a period of time, e.g., 1 C. 13:12...The most important and frequent use of νῦν in this way is for the period between the comings...it embraces in its fulness the whole of the period.”



Problems with the Canon View Answered

1. “Face to face” (vs. 12a) refers not to fellowship with God (Judges 6:22) but rather revelation from God (Num. 12:6-8) allowing honest self assessment (Jas. 1:23)
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Judges 6:22

“When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, ‘Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face.’”



Numbers 12:6-8

⁶ He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. ⁷ “Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; ⁸ With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?”



1 Corinthians 13:11-12

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D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Prove All Things*, ed. Christopher Catherwood
(Eastbourne, England: Kingsway, 1985), 32–33.

Referring to the Completed Canon view writes, “It means that you and I, who have the Scriptures open before us, know much more than the apostle Paul of God’s truth...It means that we are altogether superior...even to the apostles themselves, including the apostle Paul! It means that we are now in a position which . . . ‘we know, even as we are known’ by God . . . indeed, there is only one word to describe such a view, it is nonsense.”



Myron J. Houghton

“A Reexamination of 1 Corinthians 13:8–13,” *BibSac* 153 (July-September 1996): 353-54, n. 27.

“However, the problem does not go away if these words are interpreted eschatologically. In eternity, will believers really know fully just as they have been full known? The answer to this question seems to be, ‘Yes, but only in some limited qualified sense.’ If that answer is acceptable for the eschatological interpretation, then it ought to be acceptable for this writer’s ‘completed canon’ view as well.”

John 16:12-15

¹² “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.”



1 Corinthians 2:9-12

⁹ but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” ¹⁰ For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches **all things**, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may **know the things freely given to us by God.**”



1 Corinthians 2:13-16

¹³ which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. ¹⁴ But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises **all things**, yet he himself is appraised by no one. ¹⁶ For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.



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2 Timothy 4:13

“When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.”

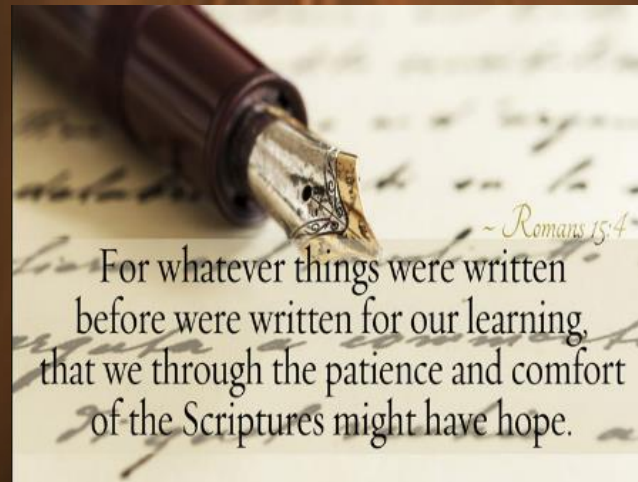


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Romans 15:4

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”



~ Romans 15:4
For whatever things were written
before were written for our learning,
that we through the patience and comfort
of the Scriptures might have hope.



2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

God's Word's
SUFFICIENT



Problems with Cessationism Answered

1. Prophets are predicted in the future (Joel 2:28-32; Rev. 11:3-13)?
Israel-Church distinction
2. Leaves the church without the ability to understand and proclaim Scripture? These revelatory gifts transitioned into edificatory gifts
3. Cessationists are anti-super-naturalists? Today God miraculously intervenes directly
4. You are putting God in a box? God's work is limited based upon the parameters that God Himself has already set (Isa. 64:6: Heb. 6:18)
5. Church history shows the continuation of all gifts

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Apostolic Gift of Healing	Healing Today
No prayer	Prayer
Indirect	Direct
Apostles	Physicians
Instantaneous	Gradual
Common	Less common
Automatic	Non-automatic

