

Knowing Our God

Advanced Exegetical Theology

The Knowledge of God Series

Book 9

God's Prophets

Is God Still Giving Revelation Today?

Kurt Jurgensmeier

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Dedication

To my son Joshua who has a gift from God for seeking and discerning truth. May God use him to expose false prophets and teachers that would harm the Church.

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The chapters below are marked with the following categories in order to help you prioritize your reading:

- ◆ **Best:** The most helpful, interesting and/or important chapters.
- ◆ **Essential:** Important chapters to understand the topic of the book.
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Preface

Helping the next generation of Bible Teachers

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)

These words were written to a young Teacher of God's word. They are a reminder of the awesome privilege, responsibility, and accountability that comes with such a divine calling. Being a Teacher is God's gift to a man, but what kind of Teacher he becomes is his gift to God. And God tells all Teachers something of what He is expecting in the verse above.

First, the Teacher is to "**present**" himself "**to God**" when he teaches. When we teach it is not only humans that are listening, but Heaven as well, and God is our most important audience. We can be concerned with what people will think of our teaching, but we need to be much, much more concerned with what God will think.

And God's expectations can significantly differ from those of humans. People often expect eloquence and entertainment, God expects accuracy, "**correctly**" interpreting, teaching, and applying God's word for God's people. There is nothing in all the world more important than this because to do otherwise is to misunderstand, misrepresent, and eventually disobey the Author.

As in all human endeavors, not even God expects perfection, but He certainly demands that we do our "**best**." We need to remember that we do all of this under the watchful eye of the Author Himself, and will one Day be either "**approved**" or "**ashamed**" regarding how careful and diligent we were in working to understand, teach, and apply His word "**correctly**."

This book is offered as a help in obeying the Apostle's command for those who have, or desire to have, the great responsibility of teaching God's word to His people. It is part of a series of books written under the title of ***Knowing Our God: Advanced Exegetical Theology***.

These books are *advanced* in that they are an in-depth, scholarly study of very specific and often difficult theological topics.

They are uniquely *exegetical* in that there is a special emphasis on interpreting the Scriptures applicable to the topic. While many systematic theologies would not require much of a Scripture index,

a large percentage of the current 5000 pages of *Knowing Our God* is commentary on Scripture.

Finally, these books are *theology*, because it is in such an endeavor that we bring the pieces of God's word into a harmonious whole in order to produce the full truth of Scripture. We believe *Advanced Exegetical Theology* is a great need in equipping Pastors today to defend the faith for this and future generations.

Ezra the priest, of course, is our example, of whom it is written: **"the gracious hand of his God was on him. For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel"** (Ezra 7:9-10). Obeying God's word was obviously important to Ezra, but so was being **"devoted . . . to the study"** of God's word, all so that he could be **"teaching"** it to God's people. It is our hope that this book will help you do just that.

Finally, a few practical points. First, while we are not aware of anything in it that would be contrary to the historical, Evangelical Christian faith, if you encounter something that differs from the beliefs of your Pastor(s), please discuss it with them if it causes serious questions for you. We desire to respect the pastoral authority God has in your life as much as possible.

Secondly, studying God's word is best pursued in community with spiritual peers, and we encourage you to read this with others and discuss the ***Gauging Your Grasp*** questions usually at the end of a chapter.

Thirdly, we make an effort to make an organized study of God's word not just theological but practical as well. So prayerfully consider the sections entitled ***Pastoral Practices*** along the way.

Fourth, as you read you will notice several references to other writings. This reflects the fact that this book is an excerpt from a larger production entitled *Knowing Our God*. The entire collection of books on systematic theology that are currently available can be found at www.trainingtimothys.org.

Finally, we would appreciate the reader visiting the site and emailing us any feedback on this book, including concerns, comments, and any proposed corrections. We too wish to study God's word in community, and that community includes you.

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Book 9
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Part I
Introduction to Prophets
& *Prophetism*

- ◆ **9.1:** Defining Biblical Prophets: 11
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Damaging Christians & Inviting Divine Judgment

Chapter 9.1
Defining Biblical Prophets
Foretelling & Forthtelling

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Primary Points

- The gift of prophecy is perhaps the most misunderstood and potentially dangerous aspect of divine revelation among God's people today.
- *Prophetism* is the belief of *hundreds* of millions of Christians that biblical Prophets are still operating today, giving us new, extrabiblical revelation.
- *Historicists* adhere to the historical position of the Church that the gift of prophecy ceased shortly after the Apostles were extinct.
- Either *prophetists* are sinning by claiming revelations they do not have, or *historicists* are sinning by ignoring Prophets God has sent.
- The two primary attributes of a biblical Prophet are: 1) "Forthtelling" direct divine revelation to be believed or obeyed as the word of God, and 2) "Foretelling" events in order to authenticate the divine revelation.
- While many would gut the function of prediction from the gift of prophecy today, it needs to be asked: Why do they still call it *prophecy*? By definition, the essence of prophecy has historically been understood as synonymous with prediction.

A) The Importance of the Debate Regarding the Gift of Prophecy

There is perhaps no aspect of divine revelation that is more misunderstood and potentially dangerous among God's people today than the gift of prophecy. *Prophetism* is our word for the belief that biblical Prophets are still operating today, giving us new, extrabiblical revelation from God. *Hundreds* of millions of Christians believe this today, and its ramifications are obvious. Accordingly, the debate over the biblical definition of the gift of prophecy is not merely academic, but moral, because either *prophetists* are sinning against God by claiming revelations they do not have, or *historicists* are sinning against God by ignoring Prophets He has sent. If you don't think this is an important topic, read about how God feels about people who falsely claim to have the gift of prophecy in chapter 9.3.

By *historicists* we refer to those who adhere to the historical position of the Church that the gift of prophecy ceased shortly after the Apostles were extinct. Accordingly, the second century version of *prophetism* called *Montanism* was universally rejected by the Christian Church, and for at least 1700 years afterwards any other claims to the gift were likewise denounced as heresy. While most modern *prophetists* even admit this history, they claim the gift has been uniquely restored to them. As we look at the biblical attributes of the gift of prophecy and compare it with the modern version being practiced, it will be demonstrated that modern *prophetists* are in fact lying about possessing the gift and bringing upon themselves all of the eventual divine judgment for falsely claiming such a thing. Accordingly, modern *prophetism* is one of the most dangerous deceptions in the history of Christianity, and a topic which requires a thorough biblical understanding lest we find ourselves under that same judgment. To that end we offer the following.

B) Biblical Prophets Spoke Divine Revelation & Predicted the Future

B.1) Biblical support

The most comprehensive description of a biblical Prophet is given when God tells the Israelites:

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you [Moses] from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account. ²⁰ But a Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a Prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" ²² If what a Prophet proclaims [foretells ¹] in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That Prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deut 18:18-22)

This prophecy directly related to the Messiah Jesus Christ, Whom God calls here a Prophet, and of course He was the preeminent Prophet of God, and recognized as one (cf. Matt 21:11, 46; 23:31-39; Mark 6:15; 8:11, 28; Luke 4:24; 7:16, 39; 13:33; 24:19; John 4:19, 44; 6:14; 7:40, 52; 9:17).

While this prophecy obviously applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, it applied as well to all biblical Prophets. ² Accordingly, here we find

¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch comment on Deut 18:18-22:

The false Prophet was to be discovered by the fact, that the word proclaimed by him did not follow or come to pass, i.e., that his prophecy was not fulfilled. Of him they were not to be afraid. By this injunction the occurrence of what had been predicted is made the criterion of true prophecy, and not signs and wonders, which false Prophets could also perform (cf. Deut 13:2ff.). (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Findex.com, 2000]).

² Again, Keil and Delitzsch comment on Deuteronomy 18:18-22:

When Moses thus attaches to the prohibition against hearkening to soothsayers and practicing soothsaying, the promise that Jehovah would raise up a Prophet, etc., and contrasts what the Lord would do for His people with what He did not allow, it is perfectly evident from this simple connection alone, apart from the further context of the passage, in which Moses treats of the temporal and spiritual rulers of Israel (ch. 17 and 18), that the promise neither relates to one particular Prophet, nor directly and exclusively to the Messiah, but treats of the sending of Prophets generally.

And this is also confirmed by what follows with reference to true and false Prophets, which presupposes the rise of a plurality of Prophets, and shows most incontrovertibly that it is not one Prophet

the two primary God-ordained attributes of a biblical Prophet: 1) "Forthtelling" direct divine revelation to be believed or obeyed as the word of God Himself, and 2) "Foretelling" events in order to authenticate the divine revelation.

First, biblical Prophets infallibly spoke the very words of God. Accordingly, we read above:

I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account. (vs. 18-19).

Obviously such a spiritual gift as prophecy carried a great deal of authority. In fact, nothing less than divine authority. Therefore, as we have demonstrated throughout *Knowing Our God (KOG)*, such divine authority must be divinely authenticated. The method of supernatural authentication described here is the accurate prediction of the future. Accordingly, God assumed that one of His Prophets would predict the future to authenticate their divine revelation. This authentication was so important that if someone claimed the gift of prophecy and could not predict the future, people could confidently conclude that "**what [the] Prophet proclaims . . . is a message the LORD has not spoken**" (v. 22).

The seriousness of falsely claiming to be a Prophet of God, and unable to supernaturally predict the future, is illustrated in the fact that God commanded that someone "**who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not [clearly, expressly] commanded him to say . . . must be put to death**" (v. 20). The gift of prophecy was not something to be claimed lightly or to guess at, which is obviously something that modern *prophetism* ignores.

While God's desire to have a presumptuous "prophet" executed evidently did not carry over to the New Covenant, the above two foundational attributes of a biblical Prophet did. Accordingly, the Christian Prophet Agabus is described by the early Church historian Luke when he writes:

After we had been there [Caesarea] a number of days, a Prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way

only, nor the Messiah exclusively, who is promised here. It by no means follows from the use of the singular, "a Prophet," that Moses is speaking of one particular Prophet only; but the idea expressed is this, that at any time when the people stood in need of a mediator with God like Moses, God would invariably send a Prophet.

the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.” (Acts 21:10-11)

We see then that a NT Prophet is described as having the same supernatural attributes required of an OT Prophet. First, Agabus, like an OT Prophet, and unlike anyone can today apart from quoting Scripture, prefaced his extra-biblical statement with, **“The Holy Spirit says . . .”** (v. 11), which was followed by an extra-biblical direct quote of God that would be sinful to disbelieve. Secondly, and also like an OT Prophet, but unlike anyone today, Agabus supernaturally and undeniably predicted the future. Accordingly, Luke records a few verses later that the Apostle was indeed attacked by the Jews, and bound and turned over to Roman officials in Jerusalem (cf. vs. 27-33; 28:17).³

Likewise, Luke had also written previously of Agabus:

During this time some Prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.²⁸ **One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)**²⁹ **The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.** (Acts 11:27-29)

The authentication of a Christian Prophet is again illustrated in Agabus’ ability to supernaturally predict the future. In addition, the authority of a Christian Prophet in the early Church is evidenced by the fact that **“the disciples . . . decided”** (v. 29) to act on Agabus’ prophecy before it even came to pass.

John, the NT Apostle and obvious Prophet,⁴ is a definitive example of the attributes of the gift of prophecy. He received direct, divinely authoritative, specific instructions from God for seven churches in Asia Minor (cf. Rev 2-3). He also predicted a great deal of the future. Accordingly, from ancient times it has been said of those who really possess the gift of prophecy: **“everything he says comes true”** (1 Sam 9:6; cf. v. 9).

B.2) Lexical support

³ For further defense of the attributes of Agabus see section 9.7.D.

⁴ For further argument that the Apostle John was given the gift of prophecy see section 9.7.H.

While many would gut the function of prediction from the gift of prophecy today, it needs to be asked: Why do they still call it *prophecy*? By definition, the essence of prophecy has historically been understood as synonymous with prediction. And this is why Scripture itself uses the word prophecy to describe this gift—because it too included prediction.

Accordingly, the OT and NT words referring to biblical Prophets reveal the functions of “forthtelling” extra-biblical divine revelation and foretelling the future. In the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)* we read:

The main term used in the OT to refer to a Prophet is *nābi*. . . . The role of the [Hebrew] *nābi* ["Prophet"] is clarified in the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Because Moses refused to speak to Pharaoh, Yahweh appointed Aaron to be his *nabi* ["direct messenger"] (Ex. 6:28-7:2). Moses himself is called a *nabi* because God spoke [directly] through him (cf. Nu. 12:1f., 6-8).

The [OT] Prophets were persons who spoke the words that God put in their mouths (Dt. 18:18-22); they were messengers who reported God's words, often saying, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel.” Other texts speak of the word of the Lord coming [directly] to a Prophet (I K. 16:7, 12; 2 K. 14:25; 24:2; 2 Ch. 29:25). The Prophetic books [Scripture] record the [direct and divine] oracles that God revealed to some of the Prophets. . . .⁵

Likewise, concerning the use of *prophētēs* in the NT, we read in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*:

In the NT *prophētēs* is found 144 times. . . . The noun means a Prophet, one who proclaims and expounds divine revelation. In most cases it refers to OT Prophets, but it is also applied to John the Baptist, Jesus, and others who proclaim the Kingdom of God of Christ, and to the believer who possesses the gift of prophecy. . . .⁶

It is similar with the occurrences of the verb ["prophecy", Gr. *prophēteuō*], which is found 28 times in the NT . . . The basic meaning is to proclaim divine revelation (e.g. Matt. 7:22).

⁵ G. V. Smith, “Prophets” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, , ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), III:987-88, 1003-4.

⁶ Colin Brown, “Prophet” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, Colin Brown ed., 4 vols., (Zondervan, 1986), III:81-87

This can be understood in an ethical sense (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:3, 3 1; to comfort, exhort, teach); in a revelatory sense (e.g. Matt. 26:68) or as pointing to the future (e.g. Matt. 15:7; to foretell).⁷

Therefore, we see in both the OT and NT that the two foundational attributes of a biblical Prophet were reliably “forthtelling” extra-biblical divine revelation to be believed and obeyed, and accurately foretelling the future to authenticate such divine authority.

B.3) Historical support

Early Church Fathers believed the same and did not allow someone to claim the gift of prophecy unless they had accurately predicted the future. So much so that “prediction” or “foreknowledge” was synonymous with the gift of prophecy.

Accordingly, Justin Martyr (c. 150), in his apologetic piece to the Jewish unbeliever Trypho wrote:

Some are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and quitting the path of error; who are also receiving [spiritual] gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined through the name of this Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding [knowledge], another of counsel [wisdom], another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God.⁸

Obviously, “foreknowledge” for Justin was synonymous with the gift of prophecy.

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 180), writes somewhat more specifically than Justin:

Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. . . . Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. . . . and bring to light for the general

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 39.2; online at www.ccel.org.

benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God.⁹

Hippolytus (c. 200), the foremost teacher in the Roman church of his day, wrote concerning biblical Prophets:

For as the blessed prophets were made, so to speak, eyes for us, they foresaw through faith the mysteries of the word, and became ministers of these things also to succeeding generations, not only reporting the past, but also announcing the present and the future, so that the prophet might not appear to be one only for the time being, but might also predict the future for all generations, and so be reckoned a (true) prophet. . . .

For with what reason should the prophet be called a prophet, unless he in spirit foresaw the future? For if the prophet spake of any chance event, he would not be a prophet then in speaking of things which were under the eye of all. But one who sets forth in detail things yet to be, was rightly judged a prophet. Wherefore prophets were with good reason called from the very first "seers." . . . For then is one a prophet indeed, when, having announced beforetime things about to be, he can afterwards show that they have actually happened.
10

While the primary context of Hippolytus' thoughts are obviously OT prophets, he no doubt has NT prophets such as Agabus in mind as well, and it is impossible to believe that he would have accepted anyone's claim to be a prophet if they could not accurately predict the future. And if one knows the stature and reputation of this man in his day, one will be very reluctant to disagree with him.

Likewise, Tertullian (c. 207) wrote:

Let Marcion [a false teacher] then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart.¹¹

⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II, ch. 23, Book V. ch. 6.1; online at www.ccel.org.

¹⁰ Hippolytus, *Antichrist*, 2, 31; online at www.ccel.org.

¹¹ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Book V, Chapter VIII; online at www.ccel.org.

Elsewhere, we will discuss the heresy of *Montanists*, whose fundamental claim was that they possessed the gift of prophecy.¹² We will note there that one of the reasons the early Church almost universally rejected the Montanist's claim to the gift of prophecy was because their "prophets" could not predict the future. Accordingly, David Farnell writes in the scholarly journal *Bibliotheca Sacra*:

Epiphanius [of Salamis c. 320-403] presented another important argument the early church used against Montanism: Prophecies of true prophets must be fulfilled exactly. Maximilla [female Montanist prophet] had predicted that "after me there will no longer be a prophet, but the end." Priscilla [another female Montanist prophet] predicted that the New Jerusalem would descend from heaven into Pepuza in Phrygia. However, since the end did not come after Maximilla's death nor did the New Jerusalem descend, Epiphanius concluded that these prophets were false. In the early church any error in a prophecy indicated that a false prophet was prophesying.¹³

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 350) wrote regarding the authority of those possessing the gift of prophecy in the early Church:

Hence it is by these miraculous workings that the manifestation of the Spirit takes place. For the gift of the Spirit is manifest . . . by prophesy, that through our understanding of doctrine we might be known to be taught of God.¹⁴

John Chrysostom (347-407), the most prominent teacher in the Eastern Church of his day, taught in his expository teaching on 1 Corinthians 12-14:

For because it was not possible to supply the evidence of the things uttered from within themselves at the moment . . . prophecy supplies the proof of its own truth not at the time when it is spoken, but at the time of the event [predicted] . . . [M]en [in Corinth] were easily deceived, because the things spoken could not for the present be brought to trial before the events had come to pass concerning which the prophecy was;

¹² For further discussion of the Montanist heresy see sections 10.15.A and 9.13.D.

¹³ David F. Farnell, "Is the Gift of Prophecy for Today?" *BSac* 149, 150 (July-September 1992 through April-June 1993), 294-3.

¹⁴ Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity*, viii:30; online at www.ccel.org.

for it was the end [fulfillment] that proved the false prophet and the true.¹⁵

None of these godly, spiritual, knowledgeable men would have totally dismissed the requirement for a "Prophet" to authenticate themselves by predicting the future. Why have we? Clearly, the early Church believed that the gift of prophecy gave a person the ability to speak new divine revelation that carried divine authority, and to predict the future.

We can fast forward to Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, also implies that he understood prediction as a part of the gift of prophecy. He wrote regarding 1 Corinthians 12:10:

In another way a divine sign is based on something God alone can know, i.e., the future contingent, as it says in Is (41:23): "Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods." As to this he says: to another is given prophecy, which is divine revelation declaring with unchangeable truth among events.¹⁶

Unfortunately, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find respected scholars in the modern Church who would agree with this traditional perspective. In the 19th century the "Old Princeton" theologian Charles Hodge (1797–1878) wrote concerning the Apostle's mention of the gift of "**prophecy**" in Romans 12:6:

From these and numerous similar passages, it appears that the prophets in the Christian church were men who spoke under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, and delivered some divine communication relating to doctrinal truths, to present duty, to future events, etc., as the case might be.

The point of distinction between them and the Apostles, considered as religious teachers, appears to have been that the inspiration of the Apostles was abiding, they were the infallible and authoritative messengers of Christ; whereas the inspiration of the Prophets was occasional and transient. The latter differed from the teachers, inasmuch as these were not necessarily inspired, but taught to others what they

¹⁵ Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Corinthians*, 29; online at www.ccel.org.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, para. 728; online at <http://www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas-Corinthians.pdf>

themselves had learned from the Scriptures, or from inspired men.¹⁷

In the early 20th century, the British Bible scholar Henry B. Swete, successor of B. F. Westcott to the prestigious Regius Professorship of Divinity at Cambridge University, in his very influential study, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* wrote (c. 1910):

In the Pauline churches the Prophet counted for more than the pastor or teacher; he was the mouthpiece of the Spirit; as the Holy Spirit in the old time had spoken to Israel by the mouth of David or Isaiah, so now He spoke by these men in Gentile cities and in the midst of congregations largely composed of Gentile converts. The coming of the Spirit had restored to the Church the gift of prophecy, and the Prophets, in whom it was manifested.¹⁸

In 1971, Merrill F. Unger, Distinguished Professor of OT at Gordon-Conwell, Dallas Theological, and Moody Bible wrote:

"Prophecy" . . . denotes not a preacher of the prophetic Scriptures but one with a special spiritual gift who received truth directly from the Holy Spirit and expounded this truth (now contained in the completed Scriptures) publicly and authoritatively in early Christian assemblies. . . . Both "prophecy" and "knowledge," therefore, were of necessity "tie-overs" to supply the church's practical needs until the New Testament Scriptures became available.¹⁹

More recently, two men considered to be contemporary experts on the gift of NT prophecy, have also agreed with the traditional view, and denied *prophetism*. David E. Aune, former Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins in the Department of Theology at Loyola University, has written, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (1983), which remains the most

¹⁷ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Electronic Edition STEP Files (Findex.com, 2003), Rom 12:6.

¹⁸ H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (MacMillan, 1909), 108

¹⁹ Merrill, F. Unger, *NT Teaching on Tongues* (Kregel, 1971), 83, 94.

exhaustive and respected study available on the topic.²⁰ Curiously though, scholars in *prophetism* do not seem to reference Dr. Aune much, and that may be because much of what he says argues against their interpretation of the gift. Accordingly, he wrote:

In sum, it appears that those designated "Prophet" in early Christianity were specialists in mediating divine revelation, not simply those who occasionally prophesied. The image of the OT Prophet and the term used to designate such Prophets (*prophētēs*) was the primary source of this conception. In the middle of the first century A.D. in Corinth, Prophets constituted a recognizable group within the Christian community that specialized in mediating a particular form of divine revelation within the setting of congregational worship.²¹

Likewise, Christopher Forbes, Professor of NT and Hellenistic History at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia has certainly done his research in *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment*. He too disagrees with much in *prophetism* as well and writes:

According to Luke and Paul, Christian prophecy was the reception and immediately subsequent public declaration of spontaneous, (usually) verbal revelation, conceived of as revealed truth and offered to the community on the authority of God/Christ/the Holy Spirit. It might include, but was not limited to, the prediction of the future . . . It was distinguished (in Paul's thought at least) from teaching and preaching in both form and content, though overlap was obviously possible.²²

²⁰ On the back cover of David Aune's, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (Eerdmans, 1983), NT scholar I. H. Marshall writes:

Professor Aune has written the most comprehensive and detailed study of early Christian prophecy yet to appear. He puts his encyclopaedic knowledge of ancient Judaism and the Greco-Roman world to excellent account in placing Christian prophecy within its context. . . . This book is a major contribution to New Testament scholarship and will become the standard textbook on its subject.

²¹ Aune, 198.

²² Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment* (J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 236.

This chapter contains the basic biblical view of the nature, purpose, and authority of the gift of prophecy. Fifty years ago we could have stopped right here and well over 90% of the Church would have agreed with what has been written. But times have changed and *prophetism* is alive and well in the Church today. Unfortunately, while you can share the truth in a few paragraphs, it requires a multitude of pages to refute error. And that takes up a large part of the rest of this book.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for giving us your word through your holy Prophets and Apostles. We appreciate you providing such revelation to all, not just those with special gifts. We ask you to continually help us to better understand its meaning and to more consistently obey its instructions, rather than looking for some new revelation. Protect us and our Christian brothers and sisters from being deceived by the many false Prophets and Teachers operating today. Help us to fix our minds and hopes only on your written Word and to regard all else as merely the thoughts and words of men. Amen.

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) Why do we claim the gift of prophecy is perhaps the most misunderstood and potentially dangerous aspect of divine revelation among God's people today? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 2) What do we mean by *prophetism*? What do we mean by *Historicists*?
- 3) What do we claim are the two primary biblical attributes of a Prophet?
- 4) What can we derive about biblical Prophets from Deuteronomy 18:18-22?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.2

Modern Second-rate Prophets

In Prophetism & Evangelicalism

Table of Topics

A) The Second-rate Prophets of *Prophetism*

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Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- In *prophetism* the only way of confidently avoiding sin is to automatically assume that a "prophet" today is going to mess up.
- Wayne Grudem, the foremost founder of *prophetism* wrote in 1982 about "my somewhat new definition of the nature of Christian prophecy," claiming that his version had eluded the Church for at least 1600 years.
- Supporters of *prophetism* include J. I. Packer and D. A. Carson.
- Dr. Grudem says of the gift of prophecy: "[I]t was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human-and sometimes partially mistaken-report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind."
- If the modern "gift" of prophecy is so unreliable, why in God's name would anyone accept such a thing as the biblical gift of prophecy?
- God is never described in Scripture as ever communicating anything in such a questionable, unreliable manner as *prophetism* suggests.
- Since when did God's people decide democratically whether or not the words of one of His Prophets were from God, as *prophetism* practices?
- Unlike modern *prophetism*, biblical Prophets made a sharp distinction between what God had revealed to them and what might arise from within their own heart. Their complaint against the false prophets is precisely that they speak from within their own heart
- The reason for *prophetism's* popularity is its appeal to human egos.
- What the second-rate "prophets" of *prophetism* want is the exalted title and position of Prophet without the necessary biblical credentials. Accordingly, it has become very important for contemporary "prophets" to prove that their biblical counterparts were just as pathetic and powerless as they are.
- It has become common among many Evangelicals to dilute prophecy into some kind of "super preaching" or teaching gift.
- What gifted Teacher would say he has the "special ability to interpret and present God's truth understandably" but not to "proclaim" it in a way that challenges, comforts, and encourages God's people?

A) The Second-rate Prophets of *Prophetism*

Our view of the gift of prophecy in the previous chapter reflects the Church's universal understanding of biblical Prophets for over 1900 years.²³ However, particularly in the 1980's *prophetism* began to be promoted and defended, claiming that Prophets had been restored to the Church, but without the biblical attributes demonstrated above. If such a novel belief was a harmless or minority position, it would not warrant the extended refutation we offer in this book. However, the potential danger of such a claim is obvious, as well as its enormous popularity in the modern Church.

As noted above, no one is more responsible for the promotion and defense of *prophetism* than Wayne Grudem, former Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity. In 1982 he published *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, in which he referred to his approach as "my somewhat new definition of the nature of Christian prophecy."²⁴ Later, in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, Dr. Grudem admits that his understanding of the gift of prophecy had eluded the Church for at least 1600 years. He attributes this to the church's failure to make a fine distinction between degrees of authority involved in prophetic utterances.²⁵ In the beginning of the book, Dr. Grudem succinctly describes his "somewhat new" approach to Christian prophecy:

I am asking those in the [*historicist* ²⁶] camp to give serious thought to the possibility that prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human-and sometimes partially mistaken-report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind.²⁷

Likewise, not long afterwards, he wrote in his *Systematic Theology* regarding the gift of prophecy:

²³ For further discussion on the history of the gift of prophecy see chapter 9.13.

²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Press of America, 1982), xv.

²⁵ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Crossway, 2000), 108-9, 112, 241-42.

²⁶ By *historicists* we refer to those who adhere to the historical position of the Church that the gift of prophecy ceased shortly after the Apostles were extinct.

²⁷ Grudem, *Today*, 14-15.

[I]t should be defined not as "predicting the future," nor as "proclaiming a word from the Lord. . . but rather as "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."²⁸

Immediately, such a position might seem very questionable, and difficult to respect at all. However, the above book was given the following endorsement by none other than one of our favorite theologians, J. I. Packer, who wrote concerning it: "Careful, thorough, wise, and to my mind, convincing." Likewise, Vern S. Poythress, Professor of New Testament at Westminster wrote, ". . . a fresh, biblically sound, readable contribution . . . its depth of scholarship, pastoral solidity, and cautions against abuses are special strengths. Highly recommended."²⁹ Dr. Poythress obviously has a much different perspective than his colleague at Westminster, Robert B. Gaffin, Professor of Systematic Theology, and representative of the "cessationist" view in Wayne Grudem's *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*³⁰

Likewise, the rightly respected NT scholar D. A. Carson, Dr. Grudem's long-time colleague at Trinity, is also implicated in modern *prophetism* when he writes, "Grudem's thesis on New

²⁸ Grudem, *Theology*, 1049.

²⁹ Dr. Poythress unsuccessfully attempts to reconcile the *prophetist* and *historicist* positions on the gift of prophecy in a 1996 article in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Essentially, Dr. Poythress claims that we first must distinguish between the "teaching" and the "circumstantial" content of a modern prophecy. Then we can agree that the "teaching" content "must not add to Scripture," and the "Circumstantial content . . . has no special claim to authority," thus, "neither type of content threatens the sufficiency of Scripture." Dr. Poythress concludes: "If charismatics and noncharismatics could agree on these points, I think that the debate on modern spiritual gifts would be largely over." (*JETS* 39:1 [March 1996], 94-5).

Unfortunately, Dr. Poythress seems to completely ignore the *prophetist* claim that modern prophecy is revelation from God. And he has not solved the problem of reconciling that claim with the suggestion that the "circumstantial content" of such a revelation "has no special claim to authority."

For further discussion see *prophetism's* danger of degrading the authority of Scripture at section 9.3.A.

³⁰ cf. *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, Wayne Grudem ed. (Zondervan, 1996)

Testament prophecy breaks new ground. I am generally sympathetic to it.”³¹

Nonetheless, we see immediately that Dr. Grudem is attempting to completely separate his *prophetism* from any foundation in OT Prophets, or NT Prophets such as Agabus. This truly is a *new* kind of prophecy. A primary strategy of *prophetists* then is to claim that Christian Prophets were really nothing like OT Prophets, in the sense that the Christian Prophets did not speak direct divine revelation in a trustworthy manner, nor were they authenticated by predicting the future. In other words, while *prophetists* are quick to claim that no Prophets like Hosea exist today, a new kind of Prophet, that communicates divine *suggestions* rather than revelation, and need not authenticate themselves at all, does operate today with a restored gift of prophecy. Again, such a claim was virtually unheard of for over 1900 years of Church history, and obviously has significant ramifications in Church life and the issue of where divine authority and revelation are to be found today.

Also, we notice in Dr. Grudem’s introductory statement regarding his view of Christian Prophets, the great difficulty that *prophetism* has in explaining how something *is not* “proclaiming a word from the Lord” but *is* “telling something that God has brought to mind.” Read that last sentence again, because that is precisely what modern *prophetists* are claiming, and they have not, because they cannot, reconcile such a thing no matter how much they want to give a supernatural twist to their very human experiences. Because this new, second-rate version of a biblical Prophet is so *untrustworthy* and evidently potentially deceptive, Dr. Grudem continues:

So prophecies in the church today should be considered merely human words, not God's words, and not equal to God's words in authority [Even though he claims *God* revealed something to the Prophet?]. . . . Most charismatic teachers today would agree that contemporary prophecy is not equal to

³¹ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Baker, 1987), 94.

Dr. Carson adds: “although I have reservations at two or three critical points.” One is tempted to be encouraged by his last phrase until one gets to these “reservations.” After writing four pages in absolute and authoritatively sounding support of Grudem’s “thesis,” Dr. Carson says, “My hesitations about this thesis are two, neither of which does irreparable damage to it, but only refines it” (98). As Carson promised, these reservations do nothing to change his overall agreement with Grudem’s charismatic interpretation of Scripture, and are deemed so minor that there is no need to address them here.

Scripture in authority [of course they do, they don't want to be heretics]. Though some will speak of prophecy as being the "word of God" for today, there is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted.

For example, Bruce Yocum, the author of a widely used charismatic book on prophecy, writes, "Prophecy can be impure—our own thoughts or ideas can get mixed into the message we receive whether we receive the words directly [from God] or only receive a sense of the message [from God]." ³²

Likewise, C. Samuel Storms, former Professor of Theology at Wheaton writes:

Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation. It is this that distinguishes prophecy from teaching. Teaching is always based on an inscripturated text, prophecy is always based on a spontaneous revelation. . . .

[The Prophet's revelation] is altogether free from error. It is as infallible as [God] is. It contains no falsehoods, it is wholly true in all its parts. Indeed, the revelation, which is the root of every genuine prophetic utterance, is as inerrant and infallible as the written Word of God itself, the Bible. In terms of the revelation alone, the New Testament prophetic gift does not differ from the Old Testament prophetic gift.

Error enters in when the human recipient of a revelation misperceives, misinterprets, and/or misapplies what God has disclosed. The fact that God has spoken perfectly does not mean that human beings have heard perfectly. They may interpret and apply, without error, what God has revealed. But the mere existence of a divine revelation does not in itself guarantee that the interpretation or application of God's revealed truth will share in its perfection. ³³

Notice how such a definition of the gift of prophecy evidently is to be applied in the Church. The Evangelical Free turned *prophetist* pastor Doug Bannister writes the following in order to suggest how we are to recognize and handle this second rate gift of prophecy today:

³² *Ibid.*, 1055.

³³ *Miraculous Gifts*, 207-8, underlining added.

Do others agree that the prophecy is of God? Sometimes at the end of a fellowship worship service, someone will sense that he or she has been given a prophetic word. We ask the person to share the word with an elder, who prays about it and then chooses whether or not the prophecy would be appropriate to share with the entire group. . . . When people share a word in the small group, they typically will ask, "Does this seem like something the Lord would say?" Words that don't find favor with the group are gently set aside.³⁴

It is interesting to observe that many Pentecostal and charismatic churches have backed away from practicing the charismatic gifts in the corporate worship service and have moved this ministry into their small groups instead. This makes good sense. A small group is a safe place to make mistakes. If someone errs in mishandling a prophetic word, for example, a few are impacted, not an entire congregation.³⁵

Several responses are in order. First, if the modern "gift" of prophecy is so unreliable and haphazard, why in God's name would anyone accept such a thing as the biblical gift of prophecy? Here

³⁴ Doug Banister, *The Word and Power Church* (Zondervan, 1999), 107.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

we have yet one more example of *charismaticism's* ³⁶ desire to

³⁶ By modern *charismaticism* we are primarily referring to what is commonly labeled the "charismatic" movement that began with the Pentecostals in the early 1900's, spread into denominational churches in the 1960's and 70's, and has merged with what is referred to as the Third Wave churches today. Pentecostal churches include Assembly of God, Church of God, Open Bible, Apostolic, Foursquare Gospel, and Full Gospel. Third Wave churches include Vineyard and a variety of independent congregations.

We thank God for all He has done through the "charismatic" movement, and for the dear Christian brothers and sisters who would claim membership in it. However, throughout *Knowing Our God (KOG)* we refrain from referring to this movement as "charismatic," because this erroneously implies a uniqueness and even superiority in Christian grace (*charis*), and by further implication, a superior possession or experience of the Holy Spirit.

Surely no right-minded "charismatic" would desire to claim such a superiority over their Christian brothers and sisters, especially since they cannot demonstrate one. Biblically speaking, being "**led by the Spirit**," experiencing His power, and living "**not under law**" but by "**grace** [*charis*]" is most clearly manifested in the "**fruit of the Spirit**" which the Apostle Paul describes as "**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**" (Gal 5:4, 18, 22-3). "Charismatic" Christians in general are not superior in these virtues of love and holiness compared to other Christians, and these virtues are the real essence of Christian *charisma*, making all obedient Christians true "charismatics," not just a particular sect.

In fact, the greatest and most important uniqueness of *charismatic* churches over other authentic Christian churches is not their love or holiness, but rather an emphasis on, and practice of: 1) emotional worship, 2) speaking and/or praying in an incoherent tongue, 3) claims to direct divine revelation through spiritual gifts such as prophecy, and 4) claims to a greater abundance of miracles in general through the gifts of healing and miracle working.

Therefore, throughout *KOG* we use the terms *emotionalism* (see chapters 4.8-11), *glossaism* (Gr. glossa: "tongue," see Book 12: *The Truth About Tongues*), *prophetism* (see Book 9: *God's Prophets*), and *super-supernaturalism* (see chapters 10.14-16) to refer to these distinctives respectively, while recognizing that they may exist elsewhere as well. Accordingly, we believe this allows us to address the areas of concern we have regarding the movement, and avoid speaking critically of the movement as a whole, which has many good, although not unique, attributes as well.

Likewise, we refrain from referring to those Christians who would differ from "charismatics" as "non-charismatics," erroneously implying again that the latter is somehow lacking in grace. Rather, those who oppose the sometimes bizarre worship of *emotionalism*, the obscure utterances of *glossaism*, the extra-biblical revelations of *prophetism*, and the

claim the extraordinary gifts of the early Church, but radically gutting them of their biblical attributes and inventing their own second-rate “gifts,” because they cannot match those biblical attributes. For example, biblical miracle workers healed people of organic diseases commandingly, completely, instantly, and convincingly, but the second-rate “miracle workers” in modern *super-supernaturalism* cannot, and are not even expected to do any of these things.³⁷ The biblical gift of tongues was the miraculous ability to speak an existing human foreign language that the speaker did not know, while modern *glossaism* practices a second-rate meaningless gibberish found around the world since ancient times among pagan religions.³⁸

Likewise, biblical Prophets spoke trustworthy divine revelation that accurately communicated God’s word, and therefore, had to be believed or obeyed in order to avoid serious sin against God. In addition, biblical Prophets authenticated such authority by predicting the future. In the sad tradition of *charismaticism’s* consistent ability to sell Christians diluted and counterfeit versions of biblical spiritual gifts, modern *prophetism* gives us second-rate “prophets” (probably more accurately *false prophets*) that merely make human *suggestions*, and who cannot predict the future, or need to supernaturally authenticate themselves at all. How convenient! And how deceptive, damaging, and pathetic.

Secondly, while in subsequent chapters we argue extensively that modern *prophetism* is unbiblical, here we would suggest its

miracle-a-minute mindset of *super-supernaturalism* are better labeled as *historicists*. This reflects the fact that *for at least 1600 years of Church history, the great majority belief and practice of God’s people was opposed to all of the uniquenesses that the “charismatic” movement claims today.*

It is a historical fact that miraculous gifts such as healing, tongues, and prophecy ceased functioning in the church in the fourth century when the NT canon had been completed, recognized and sufficiently distributed. Accordingly, the very few people since then who have promoted bizarre forms of worship, obscure utterances in prayer, claims to extra-biblical revelation, and miracle working abilities, were always thought to be deceived and dangerous, and not accepted as biblical Christians. What those in *charismaticism* also refuse to admit, or take seriously enough, is that the modern versions of the miraculous gifts being claimed do not match the attributes of their biblical counterparts. For a great deal of discussion on these matters see the books in *Volume 2* of *KOG*.

³⁷ For further discussion on the biblical attributes of miracle working see chapters 11.1-2.

³⁸ For further discussion on the gift of tongues see Book 12.

definition of prophesying is so self-contradictory that it is not even plausible. We would ask if modern Prophets are truly receiving a revelation from God as *prophetists* claim, then why shouldn't the Prophet's words be heeded as such? This is a very important question, but one which *prophetists* have no sufficient answer for, which is to be expected when you are trying to simultaneously promote two incompatible ideas.

The biggest challenge for *prophetists* is to explain how modern day "prophecy" is different from merely the thoughts and words of humans. Again, in the sad tradition of *charismaticism* they want to claim something extraordinary in that the revelations that contemporary "prophets" receive are from God, but in order to be accepted as orthodox Christians, they insist that such divine revelations cannot be communicated as authoritatively as Scripture. As usual, it is necessary to set aside our rationality in order to have any respect for the teachings and practices unique to *charismaticism*.

A third initial response to *prophetism* is that God is never described in Scripture as ever communicating anything in such a questionable, unreliable manner. Accordingly, Dr. R. Fowler White, former Professor of NT and Biblical Languages at Knox Theological Seminary notes just how *new* Dr. Grudem's claims concerning biblical Prophets are when he writes:

Grudem's position can be summarized this way: In the New Testament gift of prophecy (and its correlates—visions, dreams, auditions, words of knowledge, and wisdom) the church should find a source of practical, though fallible [unreliable], guidance. To adequately consider this proposition, we must notice that Grudem says very plainly that God now speaks as He has never previously spoken. Though the means through which God speaks are purportedly the same [i.e. Prophets], the words He speaks are different from everything He has said before—to the Old Testament saints, to Jesus, to the Apostles [to Agabus]. In short, the words God speaks have been redefined, for they are no longer His very words, inerrant and authoritative.³⁹

Likewise, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster writes:

Grudem himself suggests that the expression 'Thus says the Lord' should be 'dropped', and appears to agree with Timothy

³⁹ R. Fowler White, "Does God Speak Today Apart From the Bible?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, John H. Armstrong, ed. (Moody, 1996).

Pain that wording such as 'I think the Lord is suggesting something like . . .' would be more appropriate. It is right to suggest that this former language leads to a confusion of 'second-level prophecy' with canonical prophecy. But surely we need to go further; for no level of prophecy in Scripture is introduced by 'I think the Lord is suggesting something like this.' To speak thus is not to speak prophecy at all.⁴⁰

Modern *prophetists* cannot have it both ways and be respectable. It is simply too convenient, self-serving, dangerous, and clearly unbiblical to exalt supposed prophetic utterances today as being based on a God-given revelation that is "as inerrant . . . as the written Word of God," as Dr. Storms claims, but then to explain away the ordinary, or meaningless, or heretical nature of all these utterances by simply claiming that the person failed to accurately communicate the divine revelation they received. The NT gift of prophecy was supernatural, just like all the other *Scripture* and *sign gifts*. There is *nothing* supernatural about those claiming the gift of prophecy today.

Accordingly, Robert L. Saucy, Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot introduces the biblical difficulties with *prophetism's* description of how prophecy occurs today:

Scholarly studies on this subject [the gift of prophecy] have traditionally viewed all biblical prophecy as "inspired utterances" that came through direct revelation from God. . . . The attempt to see prophecy as having different levels, ranging from that which is totally God's Word and therefore inerrant to that which is mixed with varying degrees of human thought including error, is difficult to support biblically. . . .

Such a separation between the revelation and its reception leads one to believe that the revelation is not given in words. . . . For if the revelation is given in words, then even if left to his own humanness, it is difficult to see how the Prophet could fail to perceive or receive such revelation and speak it faithfully unless he deliberately wanted to change the words. I am not suggesting that the Prophet is necessarily able to interpret the revelation. There are biblical Prophets who apparently did not fully understand the words that they spoke (e.g., Dan. 12:8-9; Zech. 4:5; 1 Peter 1:10-11). But they conveyed the words of the prophecy accurately and infallibly.

[*Prophetism's*] definition of prophecy fails to see that the Spirit's work of inspiration in prophecy goes all the way to the

⁴⁰ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Intervarsity, 1996), 231-3.

actual prophecy, that is, the words spoken or written. As Peter says concerning prophecy, "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). No matter what forms God's revelation to the Prophet may entail (e.g., the visions of Ezekiel), the final revelation includes the verbal meaning, that is to say, the Prophet's words are God's revelation and thus his [God's] words, not simply the human report of revelation (cf. 2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 1:7, 9; 1 Cor. 2:13).

41

We would add here that the early Church expressly believed that, "**no prophecy of Scripture came about by the Prophet's own interpretation**" (2 Pet 1:20), which is a very good description of exactly what *prophetism* is claiming today. *All* of the divine revelation we have in Scripture came through human communication, and if that can obscure or pervert divine revelation, then not even Scripture can be trusted.⁴²

Fourthly, (particularly considering the "advice" of Pastor Bannister above as to how modern "prophets" should be handled in the Church), since when did God's people decide democratically whether or not the words of one of His Prophets were from God? Only since the Church has allowed such a pathetic phenomenon to be given the high and holy label of prophecy. Since when has it become wise, according to Pastor Bannister, to primarily confine biblical Prophets to small groups so that if they make a mistake, fewer people are negatively impacted? Only since God's gift of divinely authoritative and infallible prophecy has been replaced with a dismal, deceptive, and even demonic counterfeit.

Fifthly, one is forced to wonder whether *prophetists* really think about the practical ramifications of their teaching. How are we to know what part of these "prophecies" are to be believed and obeyed as coming from God? For example, Dr. Green writes:

It is encouraging that this gift has been recovered in our day, and that men and women do, as the Spirit leads them, give a word direct from God to their congregation . . . Of course, a person with prophetic gifts needs to remember that it is all too easy for him to be mistaken and confuse his own message with that of the Spirit of God.⁴³

⁴¹ *Miraculous Gifts*, 127, 230-31.

⁴² For further discussion on the trustworthiness of human messengers to deliver divine revelation see ?

⁴³ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 2004), 259-60.

If what Dr.'s Grudem, Carson, Storms, and Green claim is true, and if the "prophet" happens to *accurately* communicate what God has supposedly communicated to him, anyone listening is absolutely bound to obey what is said, and it would be rebellious sin to do otherwise. If the revelation is interpreted accurately it does indeed become the very Word of God, equal in authority and value to Scripture. And even more valuable because it is new and specifically oriented to the person or situation at hand (and these men want to claim they are not devaluing written Scripture!). In the context that *prophetism* has invented, the only way of confidently avoiding sin against God would be if everyone automatically assumes that a "prophet" today is going to mess up somehow and not communicate the revelation with enough accuracy that it should be heeded.