Problems with Cessationism Answered

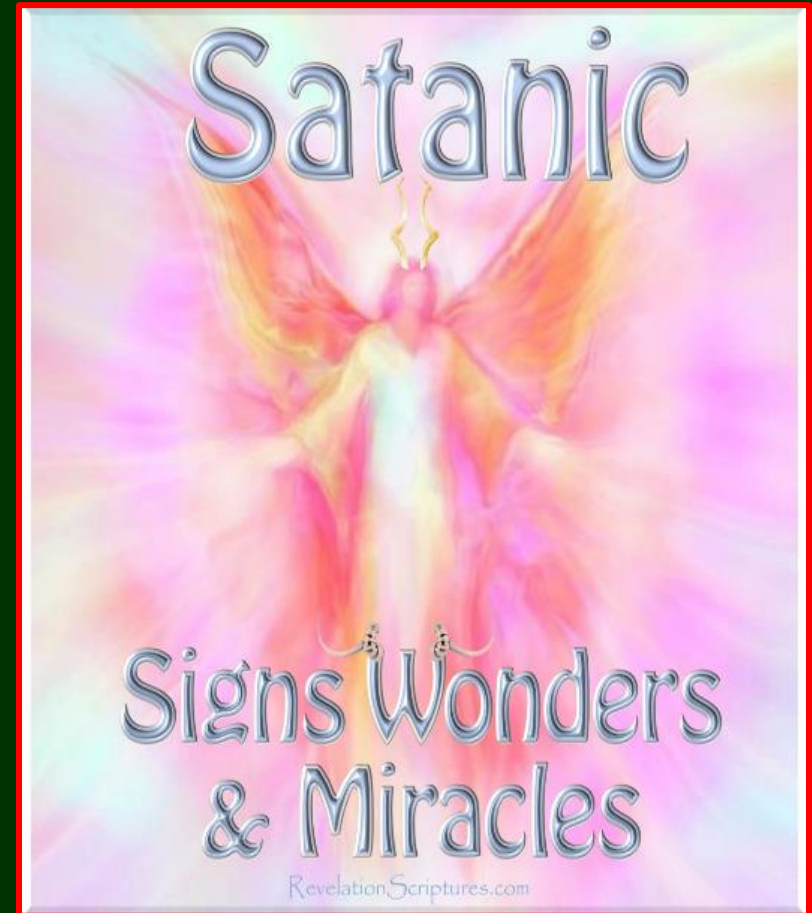
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Satanic/Demonic Miracles

1. Exod. 7–8
2. Deut. 13:1-3
3. Job 1:12-19; 2:7-8
4. 1 Sam. 28?
5. Matt. 7:21-23; 24:24
6. Acts 8:9; 16:16
7. Gal. 1:6-9
8. 2 Thess. 2:9
9. Rev. 13:3, 13, 15; 16:13-14



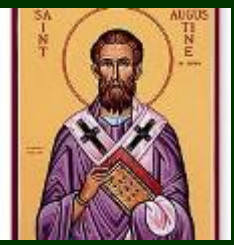


Chrysostom (A.D. 345–407)

Patriarch of Constantinople

Chrysostom, Homily 29 on First Corinthians.

“This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity has produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more?”

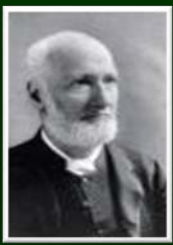


Augustine (A.D. 354–430)

Bishop of Hippo

Homily 6:10 on the First Epistle of John.

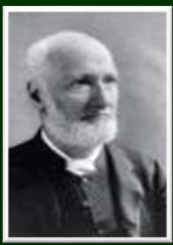
“In the earliest times, the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:4 These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to show that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away. . . . If then the witness of the presence of the Holy Ghost be not now given through these miracles, by what is it given, by what does one get to know that he has received the Holy Ghost?”



Philip Schaff

History of the Christian Church, vol. 1 , p. 236-37.

“We do not know how long the glossolalia, as thus described by Paul, continued. It passed away gradually with the other extraordinary or strictly supernatural gifts of the apostolic age. It is not mentioned in the Pastoral, nor in the Catholic Epistles. We have but a few allusions to it at the close of the second century. Irenæus (Adv. Haer. 1. v. c. 6 § 1,) speaks of ‘many brethren’ whom he heard in the church having the gift of prophecy and of speaking in ‘diverse tongues’ (παντοδαπαῖς γλώσσαις), bringing the hidden things of men (τὰ κρύφια τῶν ἀνθρώπων) to light and expounding the mysteries of God (τὰ μυστήρια τοῦ θεοῦ). It is not clear whether by the term ‘diverse,’ which does not elsewhere occur, he means a speaking in foreign languages, or in diversities of tongues altogether peculiar, like those meant by Paul.”



Philip Schaff

History of the Christian Church, vol. 1 , p. 236-37.

“The latter is more probable. Irenæus himself had to learn the language of Gaul. Tertullian (Adv. Marc. V. 8; comp. De Anima, c. 9) obscurely speaks of the spiritual gifts, including the gift of tongues, as being still manifest among the Montanists to whom he belonged. At the time of Chrysostom it had entirely disappeared; at least he accounts for the obscurity of the gift from our ignorance of the fact. From that time on the glossolalia was usually misunderstood as a miraculous and permanent gift of foreign languages for missionary purposes. But the whole history of missions furnishes no clear example of such a gift for such a purpose.”

Conclusion

“The Perfect” [teleios] in 1 Cor. 13:10

Three Interpretations

1. Eschaton or End
2. Maturity of the Church
3. Completion of the NT canon