Unlike modern *prophetism*, biblical Prophets made a sharp distinction between what God had revealed to them and what might arise from within their own heart (Num 16:28; 24:13; 1 Kgs 12:33; Neh 6:8; Ps 41:6, 7). Their complaint against the false prophets is precisely that they speak from within their own heart (Ezek 13:2, 3, 17; Jer 14:14; 23:16, 26; Isa 59:13), without being sent (Jer 14:14; 29:9; Ezek 13:6). They are, therefore, false prophets (Jer 23:32; Isa 9:15; Jer 14:14; 20:6; 23:21, 22, 26, 31, 36; 27:14; Ezek 13:6f; Mic 2:11; Zeph 3:4; Zech 10:2) and fortune-tellers, diviners (Isa 3:2; Mic 3:5f; Zech 10:2; Jer 27:9; 29:8; Ezek 13:9, 23; 21:23, 29; Isa 44:25).

Promoters of *prophetism* do nothing to correct their error by insisting that all "prophecies" should be authenticated with Scripture. In other words, they essentially often claim that if the "Prophet" doesn't say something that *contradicts* Scripture, they can be considered as a recipient of extra-biblical revelation from God. As discussed elsewhere, the problem, of course, is that many of the things said through supposed "prophecies" cannot be evaluated with Scripture.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, what is sometimes defined today as prophetic utterances have no resemblance to the words of biblical Prophets. For someone to stand up and announce something in the first person like "I (God) love you" and then claim such an utterance to be a "fresh" and direct revelation from God is absurd. Much of what supposed Prophets say today either could have been discerned by human reason or from the knowledge that God has already revealed

⁴⁴ For further discussion of the "straw man" that modern prophecies need to be checked with Scripture see ?

in the Bible. If it is more specific than that, it certainly does not have the character of direct, divine revelation from God that must be heeded to avoid sin.

Nonetheless, modern *prophetists* insist that such a thing is "prophecy." Which brings up our sixth initial concern with *prophetism*: Its appeal to human egos. Indeed, the effect that modern second-rate "prophets" claim they desire could just as well be labeled in the traditional sense of Christian encouragement or counsel. However, in *charismaticism's* tradition of appealing to the pride and ego of its followers, such otherwise traditional ministries are falsely given a super-supernatural spin resulting in such a person being crowned with the powerful position of "Prophet."

Undoubtedly, a primary motivation behind the modern redefining of NT prophecy is obvious. Many would like to claim the honored position of speaking authoritatively for God in a way that few, if any others can. That is what a biblical Prophet did. However, none of these so-called "prophets" today will confidently claim that they can predict the future accurately, or that they are revealing direct, extra-biblical quotes from God. None of them will do this because they would easily be exposed as frauds. Certainly none of them would want to be subjected to the OT test for their authenticity at the risk of being executed (cf. Deut 18:20-22). What the second-rate "prophets" of *prophetism* want is the exalted title and position of Prophet without the necessary biblical credentials. Accordingly, it has become very important for contemporary "prophets" to prove that their biblical counterparts were just as pathetic and powerless as they are.

As noted above, when the modern second-rate "prophets" of *prophetism* are confronted with the obvious heresy involved in claiming to be receiving divine revelations apart from Scripture, the gift of prophecy is conveniently but unbiblically and irrationally redefined as merely the ability to offer divine *suggestions*, rather than divine *revelations*. Such a redefinition has nothing to do with biblical Prophets, but everything to do with the intentional degrading of such a supernatural gift just so it matches mere human experience and abilities. Real God-sent Prophets could honestly preface their statements with "Thus sayeth the Lord," modern so-called "prophets" admit they cannot do any such thing. Even so, men and women such as these have been given the high and holy biblical label to something that isn't biblical at all.

Unfortunately, the reason that such a view is so popular is not because the biblical arguments for it are so compelling, but rather, because such a doctrine fits the rather man-centered desires and sought after experiences of *charismaticism*. Accordingly, we believe

that as we discuss the authority and authentication of NT Prophets in this book, that *prophetism* will be found to be a great and grave error. As discussed above, the divine authority of biblical Prophets has been unquestioned throughout Church history until very recently, and for good reason. This is what the Scriptures clearly teach. Nonetheless, modern *prophetism* has introduced a diluted man-made version of the Christian Prophet in order to fit the watered-down, non-supernatural “gift of prophecy” that it claims. Unfortunately, in the process, they have misrepresented both the Word of God and the Author Himself, and have lied to the body of Christ.

B) The Second-rate Prophets of *Evangelicalism*

B.1) Proponents of Prophecy as “Super preaching”: *A rare error by John MacArthur*

We demonstrate elsewhere that the *prophetist* idea that the gift of prophecy is revelation from God, but unreliably spoken, is a very recent position in the Church and would have been rather universally rejected until the 1980’s.⁴⁵ However, not all respected teachers have had the view that Christian Prophets in the early Church had the same attributes as their OT counterparts.

For example, commenting on Romans 12:6, John Calvin (1509–1564) wrote: “Prophecy at this day in the Christian Church is hardly anything else than the right understanding of the Scripture, and the peculiar faculty of explaining it.”⁴⁶ We are not sure how Calvin would have distinguished the gift of prophecy from that of teaching, which, as we will see, is a problem subsequent Evangelicals have fallen into as well. Accordingly, it is not only modern day *prophetists* who are wanting to claim the position and gift of Prophet without having the necessary credentials. It has become common among many Evangelicals to dilute prophecy into some kind of “super preaching” or teaching gift.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ For further on historical understanding in the Church of the gift of prophecy see ?

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Rom 12:6.

⁴⁷ Unfortunately, “super preaching” is the view of the gift of prophecy taken by Anthony Thiselton, with hardly a discussion throughout many pages on the topic, of the fact that NT prophecy was divine revelation (cf. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Eerdmans, 2000], 956-65, 1087-94).

This idea was rather prominent among the Puritans as demonstrated by William Perkins (1558-1602) when he entitled his book on preaching from Scripture, *The Art of Prophesying* (1592). Likewise, the popular Bible commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wrote concerning 1 Thessalonians 5:20 (“**do not treat prophecies with contempt**”): “By prophesyings here we are to understand the preaching of the word, the interpreting and applying of the scriptures.”⁴⁸ Fast-forwarding to the 20th century, the great Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) defined prophecy as “animated preaching, wherein the preacher feels himself cheered and inspired by the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁹

More recently, in their very influential commentary on Romans, NT scholars Alfred Plummer and Archibald Robertson wrote that the gift of prophecy is:

not necessarily predicting the future but preaching the word with power. . . . This gift implies special insight into revealed truths and great faculty for making them and their consequences known to others.⁵⁰

Likewise, another great Evangelical, John MacArthur writes:

Prophecy was exercised in the early church (cf. Acts 21:8–11) and continues in a nonrevelatory sense throughout this age.⁵¹

[John] White [a foremost promoter of *prophetism*], betrays an appalling ignorance of what Scripture says about inspired prophecy. The New Testament prophetic gift primarily has to do with declaration, not revelation. He is a preacher, not a source of ongoing revelation. . . . That is, he proclaims already revealed truth; he is not generally a conduit for new revelation.⁵²

Accordingly, at 14:30 he does not even address Paul’s clear description of prophecy as divine “**revelation**.”

⁴⁸ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1 Thess 5:20; online at www.ccel.org.

⁴⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, (Eerdmans, 1946), 187).

⁵⁰ Alfred Robertson and Archibald Robertson Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (T. & T. Clark, 1967), 266.

⁵¹ John MacArthur, *MacArthur’s New Testament Commentary* (Parsons, 1997), Acts 2:16.

⁵² John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Zondervan, 1992), 81.

We're not sure what Dr. MacArthur means by saying Prophets in the early Church were "not generally a conduit of new revelation." Either they were or they were not, and unfortunately, it would seem that Dr. MacArthur's accusation of "appalling ignorance" may apply equally well to himself.

He does not correct himself in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. There, in addition to continuing to define the "purpose" of prophecy as merely encouragement or "preaching," and not revelation, he insists that some people still possess the gift today as well.⁵³ Then to confuse the issue further Dr. MacArthur says:

The text here [1 Cor. 12:28] affirms that prophets were also appointed by God as specially gifted men, and differ from those believers who have the gift of prophecy (12:10).⁵⁴

Dr. MacArthur is claiming that someone called a Prophet in the early Church might not possess the gift of prophecy, and vice-versa, someone with the gift of prophecy was not considered a Prophet. We will deal with this suggestion in chapter 9.4.

Elsewhere, Dr. MacArthur writes: "The gift of prophecy is simply the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God."⁵⁵ He also refers to it as "interpreting Scripture," or sharing "exegetical, expositional, and practical insights they had gleaned from Scripture."⁵⁶ Sounds a lot like the gift of teaching, doesn't it? Dr. MacArthur addresses this by writing:

The Christian who teaches is divinely gifted with special ability to interpret and present God's truth understandably. The primary difference between teaching and prophesying is not in content but in the distinction between the ability to proclaim and the ability to give systematic and regular instruction in God's Word.⁵⁷

On the contrary, what gifted Teacher would say he has the "special ability to interpret and present God's truth understandably" but not to "proclaim" it in a way that challenges, comforts, and encourages God's people? Therefore, instead of only watering down the biblical gift of prophecy, Dr. MacArthur's view also dilutes and devalues the biblical gift of teaching. In addition, the Apostle Paul

⁵³ MacArthur, *Commentary, 1 Corinthians*, 303-303, 323.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁵⁵ MacArthur, *Commentary, 1 Cor 12:7*.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

clearly said that the gift of prophecy was more valuable than the gift of teaching (cf. 1 Cor 12:28). Was this merely because Christian Prophets were better speakers?

Unfortunately, what Dr. MacArthur writes concerning NT Prophets in 1 Corinthians, is contradictory to his comments on Ephesians 2:19-20 ("**God's household [is] built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets**"):

These are New Testament Prophets, as indicated by the facts that they are listed after the Apostles and are part of the building of the church of Jesus Christ (cf. 3:5; 4:11). Their unique function was to authoritatively speak the word of God to the church in the years before the New Testament canon was complete. The fact that they are identified with the foundation reveals that they were limited to that formative period. As 4:11 shows, they completed their work and gave way to "evangelists, and . . . pastors and teachers."⁵⁸

Our question is this: If the NT Prophets referred to repeatedly in Ephesians had such divine and supernatural attributes, why didn't the NT Prophets that the same author (Paul) refers to with the same word (*prophētēs*), in 1 Corinthians?

There are other definitions of the gift of prophecy that we think are unbiblical. NT scholars Grant Osborne and Philip Comfort are responsible for the following in the *Life Application Bible*:

The gift of prophecy had not so much to do with predicting future events as it had to do with bringing some message from God under the direction of the Holy Spirit to the body of believers.⁵⁹

The Evangelical confusion regarding the gift of prophecy is likewise exhibited in M. Blaine Smith, who writes in his popular book regarding divine guidance:

Unfortunately, Paul never explains what precisely the gift of prophecy is, and we can only guess at what was in his mind when he spoke of prophecy as a spiritual gift. . . .

My conclusion is that prophecy is Paul's term for preaching. Though there are similarities between teaching and preaching, there are differences as well. While the teacher is concerned with carefully and systematically explaining the whole of Christian truth, the preacher is more concerned with applying

⁵⁸ Ibid., Eph 2:20.

⁵⁹ *Life Application Bible*, Grant Osborn, Philip Comfort eds. (Tyndale, 1997), 1 Cor 12.

one aspect of it at a given time in a way that evokes a response from his hearers. Given the eminence that Paul attached to preaching, and given the fact that no other word for preaching is included in these gift lists, it's highly probable that he understood prophecy and preaching as synonymous spiritual gift terms. There is good support in the Greek usage of prophecy for this conclusion, also.⁶⁰

Several responses are in order. First, Mr. Smith's implies that the Bible does not clearly describe the attributes of NT Prophets, and then further implies that he and everyone are evidently free to make their own guess. If there is an unexpected shortage in the amount of NT Scripture describing the revelatory functions of NT Prophets, it is precisely because they were in continuity with OT Prophets, and the early Church understood that the abundant descriptions of their predecessors nullified the need to repeat it in the NT.

Secondly, anyone with the gift of teaching would be understandably offended by Mr. Smith's suggestion that they are not preachers. Again, from this perspective, such gifted teachers become those merely concerned with the details of doctrine, and not the application of life changing truth. What Pastor with the gift of teaching would admit that he is not "concerned with applying one aspect of [Christian truth] at a given time in a way that evokes a response from his hearers"?

In fact, Mr. Smith is so convinced that the gift of teaching has nothing to do with the timely, practical, and response-provoking communication of Scriptural truths, that he concludes gifted "**Teachers**" (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28) cannot be how the Apostle described such a vital ministry to the Church, and therefore, "**Prophets**" must mean preachers in the Apostle's mind, lest such a ministry be considered completely absent from the Apostle's lists of gifts and ministries. In the end, Mr. Smith and others who wish to distinguish "super preaching" from the supernatural gift of teaching discredit the God-given abilities and effects that God intended for God-gifted Teachers.

Thirdly, the "good support" that Mr. Smith provides for his "conclusion" is mere references to Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 14:1-6; and Ephesians 4:11, all of which of course mention the gift of prophecy, but nowhere support such a diluted view of it.

⁶⁰ M. Blaine Smith, *Knowing God's Will: Finding Guidance for Personal Decisions* (InterVarsity, 1991), 148.

Consequently, such Evangelicals find themselves guilty of doing what *charismaticism* is known for: diluting the attributes of biblical miraculous gifts to something less than what God intended them to be, sometimes in order to feed egos. Accordingly, many are tempted to describe their preaching with the exalted label of "prophecy" in order to avoid what they consider the lesser gift of "teaching."

An additional Evangelical error is found in the writings of the well known contemporary Greek scholar Spiros Zodhiates in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:

Who are prophets in this [passage]? Not only those specially designated as such in the Old Testament, not only ordained ministers, but all believers. All true Christians are to be prophets of God for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of other believers and of unbelievers. Let us refrain from placing unnecessary, non-existent distinctions between clergy and lay people, remembering that the Lord hath made all who believe "kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:6).

⁶¹

"Kings and priests" indeed, but the verse doesn't say "Prophets."

Finally, the popular Baptist teacher Henry Blackaby tells the following story to illustrate his definition of the Christian Prophet:

Jenny was about ten years old [and was baptized in a church service]. She wasn't likely to dive right into teaching Sunday school or chairing a committee. Yet, according to the Bible, she was vitally important to the body.

Only God knew the potential in this brave little girl's life. To Connie's dismay, however, only a handful of people lined up to greet Jenny. It had not been long since Connie herself had become a Christian and shared her decision with the church. She recalled the joy she had felt as virtually the entire church membership stood in line to welcome her.

All afternoon Connie was heartbroken over the church's seeming indifference to Jenny's decision. Finally, Connie called the interim pastor and asked if he would address the problem from the pulpit. He wisely counseled that, since the Spirit had laid this burden on Connie's heart, she should be the one to express it to the rest of the body.

During that evening's service Connie shared her burden. The Spirit affirmed her message in the hearts of those present.

⁶¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *Speaking in Tongues and Public Worship: An Exegetical Commentary on First Corinthians* (AMG, 1998), 1 Cor 14:10

We were deeply convicted to realize we'd been insensitive to God's activity in our midst.

Connie was not a preacher. She was not a Bible teacher or a worship leader, but that day she was a prophet.⁶²

Biblically speaking, she was not. And yet this very kind of thing is accepted commonly among Christians as the biblical gift of prophecy.

B.2) Biblical responses to prophecy being merely "super teaching": *Correctly interpreting 1 Cor 14:3*

Of course a foundational Scripture for the above view of NT Prophets is the Apostle's statements in 1 Corinthians 14:3: **"everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort"** (cf. vs. 25, 31; cf. Acts 15:32). Yes, they sure did. But why should we interpret this one statement as the all-sufficient definition of the essence of the gift of prophecy as so many do, and exclude the biblical evidence that those who possessed it also spoke Scripture-quality revelation and perfectly predicted the future? When we read that, **"Judas and Silas, who themselves were Prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers"** (Acts 15:32), why would we conclude, as so many have, that the spiritual strengthening and encouragement they provided *did not* include new divine revelation and predictions of the future, just like the ministry of their NT counterpart Agabus?

Nonetheless, it is common to see something like what Dr. Grudem writes:

Paul defines the function of prophecy very broadly in 1 Cor. 14:3: its functions could include any kind of speech activity which would be helpful to the hearers.⁶³

Essentially, such a perspective reduces the gift of prophecy to merely encouraging people, evidently indistinguishable from the gift of **"encouraging"** (cf. Rom 12:8) which the Apostle clearly *does* distinguish from the gift of **"prophesying"** (cf. Rom 12:6), and making such a thing that all Christians can and should do.

⁶² Ref. unknown.

⁶³ Grudem, *Prophecy*, 229.

On the contrary, when the Apostle wrote that, **“everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort”** (1 Cor 14:3), he was simply describing *one effect* of a Prophet’s ministry, in order to point out its superiority over tongues. He did not intend here to define the whole essence of what prophetic ministry involved. Before writing 1 Corinthians, the Apostle himself had experienced the ministry of Christian Prophets who had miraculously predicted a famine (cf. Acts 11:25-28), and commanded him to go on his first missionary tour (13:1-2). Paul himself knew that the gift of prophecy involved considerably more than merely **“strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”**

Therefore, it is a mistake for some to use the Apostle’s limited description of the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians as biblical proof that Prophets in the early Church *did not* also speak direct, Scripture-quality revelation from God and predict the future. The Prophet’s ability to deliver direct revelation from God, and even to predict the future, would certainly result in the **“strengthening, encouragement and comfort”** of a congregation. There is no need to water down the gift of prophecy to merely “encouraging speech” or effective “preaching.”

If we allow 1 Corinthians 14:3 to define the essence of the gift of prophecy, why not 14:24-25 where the Apostle says:

But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Evidently, the **“strengthening, encouragement and comfort”** of believers was not the only effects of NT Prophets, let alone their defining characteristics.

In addition, we have already noted that the above redefinition of the gift of prophecy fails to distinguish it from the gift of teaching or encouraging. In contrast, every list of gifts in the NT clearly describe them as different things (cf. Rom 12:6-7; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). This is another problem with defining the gift of prophecy as merely speaking **“to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort,”** because other biblical gifts accomplish precisely the same thing, including teaching (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11), pastoring (Eph. 4:11), and encouragement (Rom. 12:8). Accordingly, their operation can account for any spiritually edifying and effective speaking in the Church today, and

labeling such a thing as “prophesying” is not only unnecessary, but unbiblical and misleading.

Because of the great confusion regarding the biblical difference between Christian Prophets and Teachers, we will repeat that Prophets possessed the ability to receive extra-biblical divine revelation authenticated by the additional ability to predict the future. Gifted Teachers, on the other hand, are completely dependent on the revelation of Scripture for the divine revelation they preach from, and are authenticated by faithfully and accurately explaining the text, and living a life that practices what they preach.

While we have noted above several who have promoted the “super-preaching” idea of NT prophecy, others have rightly rejected such a thing. For example, and perhaps not surprisingly, the *prophetist* Michael Green writes:

One commonly hears it said that prophecy is the same as preaching or teaching. This could only be maintained in defiance of the whole weight of New Testament evidence. The men of the first century knew preaching and teaching when they heard it, and they knew prophecy as well. The two were quite different. Prophets and teachers are distinguished in passages such as Acts 13: 1, 1 Corinthians 12:29. It is one thing to prepare one's address in dependence on the Spirit, and to preach it in the power of that same Spirit; it is quite another thing to find the Spirit taking over and speaking directly from Christ through you, in words that you had never intended to use at all. ⁶⁴

Likewise, NT scholar Anthony Thiselton in his commentary on 1 Corinthians remarks:

[I]t would be a serious mistake to read back onto Paul modern styles of pastoral preaching. Few churches appear "to test" preaching from the pulpit [as was required with Prophets], and nothing suggests that early Christian prophecy was a sustained, uninterrupted, twenty-minute monologue delivered by a "trained" speaker. ⁶⁵

NT scholar F. L. Godet noted in his respected commentary on 1 Corinthians:

The conclusion is often drawn from this verse (14:3), that since to prophesy is to edify, exhort, comfort, whoever edifies, exhorts, comforts, merits according to Paul the title Prophet.

⁶⁴ Green, 211.

⁶⁵ Thiselton, 960.

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 therefore whoever speaks to God, is a glossalalete. No, certainly; one may edify, comfort, encourage, without deserving the title of Prophet or Prophetess.⁶⁶

Also, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* entry regarding biblical Prophets points out that, unlike gifted teachers, "Prophets were not limited to known traditions and doctrines, for they received new revelations about the present and future as well as the past."⁶⁷

Likewise, in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* we read:

All 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. . . . Whereas teachers expound Scripture, cherish the tradition about Jesus and explain the fundamentals of the catechism, the Prophets, not bound by Scripture or tradition, speak to the congregation on the basis of revelations.⁶⁸

Along the same lines, Dr. Farnell has written in Dallas Theological Seminary's *Bibliotheca Sacra* Journal:

While preaching is essentially a merging of the gifts of teaching and exhortation, prophecy has the primary elements of prediction and revelation. . . . Therefore, since the preacher is not in contact with God as was the Prophet, the preacher is not the modern equivalent of a Prophet. While both preacher and Prophet proclaim, the reception of direct revelation from God is the crucial essence of the prophetic gift that qualitatively separates it from other forms of proclamation and preaching. Furthermore, while preaching includes

⁶⁶ F. L. Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 2 vols. (T & T Clark 1886), 2:267-68.

⁶⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)* Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), III:987-88.

⁶⁸ G. Friedrich, "prōphetēs" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., 10 vols.; trans. G. W. Bromiley (Eerdmans, 1964-76), VI:854."

teaching, the ministry of the Prophet was more spontaneous, being based on direct divine revelation.⁶⁹

Finally, NT scholar Robert L. Thomas, in contradiction to the President of the seminary he teaches at, John MacArthur, has written regarding the gift of prophecy:

The very words of their prophecies, being based on, and inseparable from, divine revelation (cf. 1 Cor 14:29), were 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.⁷⁰

In any discussion of biblical prophecy then, we should be hesitant to water it down into something less than speaking the very word of God apart from Scripture.

As with any doctrinal error, redefining the gift of prophecy as merely especially effective or encouraging teaching costs the Church in practical ways. Essentially such a perspective makes other spiritual gifts that God intended to be valued, recognized, and used as practically obsolete. As noted above, how could Teachers not be offended when everything they strive for themselves is attributed to modern Prophets? There is nothing in the Evangelical definition of prophecy that gifted Teachers cannot do, and do not desire themselves. Likewise, if the essence of Christian "**prophesying**" (Rom 12:6) is encouragement, would we care about the gift of "**encouraging**" at all?

⁶⁹ David F. Farnell, "Is the Gift of Prophecy for Today?" Part 3, *BSac* 150 (July-September 1992 through April-June 1993), 184.

⁷⁰ Robert L. Thomas, "Prophecy Rediscovered? A Review of *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 [January-March 1992] 93-94.

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) What do we mean by the label *prophetism*?
- 2) Why do we claim: "In *prophetism* the only way of confidently avoiding sin is to automatically assume that a "prophet" today is going to mess up"? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 3) How does Wayne Grudem, the foremost founder of *prophetism* define the gift of prophecy?
- 4) Who are some well-respected supporters of *prophetism*?
- 5) What are the problems we see with *prophetism's* definition of the gift of prophecy?
- 6) We suggest a major reason for *prophetism's* popularity is its appeal to human egos. Why might this be the case?
- 7) How do we claim many non-*charismatic* Evangelicals dilute the gift of prophecy as well? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 8) What do we see as the unfortunate result of this Evangelical error regarding "prophesying"?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.3

The Dangers of Modern *Prophetism*

Damaging Christians & Inviting Divine Judgment

Table of Topics

A) Modern *Prophetism* Devalues Scripture

A.1) *Prophetism's* Claims to New Divine Revelation

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Prophetism

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B) Modern *Prophetism* Deceives Christians & Practices Divination

C) God's Hatred for Modern *Prophetism*

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Primary Points

- God hates false claims of revelations from Him.
- *Prophetists* are committing the heresy of claiming new divine revelation.
- Few confront claims to divine revelation apart from Scripture in our day.
- *Prophetism* has degraded the authority of Scripture more than any other attack (e.g. liberalism, higher criticism, neoorthodoxy, the errancy debate, and now postmodernism), yet significantly less is written against it in Christian literature than any of these lesser attacks.
- *Prophetism* plays on the natural human desire for the specific divine guidance that has driven occultic divination throughout human history.
- Has the Church completely forgotten the gravity of claiming to be a Prophet of God, but actually being self-deceived and deceiving others?
- False claims to the gift of prophecy test God's people and reveal whether or not they love Him.
- Alarming, *prophetists* practices border on the pagan practice of divination, which is attempting to know God's will or the future apart from His designated means, and outright prohibited by God.
- God hates *prophetism* because it is the height of arrogance to falsely claim to speak for Him.
- God hates modern *prophetism* because it promotes the grave sin of lying.
- God's attitude toward false prophets is scary.
- Many of those engaging in *prophetism* are not Christians.
- Perhaps the rise of *prophetism* is one more sign of Christ's near return.
- *Prophetist* churches are not experiencing more real prophecy, but just practicing less biblical discernment.

A) Modern *Prophetism* Devalues Scripture

A.1) *Prophetism's* Claims to New Divine Revelation

We have written elsewhere of the several ways in which various facets of *charismaticism*⁷¹ threaten and degrade the authority of God's word in the Church.⁷² This is evident in what modern *prophetists* are claiming for their "gift" of prophecy. All *prophetists* attempt to claim 1) new divine revelation is being provided through the gift of prophecy today, and 2) this does not threaten or rival the authority of Scripture. We would suggest that most discerning people will see a contradiction here that cannot be avoided, and which puts *prophetists* in a very dangerous place. As we discuss below, God hates false claims of revelations from Him.

Regardless of how modern *prophetists* wish to protect themselves from the charge of heresy in claiming new divine revelation, they are clearly doing that. We have already quoted Wayne Grudem as claiming that the modern gift of prophecy involves: "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."⁷³

Likewise, *charismatic* theologian C. Samuel Storms has claimed: [Modern prophecy] is altogether free from error. It is as infallible as [God] is. It contains no falsehoods, it is wholly true in all its parts. Indeed, the revelation, which is the root of every genuine prophetic utterance, is as inerrant and infallible as the written Word of God itself, the Bible. In terms of the revelation alone, the New Testament prophetic gift does not differ from the Old Testament prophetic gift.⁷⁴

In addition, we can quote one of the foremost and founding theologians of *charismaticism*, J. Rodman Williams:

The Bible truly has become a fellow witness to God's present activity. . . . If someone today perhaps has a vision of God, it is good to know that it has happened before; if one has a revelation from God, to know that for the early Christians

⁷¹ For a definition of *charismaticism* see endnote in chapter 8.2.

⁷² Regarding the devaluation of Scripture in *charismaticism* see section 10.16.E.

⁷³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1049.

⁷⁴ C. Samuel Storms in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today*, Wayne Grudem, ed. (Zondervan, 1996), 207-8.

revelation also occurred in the community; if one speaks a "Thus says the Lord," and dares to address the fellowship in the first person--- even going beyond the words of Scripture—that this was happening long ago.⁷⁵

Dr. Williams is clearly saying that the Bible is not our final source of God's revelation, but simply an additional "witness" to the revelation that God is giving today. Dr. Williams is clearly declaring that Christians can add to the Bible—and that they can expect God to reveal new divine revelation through others.

Likewise, a foremost historian of *charismaticism*, Richard Quebedeaux, is simply honest about the place of Scripture in this movement when he writes:

In Neo-Pentecostalism spiritual authority rests ultimately in the present activity and teaching of the Holy Spirit at least as much as in the Bible itself, whose essential truth is made known to individuals only by the power of the Spirit. Thus Charismatic Renewal rejects "bibliolatry."⁷⁶

And along with it, the historically held authority of Scripture.

On the European continent, one of the foremost promoters of *prophetism*, Anglican Bishop Michael Green, is also honest about the movement's claims to new divine revelation:

In prophecy God was communicating directly with men through men. The Prophet shared with the Apostle in being an agent of revelation. . . . What is this varied thing, Christian prophecy? First and foremost, it was a direct word from God for the situation on hand, through the mouth of one of his people. . . . [I]t is . . . to find the Spirit taking over and speaking directly from Christ through you, in words that you had never intended to use at all [so much for there being error in the human communication of prophetic revelation]. . . .

⁷⁵ J. Rodman Williams, "The Greater Gifts" in *Charismatic Experiences in History*, Cecil M. Robeck ed. (Hendrickson, 1985), 16; underlining added for emphasis. Let it be added that Williams' entry to the *EDT* under "Charismatic Movement" is not only filled with the kind of inaccuracies that demonstrate the shallowness of Charismatic theology in general, but his superior attitude (i.e. Charismatic Christianity alone is "high voltage Christianity", 208) throughout the article is offensive and one wonders what the editors were thinking when they allowed it.

⁷⁶ Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Doubleday, 1976), 111.

It is encouraging that this gift has been recovered in our day, and that men and women do, as the Spirit leads them, give a word direct from God to their congregation.⁷⁷

In light of *prophetism's* claims, it is not surprising that one of their most popular authors, Jack Deere, would make the following statement:

In order to fulfill God's highest purpose for our lives we must be able to hear His voice both in the written word and in the Word freshly spoken from heaven. . . . Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's voice so he has launched various attacks against us [who promote *prophetism*] in this area. One of his most successful attacks has been to develop a doctrine that teaches God no longer speaks to us except through the written word. Ultimately this doctrine is demonic even though Christian theologians have been used to perfect it.⁷⁸

Several points can be made. First, Mr. Deere's viewpoint is not on the fringe of *prophetism*, but at its very heart. Secondly, we need only to compare Mr. Deere's statement with the Reformers' insistence that Scripture contains, "all things necessary for [God's] own glory, man's salvation, faith and life" (cf. *Westminster Confession*), to recognize that *prophetism* has significantly separated itself from historical orthodox Christianity in a very critical doctrine.

A.2) Some Evangelical Responses to *Prophetism*

Thankfully, some Evangelical theologians have attempted to warn the Church of the heresy inherent in modern *prophetism*. The very influential Bible teacher, D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), who was sympathetic to *charismaticism* in general, nevertheless wrote:

This is a most important matter and it is one of the first tests that we must apply to anything that offers itself to us as a new manifestation of the Holy Spirit, particularly in this matter of gifts. Watch the place that is given to the Scriptures. You will often find in the history of such movements that, while they

⁷⁷ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 2004), 209-211, 259.

⁷⁸ Jack Deere, "John Wimber: Friend or Foe?" reprint from *The Briefing* (St. Matthias Press, 1990), 18.

start well, there is an increasing tendency on their part to use Scripture less and less and to attach greater and greater significance to what they call 'prophetic messages'. They talk more about them, pay more attention to them, and begin to print them instead of expositions of the word of God; that is always a most dangerous sign.

In Scripture is all the truth we need, and what we need is the illumination of the Holy Spirit upon our minds to enable us to understand it and to expound it. So I would lay it down as a valuable and general rule, that if you see an increasing tendency to base a position less and less upon the Scriptures, and to spend less and less time in expounding them, but more and more time in what are claimed to be direct messages from the Spirit, then you are entitled to have all your suspicions aroused and it is your duty to be on guard.⁷⁹

More recently, the respected Bible teacher John MacArthur has written regarding *mysticism* in general and *prophetism* in particular:

Waging war on reason and truth, it is thus in direct conflict with Christ and Scripture. It has taken hold rapidly because it promises what so many people are seeking: something more, something better, something richer, something easier—something fast and easy to substitute for a life of careful, disciplined obedience to the Word of Christ. And because so many lack certainty that their sufficiency is in Christ, mysticism has caught many Christians unaware. It has thus swept much of the church into a dangerous netherworld of confusion and false teaching. . . .

Ironically, a new breed of self-appointed prophets has arisen. These religious quacks tout their own dreams and visions with [the] phrase, "The Lord told me." That is mysticism, and it preys on people looking for some secret truth that will add to the simplicity of God's all-sufficient, once-for-all delivered Word [in Scripture].⁸⁰

J. I. Packer, another respected theologian sympathetic to *prophetism*, has nonetheless written:

Charismatic theology . . . looks loose, erratic, and naïve, and the movement's tolerance of variations, particularly when

⁷⁹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Sovereign Spirit: Discerning the Gifts* (Harold Shaw, 1985), 76-9.

⁸⁰ John MacArthur, "The Sufficiency of the Written Word" in *Sola Scriptura! The Protestant Position on the Bible* (Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), 180, 182-3.

these are backed by “prophecies” received through prayer, suggests a commitment to given truth in Scripture that is altogether too fragile. . . .

Sincere but deluded claims to direct divine revelation have been made in the church since the days of the Colossian heretic(s) and the Gnosticizers whose defection called forth I John, and since Satan keeps pace with God, they will no doubt recur till the Lord returns. At this point the charismatic movement, with its stress on the Spirit's personal leading and the revival of revelations via prophecy, is clearly vulnerable.⁸¹

Likewise, one of the more respected Evangelical theologians of the twentieth century, Carl F. H. Henry (1919-2003) wrote:

The carping comment that the Holy Spirit has been gagged by evangelicals, who emphasize the completion of the canon, is an outright caricature. The far larger danger is that human beings will snap a lock on the Bible. . . .

The increasing number of Charismatic Christians who profess to speak prophetic utterances by the Spirit's revelation are not yet widely perceived as a threat to orthodoxy because, as Dale Vree says, these utterances are usually “very personal and doctrinally conventional” (*On Synthesizing Marxism and Christianity*, p. 18). Yet every departure from the express teaching of Scripture, every appeal to a knowledge immediately given by the Spirit rather than through the prophetic-apostolic Word, increases the possibility of generating still another novel cult. The Charismatic emphasis on “a fresh word” from Christ by the Spirit suggests an immediate revelational authority different from that of the scripturally mediated word.

Some of the conciliar welcome given to the Pentecostal “third force” stemmed from ecumenical interest in a view of religious authority that is less insistent than historic Christianity on the Bible as the final rule of faith and practice. Spirit-oriented movements of recent times tend to appeal first to the Spirit and then ransack the Bible for verses to support their special views. . . .

Christian orthodoxy in the past identified such extravagant pronouncements as evidence of a false prophet; Christian ecumenism today commends them as prophetic frontiersmanship. The modern openness to Charismatic emphases is directly traceable to the neglect by mainstream

⁸¹ J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit* (Revell, 1984), 173, 193.

Christian denominations of an adequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is conceded almost everywhere that recovery of the vitalities of the Spirit is a major Christian imperative.⁸²

Elsewhere, Dr. Henry pointed out that the claims of modern *prophetism* make it little different from a cult:

The rise of recent theologies of ongoing sporadic revelation [in the Charismatic movement] was in some measure an attempt to compensate for the obscuring of the dynamic power of the biblical revelation. Present-day pseudomessiahs who claim prophetic powers and revelatory credentials step into this same gap. The Korean cult-evangelist Sun Myung Moon, for example, prefaced his message to a mass audience in New York by saying: "I did not come here to repeat what you already know. I have come to reveal something new. I want to share with you a new revelation from God".⁸³

Moon's language is virtually indistinguishable from that being espoused by leaders in *prophetism*. Accordingly, the Presbyterian theologian Donald Bloesch has written:

Theologically speaking, any group that bases its claims on new revelations that supersede biblical revelation is a cult. . . . [I]lluminism or spiritualism is another bane of the Pentecostal movement. In this aberration the inner light or private revelations become more authoritative than sacred Scripture or sacred tradition. . .

Pentecostalism has inherited two traditions: Montanism⁸⁴ and Protestant evangelicalism. While both claim to be biblical, Montanism is prone to elevate new revelations over the Bible and substitute the direct vision of God for simple trust. It also tends to foster spiritual elitism, whereas evangelicals stress the equal worth of all believers. As Pentecostals face the future I would encourage them to choose the way of the holy catholic faith over divisive enthusiasm. . .⁸⁵

⁸² Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, 6 vols. (Word, 1979), IV:283-4.

⁸³ Sun Yung Moon, "The New Future of Christianity," sermon delivered Sept. 18, 1974, in Madison Square Garden. Quoted by Henry, 4:601.

⁸⁴ For further on the heresy of *Montanism* see 9.13.D and 10.14.A.

⁸⁵ Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works and Gifts* (Intervarsity, 2000), 174, 198, 208.

Along the same lines, the Baptist theologian, Millard Erickson has written:

[This] contemporary view is that religious authority resides in prophets present in the church. Throughout history various movements have had such prophetic leaders. Mohammed believed that he was a special prophet sent from God. Among the sixteenth-century Anabaptists were prophets who declared messages allegedly received from God.

There seems to have been a special outbreak of such persons and movements in recent years. Various cults have arisen, led by charismatic leaders claiming to have a special message from God. Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church are a conspicuous example, but many others come to mind as well. Even within mainline evangelicalism [certainly including *prophetism*], many people regard the word of certain "big name" speakers as almost equal in value with the Bible.⁸⁶

Accordingly, the respected Bible scholar, Rene Pache, explains the effect that *prophetism* inevitably has on the unique authority of the Bible:

The excessive preeminence given to the Holy Spirit in their devotions and their preoccupation with gifts, ecstasies, and "prophecies" has tended to the neglect of the Scriptures. Why be tied to a Book out of the past when one can communicate every day with the living God? But this is exactly the point.

Apart from the constant control of the written revelation, we soon find ourselves engulfed in subjectivity; and the believer, even if he has the best intentions, can sink rapidly into deviations, illuminism or [self] exaltation.

Let each remind himself of the prohibition of taking anything away from Scripture or adding anything to it (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). Almost every heresy and sect has originated in a supposed revelation or a new experience on the part of its founder, something outside the strictly biblical framework.⁸⁷

Finally, Robert Gaffin, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster has written regarding the claims of modern *prophetism*:

This view, I cannot see otherwise, opens the door to revelation in the life of the church today that is neither

⁸⁶ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Baker, 1998), 271.

⁸⁷ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Moody, 1969), 319.

(inscripturated) special, redemptive revelation nor general revelation (from ourselves, as created in God's image, and the world about us). What is affirmed is a third kind of revelation that goes beyond both. It is more than "revelation" in the sense of the Spirit's illumination for today of already revealed truth (Eph. 1:17; Phil. 3:15), more than thoughtful reflection and prayerful wrestling, prompted by the Spirit, about contemporary circumstances and problems in the light of Scripture.

In view is additional, immediate revelation that functions, especially where guidance is concerned, beyond Scripture and so unavoidably implies a certain insufficiency in Scripture that needs to be compensated for. The tendency of this view, no matter how carefully it is qualified, is to divert attention from Scripture, particularly in practical and pressing life issues. . . .

To use Calvin's classic figure of the Bible as the eyeglasses indispensable for understanding ourselves and the rest of creation, prophecy is an additional lens that enhances vision; it temporarily augments or, on occasion, may even replace the lens of Scripture. That seems a fair assessment, especially in the light of how prophecy is usually understood to function today [by *prophetism*].⁸⁸

And if Dr. Gaffin's and our assessment of the claims of *prophetism* and how they function in the Church are correct, then its claims deserve the label of heresy, deserving the Church's staunch rejection of its promoters and practitioners, just as was done by the universal Church with the *Montanists* in the second century.⁸⁹ The second century Church did not stand for claims to the biblical gift of prophecy that did not meet its biblical attributes. And the Church for another many centuries did the same as demonstrated elsewhere regarding the historical response to *prophetism*.⁹⁰ This was because, as Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest write:

To preserve the unique authority of the foundational and only inerrant revelation (*sola scriptura*), Christians often challenge the pretensions of any church or cult that sees itself as an

⁸⁸ Ref. unavailable.

⁸⁹ For further discussion of the *Montanists* see 9.13.D and 10.14.A.

⁹⁰ For the history of the gift of prophecy in the Church see chapter 9.13.

additional source of revelation for these latter days alongside the Lord, the prophets, and the apostles.⁹¹

Unfortunately, that simply is not true in our day, as surprisingly few confront claims to divine revelation apart from Scripture in our day. In previous generations there have been an abundance of ones like Irenaeus, Luther, Hodge, and Warfield to defend the authority of Scripture against the contemporary threat. But today, the scholars of the Church are silent, or seem too confused or polite to really be helpful.

We believe the degradation of the authority of Scripture has been immense within the modern prophetic movement. Other movements have had the same effect as well, but none greater than this one. Even so, when one compares the amount of Christian literature that has been written to defend the Scriptures against similar attacks on its authority (e.g. liberalism, higher criticism, neoorthodoxy, the errancy/inerrancy debate, and now postmodernism), one is surprised by the paltry defense that has been made against the dangers of *prophetism*. One can only guess why this is so, because the practical threat is at least as great as any others.

A.3) *Prophetism's Empty Disclaimers*

Of course, *prophetists* are sensitive to being labeled as heretics, claiming new divine revelation from God apart from Scripture. Accordingly, they have offered several disclaimers. The primary one has been to claim that while the revelation of their "prophets" is as authoritative as Scripture, the human communication of that revelation is so prone to error that modern prophetic utterances should not be given the same authority as Scripture. We have elsewhere dealt with the ridiculous nature of such a claim, especially since even Scripture is divine revelation being communicated by humans.⁹²

Likewise, we have noted that the simple claim that God has restored a *Scripture gift* like prophecy, undermines the unique

⁹¹ Bruce Demarest and Gordon R. Lewis, *Integrative Theology*, 3 vols. (Zondervan, 1987, 1990, 1994), I:117.

⁹² For further discussion of *prophetism's* claim that the involvement of human communication in modern prophecy keeps it from being as authoritative as biblical revelation, see section 9.2.A.

authority of Scripture which was produced and authenticated by these gifts:

Accordingly, these mistaken perspectives unfortunately downgrade the God-ordained high and holy purpose that *Scripture* and *sign gifts* were intended to have. They were provided for nothing less than God's decision to implement and authenticate a new covenant and the false claims to them for other purposes is not only unbiblical, but harmful to the Body of Christ.

If modern so-called "prophets" . . . possess the same gifts as those who supernaturally revealed and authenticated the covenants recorded in Scripture, then what authoritative superiority do Moses, Christ, and Paul have over them? None, if the modern claims to the same gifts are true.

Which is something God never intended, but which is the logical conclusion to popular teaching and practices in *prophetism* . . . resulting in the very devaluation of the authority of Scripture that is too often practiced among them to a significantly greater degree than those holding to the historical understanding of these issues.⁹³

Of course, as we demonstrate elsewhere, *prophetists* attempt to redefine the biblical *Scripture* and *sign gifts* into something less authoritative and miraculous than they were in Scripture so that they match the diminished forms they are claimed to have today. But this is just another example of false teachers speaking out of both sides of their mouth. *Prophetists* cannot claim biblical precedent for their gifts and then claim they are not the same thing, or something less than what they were in Scripture. The classic example of this is Dr. Grudem's redefinition of the gift of prophecy, claiming NT and OT prophecy were different, with the latter being the less authoritative and miraculously authenticated kind practiced today. This in spite of the NT example of Agabus who spoke directly for God and perfectly predicted the future twice (cf. Acts 11:27-8; 21:10ff).⁹⁴

Along these lines, Reformed theologian Sinclair Ferguson has written:

It is not adequate in this context to suggest (as Grudem and others do) that those who exercise second-level prophecy should avoid prefacing their 'prophecies' with such statements

⁹³ Excerpt from 7.3.C. For further discussion of the downgrading of biblical authority resulting from *super-supernaturalism's* claim to the *sign gifts* see section 10.16.E.

⁹⁴ For further on the attributes of the NT Prophet Agabus see 9.7.D.

as 'Thus says the Lord'. After all, Agabus, in the biblical 'example' of [Grudem's] second-level prophecy, prefaces his words with 'The Holy Spirit says' (Acts 21:11). This is the common language of prophecy. In terms of origin, authority and reliability it belongs to exactly the universe of discourse which Acts elsewhere uses of the divine inspiration and the plenary authority of Scripture (Acts 4:25; cf. 1:16; 28:25). . .

This brings us directly to the 'storm centre' of current debate. New revelation, be it in the form of tradition or the golden tablets of Joseph Smith, principally undermines the sufficiency of Scripture, and becomes *defacto* the dominant factor, at least at certain points, in the canon by which the individual lives.

Is it not, therefore, special pleading on the part of evangelicals to claim that prophecies received by them function in an altogether different way? While it is denied that additions are being made to the canon of Scripture, it is nevertheless implied that an actual addition is being made to the canon of living. Otherwise, the illumination of Scripture and the wisdom to apply it would be sufficient.

Grudem himself suggests that the expression 'Thus says the Lord' should be 'dropped', and appears to agree with Timothy Pain that wording such as 'I think the Lord is suggesting something like . . .' would be more appropriate. It is right to suggest that this former language leads to a confusion of 'second-level prophecy' with canonical prophecy. But surely we need to go further; for no level of prophecy in Scripture is introduced by 'I think the Lord is suggesting something like this'. To speak thus is not to speak prophecy at all. The recognition that this is not prophecy in any biblical sense would solve the difficulty without any danger of the quenching of the Spirit which restorationists so fear. . . .

If God's special revelation continues in an extra-biblical manner, it is a psychological probability that it will come to exercise a canonical function. It is curious that evangelicals, who have so often assumed that this is a fatal flaw in the Roman Catholic doctrine of continuing extra-biblical revelation (in tradition), do not recognize the parallel within Protestantism.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Intervarsity, 1996), 231-3.

A final, and equally weak tactic used by modern *prophetism* to allay fears that it is committing heresy is to claim that all modern "prophecies" are to be evaluated with Scripture. Accordingly, Evangelical Free Pastor Doug Bannister, a leader in *charismaticism* writes, "No charismatic leader I know of believes that these revelatory gifts [prophecy, knowledge, etc.] speak with the same authority as Scripture."⁹⁶ Unfortunately, it is impossible for *prophetists* to claim such a thing when they at the same time claim any consistent kind of authentic extrabiblical revelation from God apart from Scripture. Divine revelation is divine revelation no matter what kind of different categories *prophetists* may like to come up with.

Accordingly, promoters of *prophetism* do little to correct its dangers when they insist that all "prophecies" should be authenticated with Scripture. In other words, the claim is that if the "prophet" doesn't communicate something that *contradicts* Scripture, it can be considered a reliable source of revelation from God. Accordingly, Mr. Bannister writes concerning the supposed revelatory abilities claimed in *prophetism*:

[T]hese gifts are divinely prompted guidance or direction that needs to be tested and weighed against Scripture. . . . Does the prophecy agree with Scripture? Spirit-led prophecy will always agree with Scripture because the Spirit of prophecy is the Spirit of Scripture. Many of the prophetic words I have heard are actually citations of Scripture applied to a specific situation.

When the prophetic word does not speak a scriptural truth, the message in the word must be in perfect harmony with scriptural revelation. This does not mean that prophecy cannot address certain specific events or details in a person's life that are not recorded in Scripture. It does mean that any behavioral change suggested by the specific prophetic word must match Scripture.⁹⁷

While we can appreciate Mr. Bannister's attempt to maintain orthodoxy, his arguments are meaningless, ineffective, and seem insincere. First, if words of prophecy are to be "in perfect harmony" with Scripture than why in the world do we need such prophecy at all? Prophets in the Bible spoke extrabiblical revelation and if "prophets" today do not do so then are they really Prophets? The honest and biblical answer is "No."

⁹⁶ Doug Bannister, *The Word and Power Church* (Zondervan, 1999), 83.

⁹⁷ Bannister, 83, 107.

If modern prophetic words are simply instruction and encouragement that is “in perfect harmony” with Scripture, then why aren’t other gifts such as teaching, encouragement, pastoring, and leadership able to fully fulfill this function, not to mention the average Christian in their personal devotionals? Mr. Bannister and *prophetists* cannot have it both ways. Either modern prophecy *does* provide extrabiblical revelation or it is useless because we have Scripture, and real spiritual gifts in the Church that are fully capable of helping us understand and apply it.

Secondly, Mr. Bannister’s attempt at addressing the dangers of *prophetism* is practically ineffective. When you tell believers that there is a potential source of divine revelation that is more specific than Scripture, they will be greatly tempted to seek it and accept it even when it cannot be completely authenticated with Scripture. You should not teach a child of God that there is an abundance of mystical cotton candy available in *prophetist’s* forms of revelation, and then expect them to confine themselves to the real nourishing vegetables of Scripture.

As discussed further below, *prophetism* plays on the natural human desire for the specific divine guidance that has driven occultic divination throughout human history.⁹⁸ While *prophetists* can communicate disclaimers about the importance of testing their “revelations” with Scripture, in practice, such disclaimers are very often not followed by *prophetist* themselves, and it is the fault of *prophetist* teachers themselves who, out of the other side of their mouth, promote extrabiblical revelation.

Finally, the reality in *prophetism* is that many of the “revelations” that come through supposed “prophecies,” especially the more specific and therefore sought-after ones, cannot be evaluated with Scripture. Dr. Gaffin writes:

Virtually all continuationists [e.g. *prophetists*] insist that prophecy is always subordinate to Scripture and must be tested by it, so that its [the Scripture’s] sufficiency and authority is maintained. But how will such testing take place? Prophecy in the New Testament (e.g., Agabus), and as it allegedly takes place today, sometimes has a specificity that simply cannot be evaluated by existing Scripture.

For instance, a particular course of action urged upon an individual or group on the basis of a dream cannot be judged by the Bible other than whether the proposed action might involve violating a biblical commandment. For the rest, it is a

⁹⁸ For further discussion on the connection between modern *mega mysticism* and ancient divination see section 14.9.G.

matter of trying to judge “apples” with “oranges”. Scripture by its very nature is silent precisely on those details that give the dream [or “prophecy”] its specific and distinct (and sought-after) “revelatory” significance and appeal.⁹⁹

In other words, “prophecies” that are too specific to be authenticated with Scripture leave people with no certain way of knowing if they are from God, or merely the “prophet.” Likewise, the more general “prophecies” like “God loves you” etc., and that can be authenticated by Scripture, are unnecessary, or at least cannot be distinguished from other spiritual gifts such as teaching or encouragement, a distinction clearly made in Scripture (cf. Rom 12:6-8).

Finally, because the disclaimers of modern *prophetists* about the ongoing authority of Scripture are so obviously meaningless and ineffective in the context of their doctrines and practices, they seem insincere, and appear to be offered only to avoid the charge of false teaching which they may very well deserve.

B) Modern *Prophetism* Deceives Christians & Practices Divination

And this is something that too few seem to be taking seriously enough. Has the Church completely forgotten the gravity of claiming to be a Prophet of God, but actually being self-deceived and deceiving others? When the second-rate “prophets” of modern *prophetism* claim among the greatest positions in God’s church, but upon their own admission do not reliably speak God’s words, or authenticate themselves by predicting the future, one shudders to think how many of them will meet Christ one day and say, “**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name,**” and the Lord “**will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers’**” (Matt 7:22-23).

There are a multitude of “prophets” in the Church today who should be very thankful that God has probably withdrawn His desire that, “**a prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say . . . must be put to death**” (Deut 18:20).

One of the obvious reasons God despises false “prophets” is that they deceive and mislead His people away from His will. We read in Deuteronomy:

⁹⁹ Robert Gaffin in *Miraculous Gifts*, 52; underlining added for emphasis.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.

The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and Him you must revere. Keep His commands and obey Him; serve Him and hold fast to Him.

⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God . . . he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you. (Deut 13:1-5)

False claims to the gift of prophecy test God's people and reveal whether or not they love Him. To fail to test and authenticate and expose false prophecy is to fail the test of loving God. Unfortunately, this is happening in abundance in the Church today.

Unfortunately, many people in the Church are consulting false "prophets" for spiritual direction and being misled in the process. Oftentimes, one of these unauthenticated "prophets" will prophesy some sort of future prediction over a person. As a result, the person may be tempted to act in accordance with this and pursue a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The author knows of a young female missionary who was told by a "prophet" in the *Youth With a Mission* (YWAM) organization that she would soon be married. She testifies that this "prophecy" caused her to be on the outlook for this prophesied "husband." When a young man showed interest in her shortly thereafter, she was inclined to think this was something God was orchestrating, and therefore ignored the need for discernment and sound judgment. Unfortunately, she ended up marrying the man, who despite his claims, turned out to be an adulterous unbeliever. That "prophet" and the young missionary's trust in him have caused her a great deal of pain. And the doctrines and practices of *prophetism* have multiplied this very thing.

Tom Stipe, former member of the Board of Directors for the Vineyard Association of Churches, a foremost promoter of *prophetism*, recounts that in this movement:

Dreams and their interpretation soon moved to center stage as [Vineyard] prophecy conferences taught devotees to keep a pencil and notebook on their nightstands to write down each dream as it occurred. These were later interpreted [by "prophets"] for God's message.

People lived on the edge of their seats, waiting for the grandiose promises of prophesies to come true. Most waited in vain. Not long after [this] became the primary source of direction, a trail of devastated believers began to line up outside our pastoral counseling offices . . . [suffering from] shattered hopes because God had apparently gone back on his promises . . . Many were left to continually live from one prophetic "fix" to the next, their hope always in danger of failing because God's voice was so specific in pronouncement, yet so elusive in fulfillment.¹⁰⁰

A similar example of unnecessary damage to a child of God because of the plague of *prophetism* is related by Jack Deere, who admits that he witnessed a "prophet" once calling an eighteen year old kid out of a crowd of 800 people and claiming that the Holy Spirit had told him that the kid was addicted to pornography. Imagine being that kid. Imagine being the parents of that kid. Then imagine that the "prophet's" so-called "prophecy" was proven and admitted to be completely false, because that is precisely what happened. Still, in order to protect his "doctrine" of *prophetism*, Mr. Deere writes:

But you know what? God is in the process of offending our minds in order to reveal our hearts . . . And I don't know any place where He is going to give us a pure ministry. I don't know any place where it's going to be 100 percent right. There's going to be stumbling blocks in every ministry that the Holy Spirit is really responsible for.¹⁰¹

To suggest that such a ministry is the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy.

Mr. Bannister is equally flippant about the fruit of *prophetism* and writes, "[I]f we want fresh air, we have to be willing to live with a few flies."¹⁰² On the contrary, the presence of flies can indicate that there is something rotten in your midst. Could we point out

¹⁰⁰ Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Word, 1997), xii.

¹⁰¹ Jack Deere, Toronto Airport Vineyard, 20 November 1994, audiotape.

¹⁰² Bannister, pg. num. unavailable.

similar devastating “mistakes” in the biblical record? No, which is just one more reason to doubt these are biblical ministries.

Because divine authority in *prophetism* has shifted from Scripture to human sources of new divine revelation, authority in the Church has been misplaced as well. J. I. Packer speaks to this very danger when he writes:

The person with unhealthy ambitions to be a religious leader, dominating a group by giving them the sense that he is closer to God than they are, can easily climb on the charismatic bandwagon and find there good-hearted, emotionally dependent folk waiting to be impressed by him. So, too, the opinionated eccentric can easily invoke the Spirit's direction when he refuses to let his pastor stop him from disrupting the congregation with his odd ideas. Living as it does on the edge of illuminism, the movement cannot but have problems here.

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In a similar vein, the highly respected theologian Alister McGrath writes regarding the dangers of misplaced authority in the Charismatic movement:

There are remarkable, and disturbing, parallels between the distorted idea of priesthood in the medieval church and the notion of ministry found within modern power evangelicalism [i.e. Charismaticism]. Both are intensely authoritarian. Both rest upon an ideology of power, which places the right to speak for God in the hands of a small and unaccountable elite. Both studiously ignore the possibility that they might get God wrong, and the deeply threatening and humiliating possibility that God might choose to challenge and correct them through ordinary lay folk within their undervalued congregations.¹⁰⁴

The *prophetism* inherent in Charismatic doctrine and practice automatically and illegitimately puts people on different levels of spiritual authority based on supposed claims to direct divine revelation. Dr. McGrath goes on to point out that when Scripture is maintained as the only authority amongst Christians, the equal authority of all Christians to know the word of God is maintained. Accordingly, he writes:

The accountability of ministers to their people rests upon the existence of means by which their preaching, ministry, and

¹⁰³ Packer, *Keep in Step*, pg. num. unavailable.

¹⁰⁴ Alister McGrath in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Moody, 1992), pg. num. unavailable.

teaching may be checked. Scripture is the sole God-given and God-authorized means by which the people of God can claim to speak in the name of their God. We must "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). We must "test everything," holding "on to the good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If one loses sight of the objective and public character of the Scriptures, one is defenseless against the power evangelical [mega mystic] who declares, "God told me to say this," or, "I had a personal revelation from God authorizing me to behave in this way."¹⁰⁵

Dr. McGrath illustrates his concern by relating the claims of *prophetist* leader Kenneth Copeland:

In relating an alleged visitation he received from Jesus Christ, Kenneth Copeland, who claims to be an evangelical, reports that Jesus told him, "Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you're God. . . . They crucified me for claiming I was God." One of the most disturbing tendencies in some of the more irresponsible leaders is a willingness to blur the vital distinction between the will of God and the will of the leader himself. Copeland is thus able to place himself on the same plane as Jesus Christ, claiming the same divine authority for his actions. In this vision, Copeland hears Christ tell him, "I didn't claim that I was God; I just claimed I walked with him, and that he was in me. Hallelujah! That's what you're doing."¹⁰⁶

We are reminded of the following sad commentary of God concerning Israel, and it especially saddens us because such harmful heresy is being allowed to occur in God's own precious Church among His precious people. God says to these deceived and deceiving churches: "**The idols speak deceit, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd**" (Zech 10:2). At least a shepherd with the correct biblical understanding, courage, and humility to stand up to such demonic invasions of His Church.

Alarming, such practices border on the pagan practice of divination, which is attempting to know God's will or the future apart from His designated means, and outright prohibited by God

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

(cf. Deut 18:9-13).¹⁰⁷ One reason for this is the devastating effects such divination can have in the lives of God's people. Along these lines we have written elsewhere:

Particularly in the area of *miraculous communication* it is important to properly distinguish the human from the divine. . . . Those in the *prophetist, super-supernatural, and mega mystical* camp are in danger of misinterpreting "prophesies" and *private inspirations* as *miraculous communications* from God and therefore giving them an authority over their lives they do not deserve, with potentially devastating results.

If thoughts and ideas are properly recognized as having natural sources, we will recognize as well that they are fallible and not worthy of the unquestionable trust we give a word of God. On the other hand, if you think such extra-biblical direction is from God, you will have too much confidence in it and when such direction fails, be tempted to blame God.¹⁰⁸

Accordingly, the famous pagan spiritualist M. Lamar Keene writes:

One of the most alarming things about the mediumistic racket is how completely some people put their lives into the hands of ill-educated, emotionally unbalanced individuals who claim a hot line to heaven. As a medium I was routinely asked about business decisions, marital problems, whether to have an abortion, how to improve sexual performance, and similar intimate and important subjects. That people who ask such questions of a medium are risking their mental, moral and monetary health is a shocking but quite accurate description of the matter.¹⁰⁹

Likewise, M. Blaine Smith writes in his book on divine guidance:

It is hard, in fact, to exaggerate the unsettling impact which prophetic pronouncements can have upon our psyche. . . . It's remarkable, the persuasive power someone can have who assumes the role of prophet in your life. Even an anonymous personality in the mail. Most of us are stirred much more than we'd like to admit by anyone's unequivocal statement about our future. While our rational side says, "This is ridiculous,"

¹⁰⁷ For further on divination in modern American Christianity see section 14.9.G.

¹⁰⁸ Excerpt from 10.1.B.

¹⁰⁹ M. Lamar Keene, *Psychic Mafia*, 22; quoted in *Understanding the Cults*, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart (Here's Life Publishers, 1982), 256.

our intuitive side cringes. We can't get the thought out of mind, "What if?" . . .

Prophetic messages, regardless of their nature or source, have their effect on us. It is this effect that is so well understood by the spiritualist personalities in every primitive culture and which gives them their almost unchallenged authority to direct the lives of others. But even in enlightened, scientific society, the effect can be powerful. Human psychology remains basically the same. . . .

[W]hen you receive a prophecy to do something you haven't contemplated doing-especially if it is diametrically opposed to what you're inclined to do-the effect can be traumatic. I've counseled with a number of people who have received such prophecies. Most . . . have still been left terribly befuddled. Many hours have been spent mulling it over, wondering, "Should I do this? What if this is the will of God and I just don't realize it? What if I don't follow the prophecy? Will something terrible happen to me?"¹¹⁰

False prophets deceiving God's people have been an ancient problem. In the second century document the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which was a highly regarded and authoritative prophecy in the early Church, we get an early Christian perspective on the types of "prophets" who give personal prophecies and the type of people affected by them:

It is the doubters, not the faithful, that he ruins. These doubters then go to him as to a soothsayer, and inquire of him what will happen to them; and he, the false prophet, not having the power of a Divine Spirit in him, answers them according to their inquiries, and according to their wicked desires, and fills their souls with expectations, according to their own wishes. For being himself empty, he gives empty answers to empty inquirers; for every answer is made to the emptiness of man. Some true words he does occasionally utter; for the devil fills him with his own spirit, in the hope that he may be able to overcome some of the righteous.

As many, then, as are strong in the faith of the Lord, and are clothed with truth, have no connection with such spirits, but keep away from them; but as many as are of doubtful minds and frequently repent, betake themselves to soothsaying, even as the heathen, and bring greater sin upon themselves

¹¹⁰ M. Blaine Smith, *Knowing God's Will: Finding Guidance for Personal Decisions* (InterVarsity, 1991), 150-53

by their idolatry. For he who inquires of a false prophet in regard to any action is an idolater, and devoid of the truth, and foolish. For no spirit given by God requires to be asked; but such a spirit having the power of Divinity speaks all things of itself, for it proceeds from above from the power of the Divine Spirit. . . . when asked He [the Holy Spirit] makes no reply; nor does He speak privately, nor when man wishes the Spirit to speak does the Holy Spirit speak, but it speaks only when God wishes it to speak.¹¹¹

Accordingly, even the Pentecostal NT scholar Gordon Fee writes: There is no Pauline evidence for the phenomenon known in contemporary circles as "personal prophecy," whereby someone prophesies over another as to very personal matters in their lives. Where such might appear to be the case (e.g., 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14), there is community affirmation (testing?) by way of the laying on of hands by the elders. Otherwise prophecy seems to be a strictly community affair, for the sake of the community's corporate life.¹¹²

C) God's Hatred for Modern *Prophetism*

We have written elsewhere:

Christ's warning that there will be "**many**" self-deceived and deceiving people who claim to "**prophecy**" in Christ's name [cf. Matt 7:22-23] suggests that biblical and diligent authentication of would-be prophets is for their own protection as well. For example, if such people knew they needed to be able to accurately predict the future in order to prove their gift, far fewer would risk the embarrassment today, and death in the OT [cf. Deut 18:20], for wrongly perceiving themselves as possessing the gift of prophecy.

Modern would-be prophets dangerously assume that God's attitude has changed from when He said: "**A Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say . . . must be put to death**" (Deut 18:20). Obviously, God has now set aside the death penalty for such people. But the OT command illustrates God's attitude toward those who take a claim to the gift of prophecy so lightly. Can the multitude of "prophets" in the Church today

¹¹¹ *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate, 11; online at www.ccel.org.

¹¹² Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Hendrickson, 1994), 170.

confidently claim that God “**commanded**” them “**to say**” what they said? They had better be, because to “**presume to speak**” in God’s name something He had *not* specifically and personally commanded the person to say, was to commit a great sin against God and the people.¹¹³

Fortunately for all of those who falsely claim the gift of prophecy today, we are under the New Covenant of grace. And while that may change how we are to respond to presumptuous “prophets,” it does not change how God feels about them. As will be demonstrated below, there are few things in Scripture that God says He gets angrier about than when someone claims to speak for Him, but are actually speaking their own thoughts.

The first reason for God’s anger is that He hates arrogance and there is nothing more arrogant than to claim to speak for God, when in reality, He has not given you any new revelation to speak. This is why He said of rebellious Israel, “**Her prophets are arrogant; they are treacherous men**” (Zeph 3:4). God will personally oppose such people (cf. 1 Pet 5:5).

The second reason God hates modern *prophetism* is that it promotes the grave sin of lying. The *content* of so-called prophetic utterances today may not violate Scripture, but the *claim* to have received it as a special, extra-biblical revelation from God is especially sinful, if in fact, they are merely speaking things they thought of themselves. *Prophetists* seem to care very little about lying, even though God cares about it a great deal. Accordingly, we have written elsewhere:

In Colossians, the Apostle Paul simply commands, “**Do not lie to each other**” (3:9; cf. Eph 4:25; 1 Tim. 1:10, 13). The Scriptures indicate that no true Christian will be gripped by this sin enough that they might be called “**liars**,” for such people are damned to Hell (cf. Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15). Lying is so demonic that Christ referred to it as the devil’s “**native language**” (John 8:44). Biblically speaking, there is no work more destructive and demonic than lying. God’s view of fraud within the Church is graphically portrayed by His killing Ananias and Sapphira for this very thing (cf. 5:1-10). In contrast, lying, exaggeration, and fraud seem quite rampant in the Church today, particularly in *super-supernatural* [which includes *prophetism*] environments.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Excerpt from 9.9.E.

¹¹⁴ Excerpt from section 11.8.B.

Accordingly, God describes false prophets as, **“lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds”** (Jer 23:26). A **“lying prophet”** is one who claims to have a revelation from God, but does not. And a **“lying prophet”** is the same thing in Scripture as a false prophet. And God’s attitude toward false prophets is scary. In Proverbs we read:

Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or He will rebuke you and prove you a liar. (Prov 30:5-6)

God promised the real Prophet Isaiah that lying, false prophets will be **“cut off”** from His people and made **“fools of”** (Isa 9:14, 16; 44:24). The Israelites confessed their own false prophecies when they said, **“Our sins testify against us [including] . . . uttering lies our hearts have conceived”** (Isa 59:13), which is no doubt what many of those claiming the gift of prophecy today are doing.

While many in the Church today do not seem to care much about this grievous sin, we should not forget that Jesus promised:

[T]he cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. (Rev 21:8)

We fear that many of these attributes very well describe the celebrities of *prophetism* in the Church, and while they may enjoy the popularity of many people today, they will experience the condemnation of God for all eternity. You do not want to be a **“lying prophet”** who claims to represent God.

God told the Prophet Jeremiah many things that, alarmingly, could be said to many *prophetist* congregations today:

The prophets are but wind and the word is not in them. . . . Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in My name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds (Jer 5:13; 14:14; cf. Lam 2:14).

What if there was a real biblical Prophet in the Church today? How many of the “prophets” of *prophetism* today would he expose as frauds, just like God did through Jeremiah when He spoke words that anyone claiming to be, or listen to, a “prophet” today had better heed:

The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly. Both prophet and priest are godless; even in My temple [and in today's Church] I find their wickedness," declares the LORD. Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished," declares the LORD (vs. 10-12). . . .

Among the prophets of Samaria I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal [a false god] and led My people Israel astray (v. 13) [which describes both the merely human and demonic prophesying occurring today]. . . .

Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty says concerning the prophets: "I will make them eat bitter food and drink poisoned water, because from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD (vs. 15-16). . . .

But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear His word? (v. 18). [Virtually none of those claiming the gift of prophecy today, honestly claim to have received their revelations in a vision as all biblical Prophets did ¹¹⁵]

"I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied [How often is that happening in *prophetist* churches today?]. But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people" (vs. 21-22). . . .

"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in My name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' [Most *prophetists* cannot even claim that]. How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has My word speak it faithfully" (vs. 25-26, 28). . . .

¹¹⁵ For further discussion of the fact that most modern "prophets" do not even see visions, see section 9.5.B.

"Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from Me. Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.' Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead My people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD. (vs. 30-32)

"When these people, or a prophet or a priest, ask you, 'What is the oracle of the LORD?' say to them, 'What oracle? I will forsake you, declares the LORD.' If a prophet or a priest or anyone else claims, 'This is the oracle of the LORD,' I will punish that man and his household. This is what each of you keeps on saying to his friend or relative: 'What is the LORD'S answer?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' But you must not mention 'the oracle of the LORD' again, because every man's own word becomes his oracle and so you distort the words of the living God, the LORD Almighty, our God.

This is what you keep saying to a prophet: 'What is the LORD'S answer to you?' or 'What has the LORD spoken?' Although you claim, 'This is the oracle of the LORD,' this is what the LORD says: You used the words, 'This is the oracle of the LORD,' even though I told you that you must not claim, 'This is the oracle of the LORD.' Therefore, I will surely forget you and cast you out of My presence . . . I will bring upon you everlasting disgrace—everlasting shame that will not be forgotten." (vs. 33-40)

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers (Jer 27:9) [which describes much of what is occurring in churches practicing *prophetism*].

Then the Prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies [like the doctrines supporting *prophetism*]. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the Earth. This very year you are going to die . . . In the seventh month of that same year,

Hananiah the prophet died (Jer 28:15-17) [Something we believe God would do today to a lying prophet as well].

Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in My name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD (Jer 29:8).

Lying prophets were a plague to God's people and He had to address it several times through several real Prophets. Finally, we will quote from the Prophet Ezekiel:

The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the LORD! ³ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! . . .

Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say, "The LORD declares," when the LORD has not sent them; yet they expect their words to be fulfilled. ⁷ Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, "The LORD declares," though I have not spoken?

Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you, declares the Sovereign LORD. ⁹ My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. . . .

Now, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination. Prophesy against them . . . You have profaned Me among My people . . . by lying to My people, who listen to lies. (Ezek 13:1-19)

Such warnings regarding false claims to the gift of prophecy are not only in the OT, but the NT as well.

This last rebuke in Ezekiel seems to apply a great deal to what is going on in *prophetists* churches when women not only violate Paul's command that no female prophets can speak in an assembly where men are present (cf. 1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:12), but also claim and then speak a supposed revelation from God, when in

reality it is their own thoughts, and they will not and cannot prove the difference. Such churches surely come under the displeasure of Christ communicated to the Christian church in Thyatira:

These are the words of the Son of God, Whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹ I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³ I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am He Who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. (Rev 2:18-24)

There are three different groups of people being addressed in this passage, and Christ is not pleased with any of them because of their unwillingness to take claims to the gift of prophecy seriously.

First, Christ addresses the Christians in the church: **"I have this against you: You [singular] tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess."** These Christians did not test her claims and expose her as a false messenger of God, unlike the Ephesian church of whom Jesus said: **"I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false"** (Rev 2:2). John MacArthur seems right when he comments that "The use of the singular pronoun ["**you**"] points this admonition especially to the leader of the congregation."¹¹⁶ Would you like the Head of the Church to have something **"against you"** because you do not practice biblical discernment when it comes to claims to speak for God in your congregation?

Nevertheless, this congregation evidently had many Christians who Christ commended for, **"your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance."** In one sense, this church looked very healthy. But in the midst of all these committed

¹¹⁶ John MacArthur, *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Parsons Technology, 1997), *loc. cit.*

Christians, and probably precisely because there was so much good occurring in this church, there was a wicked woman claiming to have the gift of prophecy.

Accordingly, Christ addressed the false "**prophetess**" who not only, "clearly professes the Christian faith"¹¹⁷ but was "a prominent woman claiming the gift of prophecy."¹¹⁸ This was their first sin. As discussed elsewhere, the Apostle Paul banned female prophetesses from speaking in the assembly, nevertheless, modern *prophetism* is prominently led and practiced by women and many congregations allow women to commit this sin. As already noted, the congregation's and leaders' second sin was not biblically testing the woman's claims to the gift of prophecy.

What was Christ's attitude toward this woman who falsely claimed to speak for God? He promised to inflict "**suffering**" on her. Likewise, He warns His "**servants**" whom "**she misleads**" and therefore "**commit [spiritual] adultery with her**" that He "**will make**" them "**suffer intensely**" and "**strike her children [followers] dead.**" Understand that the Lord is talking about *Christians* ("**My servants**") who have allowed a false "**prophetess**" to minister among them, and eventually "**mislead**" them, in spite of all the NT commands and warnings to not allow such evil in the house of God.¹¹⁹

But God will not be mocked. If these Christians do not repent of their *prophetism* He will severely discipline them, so "**the churches will know that I am He Who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.**" We still wait for God's judgment on churches, Pastors, and Christians who tolerate *prophetism* in our own day. But it will come.

Michael Wilcock writes in his commentary:

Against beleaguered Christians like those at Pergamum [cf. Rev 2:12-17], Satan uses the pressures of the world to 'squeeze' them 'into its own mould' (Rom. 12:2, ¹²⁰JBP); but where the church is noted for its growth and vigour (verse 19

¹¹⁷ Leon Morris, *Revelation*, (Intervarsity, 1996), 70.

¹¹⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Revelation* (Eerdmans, 1998), 87.

¹¹⁹ Gregory Beale believes, "the judgment due Jezebel and her cohorts is that deserved by unbelievers, which they are in the process of proving themselves to be" (*The Book of Revelation*, [Eerdmans, 1999], 263). On the contrary, there is nothing in Scripture or the text that would preclude our Father from severely spanking His children for the abomination of *prophetism*.

¹²⁰

[like Thyatira]), he knows that he can do most damage not by pressure without but by poison within.

So in Thyatira a particular woman takes on both the evil character of Jezebel and the prophetic role of Balaam, and begins to teach, as if from God, new 'deep things' which some members of this strong and lively church are only too willing to explore. . . . [M]any have so pretended, and their revelations, when divorced from what Scripture has already revealed, can be 'a very horrid thing' indeed. Their sinister voice is often heard in the midst of surging spiritual enthusiasms.¹²¹

Likewise, Dr. MacArthur writes:

The penetrating gaze of the Lord of the church had discerned serious error, causing Him to warn **I have this against you**. The indictment is **that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols**.

The sin, apparently involving the majority of the Thyatira church's members, was twofold. First, they violated the biblical teaching that women are not to be teachers or preachers in the church (1 Tim. 2:12). That led them to **tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess**. They compounded their error of permitting her to teach by allowing her to teach error. As a result, Jesus declares, **she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols**. . . .

Divine judgment was about to fall not only on Jezebel, but also on **those who commit adultery with her**. The Lord threatens to cast them **into great tribulation**—not the eschatological tribulation described in Revelation 4–19, but distress or trouble. Since these were the sinning Christians who had believed her lies, the Lord does not threaten to send them to hell as He did the false prophetess.¹²² He promises to bring them severe chastening—possibly even physical death (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16)—**unless they repent of her deeds**.

¹²¹ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation*, (Intervarsity, 1975), *loc. cit*

¹²² Dr. MacArthur writes, "In light of the finality of Jezebel's refusal to repent, it is more likely that the **bed** refers to death and hell—the ultimate resting place for those who refuse to repent." For us, at least, it is unclear whether the prophetess is a believer or unbeliever.

The severe judgment promised to the false prophetess and her followers again reveals Christ's passion for a doctrinally and behaviorally pure church. He will do whatever is necessary to purge His church of sin—even to the point of taking the lives of false teachers. That sobering reality should cause all who purport to be teachers and preachers [how about "prophets"!] in the church to be certain they are speaking the truth (cf. James 3:1). It should also warn Christians who are following false teachers to repent of their sins, lest they face divine chastening. . . .

It is not known how many in that congregation responded to Christ's warning, but, tragically, the Thyatira church as a whole apparently did not heed it. History records that it fell prey to the Montanist heresy (a movement led by a false prophet who claimed continuing revelation from God apart from Scripture)¹²³ and went out of existence by the end of the second century.¹²⁴

And the King is not done condemning *prophetism* in the Revelation: **"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book."** (Rev 22:18). Don't the "prophecies" being claimed today practically **"add"** to **"the prophecy of this book"**? Those who would doubt this had better be sure Jesus would not think so, because the consequences are disastrous.¹²⁵

¹²³ For further discussion of the *Montanists* see 9.13.D and 10.14.A.

¹²⁴ MacArthur, *loc. cit.*

¹²⁵ The highly respected Reformed theologian, Robert Reymond, makes a good case that the prohibition in Revelation 22:18 would certainly apply to modern *prophetism*:

In this verse John writes: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book." There can be no doubt that John's warning here against adding words to "the prophecy of this book" has immediate reference to the Book of Revelation itself; in short, John opposes any and all tampering with his Patmos prophecy. This cannot be controverted and no one denies it.

But does John's warning here have exclusive reference only to the Book of Revelation? While good scholars have said so, good reasons exist to believe that the warning applies to all the prophetic Scriptures construed as a unitary whole.

Dr. MacArthur is worth quoting here as well

The speaker who testifies to the authority and finality of **the words of the prophecy of this book** is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. v. 20). His solemn warning against tampering with Scripture applies first of all to the **prophecy of the book** of Revelation (cf. 1:3). Its stern rebukes of Jezebel

Consider the fact that this portion of the Word of God not only deals with "last things" but also was the last portion of the New Testament to be written. It is quite conceivable that John could have had before his mind the entire corpus of prophetic writings (his own and those preceding his) when he issued his warning, for doubtless John knew he was the last of the apostles, and there is evidence that by the last decade of the first century the several literary parts of our New Testament were already regarded as God's word to his church and were being gathered together in codex or "book" form.

It should also be noted that the Book of Revelation, by the very nature of its content, in no sense stands in isolation from the other prophetic writings of Scripture. To the contrary, John presents us with more direct allusions to the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament, verse for verse, than perhaps any other writer of New Testament literature.

In other words, from his vantage point in history, under inspiration John reaches far back, as it were, into Old Testament prophecy, brings both its weal and its woe forward and integrates them with his own and then relates the whole to the farthest reaches of this age. So there is a real sense in which the very subject which he treats unites his prophecy with the earlier prophetic writings, and unites them together in such a way that to add to his book is just to add to their book of prophecy. Standing midway, as he does, between all the former prophetic writings and the eschaton itself, John by means of the most comprehensive and extensive prophetic statement of them all brings past and future together with his own book serving as the uniting "linchpin" for prophecy and fulfillment.

When the all-time-encompassing manner in which John handles his material is kept in mind, it is readily perceptible that John's warning against adding to "the words of the prophecy of this book" must be construed in the widest and most comprehensive sense possible and not in the more restricted sense as is often done.

Once this is realized, it follows that Revelation 22:18, in its warning not to add anything to the prophetic Scriptures per se, envisions a completed canon, with the addition of the Book of Revelation itself constituting the concluding segment; and thus this verse becomes one of the strongest affirmations in the New Testament that the revelatory process ceased with the writings of the apostle John. (*What About Continuing Revelations And Miracles In The Presbyterian Church Today?: A Study Of The Doctrine Of The Sufficiency Of Scripture* [Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977], 40-41)

and her followers (2:20–23), those who had embraced the “deep things of Satan” (2:24), and those of the “synagogue of Satan” (3:9) would have prompted them to assault it.

But in light of the repeated warnings against altering God’s Word, Christ’s warning must be broadened to include all of Scripture. In Deuteronomy 4:2 Moses cautioned, “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

In Deuteronomy 12:32 he added, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.” Proverbs 30:5–6 warns, “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.”

Thus, the prohibition against altering the Apocalypse by implication extends to all of Scripture. Because Revelation describes the entire sweep of history from the close of the apostolic age to the eternal state, any alteration of it would be an alteration of Scripture, as Robert L. Thomas notes:

The predictive portions project from John’s lifetime all the way into the eternal state. Any type of prophetic utterance would intrude into the domain of this coverage and constitute either an addition to or subtraction from Revelation’s content. So the final book of the Bible is also the concluding product of NT prophecy. It also marks the close of the NT canon since the prophetic gift was the divinely chosen means for communicating the inspired books of the canon. (*Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995], 517)

The canon of Scripture was closed at the end of the first century when Revelation was finished. Thus, any false prophet, fraud, or charlatan who **adds** alleged new revelations to it (as the Montanists did in the early church and Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and other false prophets have done in recent times) will face divine vengeance. **God will add to such people the plagues which are written in the book of Revelation.**¹²⁶

Accordingly, many of the “prophets” in *prophetism* don’t even know Christ. Isn’t this what Jesus warned? That “**Many**” will tell Him, “**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name,**” and the

¹²⁶ Ibid

Lord **"will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers'"** (Matt 7:22-23).

It is, of course, difficult to imagine satanic influences and deception being so intermixed among God's people. But then again, where else would we expect them to be? We should be reminded that in this age, the demonic coexists with the divine. Christ's parable of the wheat and the weeds clearly illustrates this (cf. Matt 13:24-30). The King warned of people who would operate among Christians portraying themselves as **"sheep"** but who are actually **"ferocious wolves,"** including people who will **"prophecy"** in the name of Jesus (Matt 7:15, 22-23). The Apostle warned the Ephesian elders, **"Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!"** (Acts 20:30-31).

Accordingly, we are repeatedly warned in Scripture of:

- False christs (cf. 2 Thess 2:9; Matt 24:5, 24; 1 John 2:18),
- False apostles (cf. 2 Cor 11:13; Rev 2:2),
- False prophets (cf. Deut 13:1-3; 18:20-22; Jer 23:11-40; 29:8-9; Matt 7:15; 24:11, 24; 1 Thess 5:21; 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John 4:1),
- False teachers (cf. Acts 20:29-31; Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:6-8; Eph 4:14; Col 2:8, 18-19; 1 Tim 1:3; 6:3-4; 2 Tim 2:17-18; 3:13; Tit 1:9-11; 2 Pet 2:1-22; 2 John 1:7; Jude; Rev 2:14-15,20),
- Deceptive miracles and miracle workers (cf. Deut 13:1-4; Matt 7:22; Acts 8:9-12; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:12-14; 16:13-14),
- False spirits (cf. 1 Tim 4:1; 1 John 4:1, 6).

If such warnings and promises of false ministers and ministries *in the Church* are so prevalent in Scripture, why are we so surprised to find them coming true! And these warnings are especially important in spiritual revivals as we have discussed elsewhere.¹²⁷ Jesus warned that at **"the end of the Age . . . many false prophets will appear and deceive many people"** (Matt 24:3, 11). Perhaps the rise of *prophetism* is one more sign of Christ's near return.

In a day when so many are claiming to be "prophets" in and out of the Church, there is a great need for discernment. In our view, *prophetist* churches are not experiencing more real prophecy, but just practicing less discernment. Considering the likelihood that there has been an abundance of false prophets among them, when is the last time you heard of them actually exposing and

¹²⁷ For dangers in revivals see section 10.15.A.

excommunicating one as a dangerous fraud? Is the fact that they have rarely if ever done this reflective of the fact that they have rarely if ever had false or lying prophets in their midst? Not likely. The man of God is to keep the devil *out* of the Church. Because of their craving for extra-biblical revelation, the modern prophetic movement has let him in.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

Oh God protect us from the false prophets! Expose them among Your people. Help Your people repent of their idolatry and reject these lying prophets. Reveal Your judgment on them now so Your people may be rebuked and corrected. Regardless, we look forward to that Day when these lying prophets will stand before You and get what they deserve.

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) What is God's general attitudes toward claiming to have a word from Him when you actually don't?
- 2) Why do we claim *prophetists* are committing heresy? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 3) Why do you think so few confront claims to divine revelation apart from Scripture in our day?
- 4) What natural human desire does particularly "personal *prophetism* play on?
- 5) How do false claims to the gift of prophecy test God's people? What biblical passage teaches this?
- 6) What is divination? What is God's attitude toward it? Why do we believe modern *prophetism* often practices it? Do you agree or disagree and why?

9.3: *Dangers of Prophetism*

- 7) What is a significant difference between ancient pagan prophets and biblical Prophets? Who are modern "prophets" most like in this regard?
- 8) What are the reasons God hates false claims to the gift of prophecy?

Publications & Particulars

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God's Prophets
Part II
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Chapter 9.4

More Precisely Defining Biblical Prophets

NT Prophets are the Same as OT Prophets & the NT Gift of Prophecy

Table of Topics

A) NT Prophets are Synonymous With OT Prophets

B) The Gift of Prophecy & the Ministry of Prophet Are Synonymous

B.1) Prophecy equals Prophets

B.2) Prophecy is not viral: *1 Cor 14:1, 31 & Acts 19:6*

B.3) Prophecy is not learned

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- *Prophetists* must claim two things: 1) NT Christian Prophets were different in function and authority than OT Jewish Prophets, and 2) NT Christian Prophets were different than those with the gift of prophecy.
- For over 1900 years virtually no one in the Christian Church distinguished between the attributes of OT and NT Prophets.
- There is no biblical distinction between the divine authority and authentication of OT and NT Prophets. The Prophet Agabus is an example.
- The gift of prophecy was an abiding gift of God, resulting in a ministry such that you were recognized as a Prophet.
- There is no biblical evidence that the gift of prophecy was intended to flit around such that no one really knew at any one moment who was going to be a Prophet.
- Like any true spiritual gift, prophecy cannot be learned, but is sovereignly granted by the Holy Spirit.

A) NT Prophets are Synonymous With OT Prophets

Unfortunately, as we have pointed out elsewhere in *KOG*, *charismaticism*¹²⁸ attempts to separate what God has joined together. The errors in *prophetism* are no exception. In order to support their position regarding the NT gift of prophecy, *prophetists* must claim two things: 1) NT Christian Prophets were rather completely different in function and authority than OT Jewish Prophets, and 2) NT Christian Prophets were different from those who had the gift of NT prophecy.

All of this is in an effort to water down the real biblical gift of prophecy to match the rather pathetic modern version being practiced in which “prophets” neither authoritatively speak divine revelation, nor accurately predict the future. On the contrary, NT Christian Prophets had the same attributes and authority as OT Jewish Prophets, and NT Christian Prophets alone possessed the NT gift to prophecy.

Did the early Church make a distinction between OT and NT Prophets? We would not expect such a thing, particularly when the same word “Prophet” is used in both testaments. Nevertheless, this is a foundational and necessary claim of *prophetism* in order that they may redefine the NT gift of prophecy from the divinely authoritative and supernaturally authenticated version in the OT.

Accordingly, Wayne Grudem, former long-time Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and the foremost proponent of *prophetism* today, writes:

Now *if* New Testament congregational prophecy was like Old Testament prophecy . . . then the [*historicist's*¹²⁹] objection would indeed be true.¹³⁰

And modern *prophetism* would indeed be wrong.

There is good reason that for over 1900 years virtually no one in the Christian Church distinguished between the authority and

¹²⁸ For a definition of *charismaticism* see endnote in chapter 8.2.

¹²⁹ By *historicists* we refer to those who adhere to the historical position of the Church that the gift of prophecy ceased shortly after the Apostles were extinct. Accordingly, the practice was universally rejected by the Christian Church for at least 1600 years since the days of the Montanists (c. 200), and as demonstrated throughout this section of Volume II, there is no biblical support for claiming that the gift of prophecy has been restored to the Church.

¹³⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1039.

attributes of OT and NT Prophets. First, as already noted, one might expect a different word to be used for these ministries if they were as different as modern *prophetism* claims. However, the same Greek word (*prophētēs*) is used to refer to Prophets in the Greek OT (Septuagint), and refers to both OT and NT Prophets in the NT.

For example, Luke writes, **"In the church at Antioch there were [Christian] Prophets [*prophētai*] and Teachers"** (Acts 13:1), and a few verses later he quotes the Apostle as saying, **"The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning Him they fulfilled the words of the [OT] Prophets [*prophētōn*] that are read every Sabbath** (Acts 13:27). If the great distinction between OT and NT Prophets existed, as claimed by modern *prophetism*, we might expect a different word group being used, but there is no hint of such a distinction. Consequently, the same words are used to refer to NT and OT Prophets (cf. OT Prophets and prophecy at Acts 2:16; 3:24, 25; 10:43; 13:20, 27, 40; 15:15; 24:14; 26:22, 27; 28:23 and NT Prophets and prophecy at Acts 7:37; 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9-10; cf. Rom 1:2; 12:6).

Accordingly, we read in the *ISBE*:

The NT's use of *prophētēs* to refer to contemporary [NT] Prophets as well as OT Prophets demonstrates that the NT authors saw a continuity between these two era of prophecy.

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Along the same lines, the *NIDNTT* records:

Certain functions of NT Prophets are reminiscent of the OT Prophet: prediction of future events (Acts 11:28; 20:23, 25; 27:22), the declaration of divine judgments (Acts 13:11; 28:25-28), and the employment of symbolic actions (Acts 21:11).¹³²

Therefore, the common sense conclusion is that the early Church never desired to distinguish between OT and NT gifts of prophecy in any way.

Further evidence for this is found in the post-apostolic Church. For example, the apologist Justin Martyr (c. 150) wrote to a Jew:

¹³¹ G. V. Smith, "Prophets" *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), III:987-88, 1003-4.

¹³² Colin Brown, "Prophet" *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, Colin Brown, ed., 4 vols., (Zondervan, 1986), III:81-87.

[T]he prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation [Israel] have been transferred to us [the Church].¹³³

Justin understood that the gift of prophecy operating in the early Church was identical to that which operated in the OT.

Likewise, c. 200 when the early Church was battling the claim of the Montanists to the NT gift of prophecy, the Church's leaders clearly used the attributes of OT Prophets to condemn the Montanists' version of the gift of prophecy as a dangerous and heretical fraud.¹³⁴ For example, one early Church leader pointed out that a prediction given by one of the Montanist "prophetesses" had not come true, therefore exposing her as a fake (cf. Deut 18:21-22).¹³⁵ Accordingly, Dr. Farnell writes concerning the Montanist controversy in the early Church:

[T]he Old Testament Prophets were a basis for understanding what constituted genuine New Testament Prophets. If a self-acclaimed Prophet did not conform to the Old Testament standards of a Prophet, he was to be rejected. Here again the early church saw a direct continuity between Old Testament and New Testament Prophets.¹³⁶

In an effort to reinterpret this consistent use of the word group *prophētēs*, proponents of *prophetism* have suggested that the Apostle Paul, a "**Hebrew of Hebrews**" (Phil 3:5), actually gained his understanding of biblical prophecy from the pagan Greeks, rather than his OT Jewish heritage. Accordingly, Sinclair B. Ferguson, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster (Dallas) relates:

[Dr. Wayne] Grudem notes that in the Hellenistic world the semantic range of the term 'Prophet' [*prophētēs*] was very wide indeed, and he argues that we should recognize a similar range in the New Testament. While a distinction was made in Hellenistic religion between the different 'levels' of prophecy

¹³³ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 82; online at www.ccel.org.

¹³⁴ See further below and Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, V. 14-18; online at www.ccel.org.

¹³⁵ Eusebius, 5.16.18-19.

¹³⁶ F. David Farnell, "Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets? A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Hypothesis," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2 (1991) 294

involved in inspiration and interpretation, however, the controlling background to the New Testament's thinking is not Hellenistic but Hebraic prophecy, with its implicit, and at times explicit, claim to divine inspiration, not least when it reflected on future events.¹³⁷

Accordingly, even the Pentecostal NT scholar Gordon Fee writes: Although it [prophecy] was a widespread phenomenon in the Greek world, Paul's understanding is thoroughly conditioned by his own history in Judaism. The Prophet spoke to God's people under the inspiration of the Spirit. . . . That also means that he undoubtedly saw the "New Testament Prophets" as in the succession of the "legitimate" Prophets of the Old Testament.¹³⁸

Likewise, the rather liberal NT scholar J. D. G. Dunn, who is also sympathetic to *prophetism*, nonetheless writes that NT Prophets "were no doubt acting out of a consciousness of continuity of inspiration with these OT Prophets and Jesus [because] it was the same Spirit, the Spirit of Christ who inspired them all."¹³⁹

Accordingly, while the trend today is to claim the gift of prophecy is something less than the forthtelling of a word from God or foretelling an act of God, many biblical scholars of the previous

¹³⁷ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Intervarsity, 1996), 214-15.

¹³⁸ Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Hendrickson, 1994), 891-2; cf. 169.

¹³⁹ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Westminster Press, 1975), 172.

generation had a clearer understanding of the biblical view.¹⁴⁰ NT scholar C. K. Barrett wrote of the NT gift of prophecy:

¹⁴⁰ Again, David Aune shares our view when he writes:

In early Christianity the exclusive use of the term *prophētēs* as a designation for a human medium of divine revelation is consciously borrowed from the widely accepted equation in Judaism of the Greek word *prophētēs* with the Hebrew term *nabi'* (reflected in the LXX). The term *prophētēs* occurs 144 times in the NT, 86 of which refer to OT Prophets. Similarly, in the Apostolic Fathers the word occurs 58 times, 37 of which refer to OT Prophets.

The early Christian application of the designation *prophētēs* to individual Christians, then, was originally determined by the prevalent conception of the prophetic role in the OT. In [intertestamental] Judaism the term "Prophet" was rarely applied to those who were not [biblical] OT Prophets In early Christianity this reluctance to apply the designation to contemporary figures was completely overcome, and the term *prophētēs* was freely applied to those who were regarded as inspired spokesmen of God. (*Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* [Eerdmans, 1983], 19)

Likewise, David Farnell, Chairman of the Department of Ministerial Studies, Southeastern Bible College writes:

The Old Testament predicted the Prophet John the Baptist (Malachi 3:5). Jesus declared that John was the greatest of the Prophets (Matt 11:11), thus placing him in line with the Old Testament Prophets. John the Apostle spoke of "the prophecy of this book [of Revelation]" that he wrote (Revelation 22:7). And the angel from God that spoke to him placed him among "the Prophets" such as the other "servants" God used in the Old Testament (22:6). And John said of himself, "I am a fellow servant with . . . the Prophets" (22:9). So from John the Baptist to John the Apostle, New Testament Prophets stood in continuity with Old Testament Prophets. And their revelations from God were both authoritative and infallible (see Revelation 22:18–19).

Old Testament Prophets pronounced prophecies that were sometimes more enduring (e.g., Isa 7:14; 11:6–10) in nature than many Christian Prophets who may have given temporal or localized Prophetic advice to Christian communities. Such issues as these are separate from questions of authority or accuracy and do not in any way lessen the authority or accuracy of Christian Prophets and their prophecies. When the great Prophet Isaiah spoke, he may have been more prestigious (much of such prestige is by hindsight, e.g., Dan 9:6; Neh 9:26) than an anonymous Christian Prophet, but since both had the source of their prophetic utterance in the Holy Spirit, their prophetic pronouncements were equally authoritative and accurate (if a genuine New Testament Prophet was speaking). The authority of the genuine Prophet rests in God as the source of the prophecy and not in the Prophet himself. (*Bsac*, part 2, 388, endnote 3, 149:596 (Oct 92) p. 394)

[I]t was expressed in inspired but intelligible speech, and sometimes though not always included prediction of future events (e.g. Acts xi. 27 f.). Like Old Testament prophecy it was primarily an immediate communication of God's word to his people, through human lips.¹⁴¹

Likewise, Christian philosopher and theologian Norman Geisler has written, "There is no reason to believe that New Testament Prophets exercised their gifts any differently than Prophets in the Old Testament."¹⁴²

Contrary to the claims of modern *prophetism* then, there is no biblical distinction between the divine authority and authentication of OT and NT Prophets. Accordingly, the NT Prophet Agabus spoke divinely authoritative extra-biblical revelation, prefacing his statement with "**This is what [God] the Holy Spirit says . . .**" (Acts 21:11), an utterance very reminiscent of his OT counterparts. Agabus also miraculously authenticated himself by accurately predicting the future twice (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11, 27-33), just as prescribed for OT Prophets (cf. Deut 18:21-22).¹⁴³

B) The Gift of Prophecy & the Ministry of the Prophet Are Synonymous

B.1) Prophecy equals Prophets

In the early Church, the gift of prophecy was synonymous with being a Christian Prophet, and being a Christian Prophet was synonymous with having the gift of prophecy. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 that, "**the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit . . . prophecy**" (vs. 7-8, 10), clearly a reference to the NT gift of prophecy. Then a few verses later, the

¹⁴¹ C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC) (Hendrickson, 2000), 219.

¹⁴² Norman L. Geisler, *Signs and Wonders* (Tyndale, 1988), 159.

¹⁴³ Anglican Bishop Michael Green comments:

The Old Testament Prophet, however, was more of a national leader, reformer, and patriot, and his message usually was to Israel alone. In the New Testament the Prophet principally ministered to the church and did not have national characteristics. (*I Believe in the Holy Spirit* [Eerdmans, 2004], 109

Apostle refers to these very same people when he writes, **"in the church God . . . appointed . . . Prophets"** (v. 28), and asks the question, **"are all Prophets?"** (v. 29). Clearly, the Apostle does not distinguish between those with the spiritual gift of **"prophecy"** (v. 10) and the ministry of Christian **"Prophets"** all because the gift and ministry were synonymous.

The Apostle has the same in 1 Corinthians 14 which begins with, **"eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy"** (v. 1). Then the Apostle repeatedly equates one **"who prophesies"** (vs. 3, 4, 5) as possessing the gift of prophecy. In verse 22 he says the gift of **"prophecy . . . is for believers."** Then in verse 29, no doubt referring to those with the gift of prophecy mentioned in vs. 1 and 22, and those who would prophesy in vs. 3, 4, and 5, the Apostle states:

Two or three Prophets should speak . . . For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. (vs. 29, 31-33)

Again, those with the gift of prophecy, who prophesy, are referred to as those having the ministry of a Prophet.

Accordingly, spiritual gifts are tied to ministries. For example, no one doubts that in the early Church, the people with the spiritual gift of **"teaching"** listed in Romans 12:7, were synonymous with those having the recognized ministry of **"Teachers"** mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, 29 and Ephesians 4:11. The NT Church simply did not make a distinction between someone having the gift of teaching and the ministry of a Teacher.

Accordingly, the Apostle ties the giving of spiritual gifts to specific ministries when he writes the Ephesians:

But to each one of us grace [i.e. a spiritual gift] has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it says: "When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave [spiritual] gifts to men." . . . ¹¹ It was He who gave some to be [and have the corresponding spiritual gifts of] Apostles, some to be Prophets, some to be Evangelists, and some to be Pastors and Teachers . . . (Eph 4:7-8, 11)

The context of the Apostle's statement is clearly spiritual gifts. Accordingly, the **"grace . . . given"** (v. 7) and the **"gifts"** Christ **"gave . . . to men"** (v. 8) refers to a spiritual gift for ministry (cf. Rom 12:6 where Paul writes, **"We have different [spiritual] gifts,**

according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it . . ."). And in this context of spiritual gifts given to men, the Apostle speaks seamlessly about the resulting ministries given to the Church. Accordingly, there is no distinction here between the gifts of prophecy, evangelism, pastoring, and teaching "**gifts**" that Christ "**gave to men**" and the corresponding ministries of Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.

In the early Church then, it was common sense to understand that a person with the ministry of Teacher, had the spiritual gift of teaching. There is no reason to believe that the opposite was true as well, in that, those with the gift of teaching could be referred to as having the ministry of Teacher. The same was true for the gifts of prophecy, evangelism, and pastoring.

Therefore, some things become clear about the NT gift of prophecy. First, it was synonymous with being a Christian Prophet. Accordingly, the *NIDNTT* notes:

In the NT *prophētēs* is found 144 times. . . The noun means a Prophet, one who proclaims and expounds divine revelation. In most cases it refers to OT Prophets, but it is also applied to John the Baptist, Jesus, and others who proclaim the Kingdom of God of Christ, and to the believer who possesses the gift of prophecy.¹⁴⁴

The same Greek word is used for both the gift and office because they were synonymous. Consequently, the attributes of a Christian Prophet such as Agabus, who clearly spoke new, extra-biblical, but divinely authoritative revelation, and perfectly predicted the future, are to be expected of anyone claiming the gift of NT prophecy, and vice versa.

It is important in the modern debate concerning the gift of prophecy to demonstrate, that from a biblical perspective, it was tied to being a Christian Prophet. This is because like several other things, what God has joined together, *charismaticism* is attempting to tear apart.

For example, teachers of *prophetism* insist that a Christian Prophet such as Agabus did not have the NT gift of prophecy. Their reason for imposing this artificial distinction is to redefine the latter as something less than what the Church has normally believed about God's Prophets. For example, Dr. Fee writes regarding the Apostle Paul's statement that, "**in the church God has appointed . . . Prophets . . .**" (1 Cor 12:28):

¹⁴⁴ Brown, "Prophet" in *NIDNTT*, III:81-87.

The question is whether Paul is here thinking of a specific group of people known as "Prophets" vis-a-vis "Apostles" and other members of the community, or whether this is a purely functional term for him, referring to any and all who would exercise the gift of prophecy.¹⁴⁵

On the contrary, there is no question at all whether those with the gift of prophecy were called Prophets, and there had never been such a question for over 1900 years of Church history until the advent of modern *prophetism*.

Likewise, regarding the Apostle Paul's claim that Christ "**gave . . . Prophets**" (Eph 4:11) to the NT Church, Dr. Fee writes:

As with 1 Cor 12:28 and Eph 2:20, the more difficult term is "Prophet," since [the NT gift of] prophecy is more clearly a church-wide phenomenon and not at all limited to leadership or to itinerants [Prophets] who prophesied. . . . If so, then "Prophet" in this listing may refer not to the congregational [gift of] prophesying like that in I Thes 5:19-22, I Cor 14:1-40, or Rom 12:6, but to people [i.e. Prophets] like Paul and his co-workers who also functioned in this way among the churches.¹⁴⁶

In essence, *prophetism* is asking us to believe that the ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11 are not attached to spiritual gifts. If so, then modern *prophetists* need to be consistent and claim as well that there were those in the early Church with the gift of "**teaching**" and who were to "**teach**" (cf. Rom 12:8), but did not have the ministry or office of "**Teachers**" (cf. Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). We doubt most will be willing to claim this, and such inconsistency is a foremost characteristic of a lie. The "congregational prophesying" occurring in the passages Dr. Fee cites was, no doubt, occurring through those authenticated and recognized as having the ministry of Prophets.

Unfortunately, this unbiblical distinction between NT Prophets and the gift of prophecy is found outside of *prophetism* as well.

¹⁴⁵ Fee, *Presence*, 170. Unfortunately, Leon Morris reflects the same error, writing: "Prophecy might be occasional (Acts 19:6), or a settled office (1 Cor 12:28ff.). (*1 Corinthians* [Eerdmans, 1999], 168). For comments on Acts 19:6 see section B.2 below.

C. K. Barrett however comments on Paul's designation of the ministry of "**Prophets**": "We must suppose that they were men who exercised the gift of prophecy described at length in chapter xiv." (295).

¹⁴⁶ Fee, 708.

Accordingly, the rightly respected Bible teacher John MacArthur comments on 1 Corinthians 14:29-31:

The text here affirms that Prophets were also appointed by God as specially gifted men, and differ from those believers who have the gift of prophecy (cf. 12:10).¹⁴⁷

On the contrary, and as demonstrated above, a common sense interpretation of the Apostle's words would not seem to mean this. In the text that Dr. MacArthur refers to, the Apostle wrote:

Two or three Prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone [a Prophet] who is sitting down, the first speaker [a Prophet] should stop. For you can all prophecy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. (1 Cor 14:29-31)

Unfortunately, Dr. MacArthur is in agreement with modern *prophetism* in distinguishing between a special office of NT Prophet and the gift of NT prophecy by which anyone could "**prophecy**." The Bible simply does not make such a distinction and accordingly in this passage the Apostle Paul synonymously speaks of the ministry of "**Prophets**" (v. 29) and a person who would "**prophecy**" (v. 31) with the gift of prophecy (v. 1, 22).

¹⁴⁷ John MacArthur, *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Parsons Technology, 1997)

B.2) Prophecy is not viral: 1 Cor 14:1, 31 & Acts 19:6

The second conclusion drawn from the verses above is the gift of prophecy was an abiding gift of God, resulting in a ministry such that you were recognized as a Prophet. Spiritual gifts in the NT are not generally perceived as one-time endowments that spontaneously visit a person temporarily like some virus, leave them, and jump from person to person. This is especially true of such ministry gifts as apostleship, prophecy, teaching, etc.

One reason for this is that such authoritative gifts needed to be authenticated and recognized. No one could just stand up in a congregation and "prophesy" without first being accepted as a Prophet. If anyone in the early Church had the gift of prophecy, then they miraculously authenticated themselves by predicting the future or otherwise, as Agabus did.

All of this is why the early Church consistently referred to people with the gift of prophecy as authenticated and recognized Prophets. Accordingly, Luke refers to "**the Prophet Joel**" (Acts 2:16), or the "**Prophet Isaiah**" (Acts 8:28), and then using the same Greek word speaks of "**some Prophets** [who obviously had the gift of prophecy] **came down from Jerusalem to Antioch**" and "**a Prophet named Agabus**" (Acts 21:10), "**Judas and Silas, who themselves were Prophets**" (Acts 15:32), "**Prophets and Teachers: Barnabas, Simeon . . . Lucius . . . Manaen . . . and Saul**" (Acts 13:1), and "**the Prophetess Anna**" (Luke 2:36). Likewise, the Apostle could say, "**in the church God has appointed first of all Apostles, second Prophets, third Teachers**" (1 Cor 12:28), and those divine appointments and their accompanying gifts did not flit around such that no one really knew at any one moment who was going to be an Apostle, Prophet, or Teacher.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Dr. Aune writes:

Several times in the Apocalypse of John the author uses the term *prophētēs* in the plural; he refers to "thy servants the Prophets and saints" (11:18), "the blood of the saints and Prophets" (16:6), "saints, Apostles, and Prophets" (18:20), "the blood of Prophets and of saints" (18:24.), "the Lord, the God of the spirits of the Prophets" (22:6), and "your brethren the Prophets" (22:9). These references all indicate that the Prophets were an identifiable group, distinguishable from saints and Apostles. While there is no indication that they prophesied in groups, either within or apart from the setting of Christian worship, they appear to have constituted a "school" or . . . "order" within the churches of western Asia Minor. . . .

In sum, it appears that those designated "Prophet" in early Christianity were specialists in mediating divine revelation, not simply

Therefore, while God could give anyone, at anytime, the gift of prophecy if He chose to, it would not follow the biblical pattern of being attached to an abiding, authenticated ministry. Accordingly, Dr. Aune likewise concludes:

Some, but not all, early Christians acted as inspired mediums of divine revelation and . . . these individuals alone received the label "Prophet." To regard all Christians as potential Prophets is a theological dictum which cannot be confirmed . . . by historical or literary criticism.¹⁴⁹

Likewise, Dr. Forbes writes:

It cannot be the case that all Christians were "potentially Prophets." No positive evidence suggests such a position, and the designation of certain individuals as Prophets, as well as Paul's rhetorical question in I Corinthians 12:29, is against it.¹⁵⁰

Because *prophetists* believe in a second-rate gift of prophecy, distinguished from the biblical attributes of a biblical Prophet, and that could be spontaneously possessed by anyone, at any time, they promote something that could be called "viral prophecy." Accordingly, the gift of prophecy might flit about a room of people, visiting one person and then another, and perhaps never ending them again.

Dr. Grudem, for instance, writes:

Another great benefit of prophecy is that it provides opportunity for participation by everyone in the congregation, not just those who are skilled speakers or who have gifts of teaching. Paul says that he wants "all" the Corinthians to

those who occasionally prophesied. The image of the OT Prophet and the term used to designate such Prophets was the primary source of this conception. In the middle of the first century A.D. in Corinth, Prophets constituted a recognizable group within the Christian community that specialized in mediating a particular form of divine revelation within the setting of congregational worship. . . .

[T]he certification process was not formalized but consisted of the reputation which the Prophet had built up over an undetermined period of time. Prophets who settled in the community were undoubtedly those who had been certified by the community. (197-98, 226)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 6, 220-21.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment* (J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 245.

prophecy (I Cor. 14:5), and he says, "You can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged (1 Cor. 14:31). [This] mean[s] that anyone who receives a "revelation" from God has permission to prophesy (within Paul's guidelines), and it suggests that many will."¹⁵¹

Dr. Fee likewise writes:

Although some people are called "Prophets," probably because they were frequent speakers of "prophecies," in [1 Cor 14] the implication is that it is a gift widely available—at least potentially—to all. . . . See on 11:4-5; 14:1-5, 23-24, 29-31. This does not mean that all do (cf. 12:29), but that it is not limited strictly to "Prophets," as is so often suggested in the literature.¹⁵²

There simply is no clear biblical evidence for such a thing. Accordingly, we quoted Dr. Aune above that, "To regard all Christians as potential Prophets is a theological dictum which cannot be confirmed," and Dr. Forbes has written, "It cannot be the case that all Christians were 'potentially Prophets.'"

There are three primary verses in the NT used by *prophetists* to claim the gift of prophecy is "viral." First we will address, 1 Corinthians 14:1. In the Apostle's effort to battle another error of the *charismaticism* in his day, he was attempting to put spiritual gifts in perspective for the tongues-hungry Corinthians. Therefore, he wrote them, "**eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy**" (1 Cor 14:1). This has been construed by some as a modern day encouragement for every Christian individually to be seeking to possess the gift.

First, this is just one more example of the unbiblical independence and egotism in American Christianity, and especially in *charismaticism*.¹⁵³ The Apostle was not telling individual Christians to seek the gift. That would be fruitless because the Holy Spirit grants spiritual gifts "**to each one, just as He determines,**" (1 Cor. 12:11), not as we wish. The Apostle's exhortation only makes sense if we understand it to mean that the Corinthian congregation *as a whole* were to be seeking God to bless their

¹⁵¹ Grudem, 1060.

¹⁵² Fee, *Presence*, 170.

¹⁵³ For further discussion of the egotism evident in *charismaticism* see section 10.16.G.

congregation with this gift, but they understood that only the Spirit would decide who might possess it.

Secondly, *prophetism* ignores the real and special purpose of the gift of prophecy as a “**foundation**” building gift along with “**the Apostles**” (Eph 2:20; cf. 3:4-5), and which ceased to be given in the early Church after it had accomplished this special purpose, which no longer exists today unless God wishes to add to Scripture. It should be noticed that this instruction for the Corinthians to “**eagerly desire . . . the gift of prophecy**” was initially to a church in the first century, and as we have repeatedly pointed out, we need to be careful in applying every instruction in the NT to our own day (e.g. Christ telling the disciples only to preach the Gospel to the Jews, Matt 10:5-6).

When we recognize the historical context of this statement, we can understand the Apostle's exhortation to this church. The Corinthians were living in an age when God was revealing revolutionary new truth apart from established Scripture. The only sources of these new truths in the early Church were the Apostles and Prophets (cf. Eph 2:20; 3:5). Therefore, it becomes abundantly clear why this was such a valuable gift to a local congregation. If you had NT Prophets in your church, you had the NT revelation! 1 Corinthians is one of the very earliest NT documents and at this time a church without an Apostle or NT Prophet, was probably without the NT revelation. It would seem that because the NT gift of Apostleship could only be bestowed personally by Christ, it was the more commonly available NT gift of prophecy that the Apostle encouraged.

Those who so desire the gift of prophecy and claim it, forget how easy and “**evil**” (Matt 7:23) it is to be **lying Prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds**” (Jer 23:26).

The second verse used to suggest the gift of prophecy was “viral” is 1 Corinthians 14:31 where Paul instructs: “**You can all prophesy one by one.**” Taken out of context with what the rest of Scripture teaches about the gift of prophecy, this could appear to imply a viral nature for the gift. However, let us look at Paul's complete statement:

Two or three Prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. ³⁰ **And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.** ³¹ **For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.** ³² **The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets.** ³³ **For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.**

As in all the congregations of the saints, ³⁴ **women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.** ³⁵ **If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.** (1 Cor 14:29-35)

First, Dr. Grudem conveniently leaves out the Apostle's prohibition against women speaking in the public church assembly *at all*. Evidently, then, it is not at all true, as Dr. Grudem claims, that a "great benefit of prophecy is that it provides opportunity for participation by everyone in the congregation . . . anyone who receives a 'revelation' from God has permission to prophesy."¹⁵⁴ This prohibition of at least female prophesying of any kind in the congregational meeting will be discussed further elsewhere.¹⁵⁵

Secondly, the Apostle says those who were to "**prophesy**" (v. 31; cf. vs. 5, 25) in the congregation were called the "**Prophets,**" (v. 29, 32), and they were the same "**Prophets**" "**God has appointed**" "**in the church**" "**second**" only to "**Apostles**" (1 Cor 12:28), and who had, "**insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and Prophets**" (Eph 3:4-5), and were among "**the Apostles and Prophets**" who were "**the foundation**" on which "**God's household**" had been "**built.**" (Eph 2:19-20). The "congregational Prophets" in Corinth were not the kind of "ordinary" Prophets prevalent and promoted in *prophetism*, but rather, peers of those who had laid the revelational foundation of the New Covenant Church with the Apostles.

Thirdly, then, we see that what Dr. Grudem suggests is a literal command, the Apostle intended as hyperbole. Not everyone really could prophesy because the Apostle himself had limited it to "**two or three Prophets**" (v. 29), not "**all**" would ever be Prophets (cf. 12:29), and "**all**" certainly didn't include the women.

¹⁵⁴ Grudem, 1060. While Dr. Grudem adds "within Paul's guidelines" one of those guidelines for him is not the prohibition of women speaking in the church.

¹⁵⁵ Regarding the prohibition of female prophets in the congregation see section 9.7.F.

Finally, some see support for “viral” prophecy apart from an authenticated ministry as a Prophet in Acts 19:6 ¹⁵⁶ where Luke records:

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”

“John’s baptism,” they replied.

Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all. (Acts 19:1-7)

The instance of these men “prophesying” is taken to be a normative event for the life of the Church for all time. Actually, neither “prophesying” at conversion nor many other events in this passage were even norms in the first century, let alone all of Church history. What *prophetists* (and Pentecostals for that matter) fail to see here is the monumental, unique event that is taking place here. Dr. MacArthur correctly summarizes this when he comments here:

These twelve men, like Paul and Apollos before them, illustrate the transitional nature of Acts. The church, which had embraced Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans, now gathered in the last group: Old Testament saints. And the same miraculous gifts were present, so that all would know what was said of the Gentiles in Acts 11:17-18:

“If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way? And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.”

¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately, Leon Morris reflects the same error, writing: “Prophecy might be occasional (Acts 19:6), or a settled office (1 Cor 12:28ff.). (1 *Corinthians* [Eerdmans, 1999], 168).

So all the groups were gathered in. And in each case apostles were present to verify that all received the same Holy Spirit in the same way. That having been completed, Paul could write to the Ephesians, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5). From then on, the Holy Spirit would come to every heart at salvation, as the epistles teach.¹⁵⁷

B.3) Prophecy is not learned

Because of *charismaticism's* fundamental misunderstandings of biblical spiritual gifts, they believe they can teach someone to possess them. This is yet additional evidence that they have abandoned the supernatural attributes of the biblical gifts, and have accepted mere human, second-rate versions of them. We have discussed elsewhere *charismaticism's* claim to be able to teach

¹⁵⁷ MacArthur, *in loc.* Barnes has no comment on this. The following commentators agree: F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts (NICNT)* (Eerdmans, 1988), 364; I. H. Marshall, *Acts* (Eerdmans, 1999), 308; and John Stott, *the Message of Acts* (Intervarsity, 1990); and Calvin, *Commentaries*, online at www.ccel.org. The latter writes concerning the laying on of hands for the baptism of the Spirit, and which obviously applies to prophesying:

Furthermore, as I confess that this laying on of hands was a sacrament, so I say that those fell through ignorance who did continually imitate the same. For seeing that all men agree in this, that it was a grace which was to last only for a time, which was showed by that sign, it is a perverse and ridiculous thing to retain the sign since the truth is taken away.

Likewise, Dr. Stott writes:

[T]hose twelve 'disciples' cannot possibly be regarded as providing a norm for a two-stage initiation. . . . The norm of Christian experience, then, is a cluster of four things: repentance, faith in Jesus, water baptism and the gift of the Spirit. Though the perceived order may vary a little, the four belong together and are universal in Christian initiation. The laying-on of apostolic hands, however, together with tongue-speaking and prophesying, were special to Ephesus, as to Samaria, in order to demonstrate visibly and publicly that particular groups were incorporated into Christ by the Spirit; the New Testament does not universalize them. There are no Samaritans or disciples of John the Baptist left in the world today. (*in loc.*)

people how to learn the gift of tongues.¹⁵⁸ It should not surprise us that the same error has occurred among them with the gift of prophecy.

Therefore, one can now find an abundance of "Prophet schools" teaching people how to prophesy, usually for a fee, of course. One wonders how in the world Samuel, Jeremiah, or Agabus possibly fulfilled their prophetic ministries without the benefits of such a thing. If one looks back at the biblical record to study a Prophet's calling, it was God Who picked them, and they are often found reluctant to have the office. In contrast, there are now schools to train new Prophets because so many want the office.

The truth is that a spiritual gift cannot be taught, but rather, as the Apostle wrote, they, "**are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines**" (1 Cor 12:11), not as we will or work. Nor is it up to us to choose what gift we have, as in the context of the distribution of spiritual gifts, the Apostle says, "**God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be**" (12:18). Accordingly, what Drs. Keil and Delitzsch have written regarding OT prophecy is certainly true of NT prophecy as well:

Prophecy could neither be taught nor communicated by instruction, but was a gift of God which He communicated according to His free will to whomsoever He would.¹⁵⁹

The modern idea in *prophetism* that someone can teach you how to have the biblical gift of prophecy is eerily familiar to something the Church Father Irenaeus (c. 170) wrote of in his book *Against Heresies* concerning a false Apostle named Markus who deceived people into receiving spiritual gifts in much the same way. Irenaeus wrote:

It appears probable enough that this man possesses a demon as his familiar spirit, by means of whom he seems able to prophesy, and also enables as many as he counts worthy to be partakers of his Charis [gift] themselves to prophesy. He devotes himself especially to women, and those such as are well-bred, and elegantly attired, and of great wealth, whom he frequently seeks to draw after him, by addressing them in such seductive words as these:

¹⁵⁸ For discussion regarding *charismaticism's* claim to be able to teach people how to learn the gift of tongues see section 12.4.C.

¹⁵⁹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.com, 2000), 1 Sam 19:22-24.

"I am eager to make thee a partaker of my Charis . . . Receive first from me and by me [the gift of] Charis. . . . Behold Charis has descended upon thee; open thy mouth and prophesy."

On the woman replying, "I have never at any time prophesied, nor do I know how to prophesy;" then engaging, for the second time, in certain invocations, so as to astound his deluded victim, he says to her, "Open thy mouth, speak whatsoever occurs to thee, and thou shalt prophesy." She then, vainly puffed up and elated by these words, and greatly excited in soul by the expectation that it is herself who is to prophesy, her heart beating violently, reaches the requisite pitch of audacity, and idly as well as impudently utters some nonsense as it happens to occur to her, such as might be expected from one heated by an empty spirit.

Henceforth she reckons herself a Prophetess, and expresses her thanks to Marcus for having imparted to her of his own Charis. She then makes the effort to reward him, not only by the gift of her possessions (in which way he has collected a very large fortune), but also by yielding up to him her person, desiring in every way to be united to him, that she may become altogether one with him.¹⁶⁰

The parallels to what occurs in many "Christian" settings today is obvious, and it is just as obvious that the early Christians condemned such a practice.

¹⁶⁰ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I.13.3; online at www.ccel.org.

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) What are the two main arguments that *prophetists* use to accommodate the existence of the gift of prophecy today?
- 2) What biblical data demonstrates that Christian Prophets and the gift of prophecy were synonymous?
- 3) What biblical data demonstrates that the attributes and authority of NT Prophets was the same as their OT counterparts?
- 4) What is the significance of the attributes of Agabus?
- 5) What do we mean by "viral prophecy"? Why do we claim this is unbiblical? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 6) Why is the idea in *prophetism* that people can be taught the gift of prophecy unbiblical?

Recommended Reading

- F. David Farnell, "Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets? A Critique of Wayne Grudem's Hypothesis," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 2 (1991) 157-79.

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.5

**The Revelation & Writing of
Biblical Prophets**

*Dictating Visions not "Inspired" Impressions or
Possession*

Table of Topics

- A) The "Seeing" & "Hearing" of Biblical Prophets**
- B) The Visionless Prophets of *Prophetism***
- C) The Dictation of Prophets**
- D) A Denial of the Possession of Prophets**

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- While the Apostles experienced revelation in several different ways, visions are rather synonymous with how the gift of prophecy operated.
- All biblical Prophets who describe how they received their revelations, describe them as coming through visions.
- Regarding the hundreds of times the biblical Prophets prefaced their revelation with, "**the Lord said to me . . .**," it is best to understand the Lord said it in a vision.
- "**Prophets prophesy[ing] lies**" was "**A horrible and shocking thing**" to God, yet this is precisely what *all* modern "prophets" are doing, because God has *not* spoken to them.
- God has never simply put thoughts in someone's mind, and expected them to recognize those thoughts as coming from God, without some sort of miraculous authentication
- Notice then the unfortunate and even sinful presumption that *prophetism* has led so many into when they claim the gift of prophecy is merely: "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."
- "**This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!**" (Ezek 13:3). This describes the "prophets" of modern *prophetism*.
- There is a modern aversion to the idea that God dictated words to the Prophets, but there are several biblical examples that would seem to clearly indicate this.
- Jesus Himself described His own revelatory experience at His baptism by the Father.

A) The “Seeing” & “Hearing” of Biblical Prophets

God said of Moses:

When a Prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. With him I speak face to face . . . he sees the form of the LORD. (Num 12:6-8; cf. Exod 33:11; Duet 42:10)

As discussed thoroughly elsewhere, the revelation Moses received came through physically seeing and hearing the Lord.¹⁶¹ However, as noted in the passage, God’s primary method of communicating with His Prophets was “**visions**” and “**dreams.**” Accordingly, God often asked the Prophets when He gave them revelation, “**What do you see?**” (cf. Jer 1:11, 13; 24:3; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Zech 4:2; 5:2). Obviously, God spoke to Prophets in such visions, perhaps even audibly, as He describes to Ezekiel, “**Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from Me**” (Ezek 3:17).

Elsewhere we have written a great deal on the biblical nature of revelatory visions,¹⁶² and more specifically on how they seemed to have played an important part in the divine revelation that Christ and the Apostles received, taught, and wrote.¹⁶³ Accordingly, while the Apostles experienced revelation in several different ways,¹⁶⁴ visions are rather synonymous with how the gift of prophecy operated.¹⁶⁵ Accordingly, God had said a long time ago: “**When a Prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal Myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams**” (Num 12:6). Likewise, He

¹⁶¹ Regarding the revelation that Moses received, see section 10.10.B.

¹⁶² Regarding divine revelation through visions see section 10.11.A.

¹⁶³ Regarding the visions that Christ and the Apostles experienced see chapter 8.3.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ We are not aware of any descriptions of biblical Prophets receiving revelation in a way other than visions and dreams. There is no biblical evidence for the common idea of “inspiration” involving some sort of divine/human mental telepathy. In addition, the idea that biblical Prophets were somehow possessed and uncontrollably blurted out revelation has more to do with pagan prophets than biblical ones (cf. 1 Cor 14:29-33; section 9.4.B.2).

told the Prophet Hosea, **"I spoke to the Prophets and gave them many visions"** (Hos 12:10). Even **"after"** the Lord returns (cf. Joel 2:26-28), and the gift of prophecy is granted to the regenerated people of Israel, visions will be synonymous with the gift of prophecy as we read of that time: **"Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions"** (Joel 2:28).

All biblical Prophets who describe how they received their revelations, describe them as coming through visions. Accordingly, in the preface to the prophecies of Isaiah we read: **"The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah"** (Isa 1:1; cf. Jer 1:11; Ezek 1:1; Dan 2:19; Amos 1:1; Obad 1:1; Mic 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 2:1; Zech 1:8). Likewise, while the word **"vision"** (*horasis*) occurs only once in Revelation (cf. 9:17), the Christian Prophet John ¹⁶⁶ says, **"I saw"** over thirty times, and signs off on his prophecy by saying, **"I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things"** (John 22:8). Therefore, regarding the hundreds of times the biblical Prophets prefaced their revelation with, **"the Lord said to me . . .,"** it is best to understand the Lord said it in a vision. ¹⁶⁷

Accordingly, the second century Bible teacher Hippolytus (c. 170-c. 236) in speaking of the biblical Prophets, wrote they, "were

¹⁶⁶ For further discussion of the fact that the Apostle John was also a Christian Prophet possessing the NT gift of prophecy see section 9.7.H.

¹⁶⁷ We also believe that there was a revelatory vision behind God's statement to some Prophets, **"I have put My words in your mouth"** (Isa 51:16). While some, no doubt, would want to infer some sort of divine/human mental telepathy in such a statement, it only describes the *result* of the revelation given, not the method. Accordingly, the first time this language is used, it is in the context of how Aaron would receive revelation from Moses. God said to Moses:

You shall speak to him [Aaron] and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. . . . your brother Aaron will be your Prophet. (Ex 4:15-16; 7:1)

Here, the process by which Moses was to put words in Aaron's mouth was to **"speak to him."**

Likewise, we see this statement being made in the context of a vision. We read of Balaam: **"The LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said [in the accompanying vision], "Go back to Balak and give him this message"** (Num 23:5). Likewise, God said to Jeremiah, **"I have put My words in your mouth"** (Jer 1:9), and immediately asks the Prophet, **"What do you see"** in a vision.

rightly instructed in the future by means of visions.”¹⁶⁸ Even regarding the post-biblical gift of prophecy operating into the late second century, Bishop Irenaeus (c. 180) wrote they: “have foreknowledge of things to come; they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions.”¹⁶⁹

As noted above, we have elsewhere written a great deal on the nature of biblical visions, including the fact that they were so real, the recipient themselves could not always tell whether they were experiencing an apparition with their physical senses or God was using the sensical parts of their mind to give them a psychical vision (cf. 2 Cor 12:1-4). Nonetheless, divine visions are a powerful revelatory experience that leaves the recipient with no doubts that God has spoken to them.

B) The Visionless Prophets of *Prophetism*

The supernatural nature of the prophetic vision was an important part of the supernatural authentication of the revelation itself. How else would the Prophet Hosea really know that God was telling him to marry a prostitute (cf. Hos 1:2-3). God has never simply put thoughts in someone’s mind, and expected them to recognize those thoughts as coming from God, without some sort of miraculous authentication.¹⁷⁰

This exposes a grave error in modern *prophetism* that will be discussed further below. In this modern movement, there are a hoard of people presuming to be Prophets, but who are merely speaking their own thoughts rather than thoughts from God. This is a serious sin and God was very angry with those who claimed to be His Prophets, but who **“speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord”** (Jer 23:16), **“who prophesy the delusions of their own minds”** (Jer 23:26), and **“who prophesy out of their own imagination”** (Ezek 13:2). **“Prophets**

¹⁶⁸ Hippolytus, *Antichrist*, 2.31; online at www.ccel.org.

¹⁶⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II, ch. 23, Book V. ch. 6.1; online at www.ccel.org.

¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, we disagree with the *Westminster Theological Journal* which states:

As Robinson states, “[a Prophet] was potentially able to regard any thought, which came to him with sufficient intensity or impressiveness, as a divine word. What ultimate test he applied in any particular instance is beyond our power to examine.” *WTJ* 56:2 (Fall 1994), 246.

prophecy[ing] lies" was "**A horrible and shocking thing**" to God (Jer 5:30-31).

Yet this is precisely what *all* modern "prophets" are doing, because God has *not* spoken to them. We know this first of all, because they cannot authenticate themselves as messengers of divine revelation, as we demonstrate in subsequent chapters. But we also know this because modern Prophets rarely, if ever, even see real visions at all. The primary mode of revelation that God used in prophecy was an undeniable vision. Notice in the texts above that even the false and presumptuous "prophets" at least claimed to have received a vision or dream. But modern "prophets" need not even do this because of how *prophetism* has watered down what the biblical gift of prophecy consists of. While biblical Prophets would hardly claim to possess divine revelation apart from a supernatural vision, modern *prophetism* has encouraged false prophecy by defining it as merely speaking thoughts from God.

Notice then the unfortunate and even sinful presumption that Dr. Grudem has led so many into when he writes in his popular *Systematic Theology* that the gift of prophecy is: "telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind."¹⁷¹ At least even the false "prophets" in biblical times understood that real prophecy comes through supernatural visions, not spontaneous thoughts. Accordingly, the following stern warning applies to all the poor souls who have been duped by *prophetism* to think they have the gift of prophecy because they've had moving thoughts, but have never seen a vision from God: "**This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!**" (Ezek 13:3).

C) The Dictation of Prophets

By dictation, we mean the act of writing or speaking word-for-word exactly what another person is saying, as they are saying it. In other words, there is absolutely no influence of the speaker or the recorder in what is said or written, but only the words of the one they are speaking or writing for.

¹⁷¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1049.

Some "fundamentalists" have been castigated for proposing that virtually all of the Scriptures were dictated to biblical writers.¹⁷² However, the more common approach is the modern aversion to describing any part of the formation of Scripture as "dictation." The slightly neoorthodox Presbyterian theologian Donald Bloesch is typical when he writes: "Verbal inspiration must not be confused with . . . mechanical dictation."¹⁷³ Likewise, Norman Geisler writes: "With the exception of small sections such as the Ten Commandments, which were "written with the finger of God" (Exod. 31:18), the Bible was not verbally dictated. The writers were not secretaries of the Holy Spirit."¹⁷⁴

The reason for such a denial stems from several things: 1) As discussed elsewhere, Evangelical theologians are typically attempting to find a "one-theory-fits-all" approach to how Scripture was written;¹⁷⁵ 2) much of Scripture obviously reflects the personality of the writer and is therefore just as obviously not dictated; and 3) Liberal skeptics have made "dictation" a dirty word when it comes to divine revelation.

¹⁷² C. S. Lewis wrote:

A fundamentalist view of the Bible, such as that advanced by John R. Rice, posits divine dictation to biblical writers who functioned as secretaries of the Holy Spirit. Rice's view of inspiration as dictation implies that God gave the very words that men wrote down in Holy Scripture. "A secretary is not ashamed to take dictation from man. Why would a prophet be ashamed to take dictation from God?"

Rice seeks to safeguard the human element in Scripture by maintaining that God prepared the writers in advance so that their style, vocabulary, and personality are included in the writing in accord with God's plan. What he wishes to avoid is that the biblical writers engaged in historical research, utilized oral traditions, or acquired information from eye witnesses. All Scripture came in a straight line from God to the human writers. Rice's theory of dictation borders on the docetic: "The Scriptures are fundamentally the Word of God, not the word of men, except in some incidental and controlled and limited sense. (M. J. Christensen, *C. S. Lewis on Scripture* [Word, 1979], 135)

¹⁷³ Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vols. 1 & 2 (Harper & Row, 1978), 55.

¹⁷⁴ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Baker, 1999).

¹⁷⁵ For a critique of the popular Evangelical attempt to find a "one-theory-fits-all" approach to how Scripture was written see chapter 8.8.

Nonetheless, Anglican theologian Peter Jensen writes regarding the accusations of liberals against claims that Scripture was dictated by God:

[T]he evangelical response may have been too defensive. The vehemence with which 'dictation' is dismissed, and the almost inveterate desire to attribute it to evangelicals (or 'fundamentalists'), is suggestive of a problem being concealed.

After all, while it is true to say that the Bible exhibits a number of ways in which human utterances are also thought to be divine, it gives us, in the case of Moses and the Book of the Covenant at least, one example very close to 'dictation' (Exod. 19:6-7; 24:4; 34:27). Indeed, the Ten Commandments were originally written by God directly (Exod. 32:15-16); and if the prophets claim to be speaking the word of God by quoting him as they so often do, 'dictation' may not be an entirely inappropriate description of such an event.

The idea of dictation is easier to attribute to the pre-Enlightenment writers than to more modern ones [e.g. Calvin]. They were prepared to use such phrases as 'the divine pen-men.' Such words are now rarely heard from evangelicals, let alone from their critics. But the theories of inspiration that have emerged over the years to displace the earlier beliefs, and that emphasize genius rather than providence, reflect much less accurately the Bible's own account of how divine words enter human language. It may well be that the pre-Enlightenment authors understood a truth that we ignore for cultural reasons. How do we see Moses at work in Exodus 24:4, if not as the divine amanuensis?¹⁷⁶

Indeed, it is time that perhaps John Calvin's common description of how Scripture was written is more defended by Evangelicals than dismissed with embarrassment. Theologians Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis still seemed embarrassed when they write:

Indeed, Calvin states that the biblical writers were "clerks," (*Harmony of the Gospels* 1:127) "penmen," (*Psalms* 3:205) "amanuenses," (*Inst.* IV.8.8-9) and "organs and instruments" (*Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 87; *Minor Prophets*, 3:197) of the Holy Spirit. By these bold metaphors Calvin did not endorse the dictation theory; rather he sought to convey in this way his conviction that God was in sovereign

¹⁷⁶ David Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Intervarsity, 2002), 158-9.

control of the inscripturation of his Word and that he is its ultimate Author.¹⁷⁷

Reformed theologian Cornelius Van Til was at least willing to admit:

In prophetic inspiration, the secondary authors are often more passive than in lyrical and poetic inspiration. In all forms of inspiration, a higher personality, even a personality from above comes to and speaks through the secondary authors, but in the case of prophecy this fact is more clearly apparent than elsewhere. Jeremiah (chapter 20) and Ezekiel (chapter 3) seemed at times even to be antithetical with respect to [reflecting a human element in Scripture].¹⁷⁸

Webster's defines "dictation" as: "the act or manner of uttering words to be transcribed."¹⁷⁹ What else is happening when Isaiah says: "**The LORD said to me, 'Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz'**" (Isa 8:1)?

Erwin Lutzer, longtime Teacher at Moody Bible Church has succinctly written:

[S]ome of the Bible was dictated by God word for word. Moses did not add his own style when he wrote, "You shall have no other gods before Me." On many occasions the prophets received revelations from God, word for word, at other times they put the message in their own words. But dictation, as such, was rare; almost always the author's style can be recognized.¹⁸⁰

While we would agree that dictation may have been a relatively rare mode of writing and speaking the word of God, it was perhaps more common than just the Ten Commandments that most are willing to concede. Even in this context, considerably more was dictated than just the Ten Commandments. After a rather lengthy list of laws that go beyond the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod 34:10ff), we read:

¹⁷⁷ Bruce Demarest & Gordon R. Lewis, *Integrative Theology*, 3 Vols. (Zondervan, 1987, 1990, 1994), I.137.

¹⁷⁸ Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Unpublished syllabus, 1955), 160.

¹⁷⁹ *Webster's Dictionary* online at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dictation>.

¹⁸⁰ Erwin Lutzer, *Seven Convincing Miracles* (Moody, 1999), 22-3.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant—the Ten Commandments. (Exod 34:27-28)

Other instances of dictation that seem clear to us as well. God tells Jeremiah: **"This is what the LORD says: 'Stand in the courtyard of the LORD'S house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the LORD. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word.'"** (Jer 26:2). These instances seem to reflect that the Prophets were going to speak immediately after receiving the revelation and were to speak it word-for-word.

Likewise, the following in Revelation seems to be an immediate, word-for-word dictation from God the Father. John writes:

Then He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Rev 21:5-8)

In addition, one wonders if the common description of God "putting words in the mouth" of a Prophet are to be understood as dictation. God told Moses: **"Go, and I, even I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say"** (Exod 4:12 NASB). He tells Isaiah: **"I have put My words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of My hand"** (51:6). Likewise, Jeremiah records: **"Then the LORD reached out His hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put My words in your mouth"** (1:9). For all we know, many of the extended speeches of the Prophets may have been dictated. Only the context can make this clear as Hebrew words for speech do not make such a distinction.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ D. A. Carson suggests the attractive claim that the Hebrew words *imrâ* and *dābar* [both generally meaning "speech" or "word"] can be

We would suggest that Jesus Himself often described His speaking in terms of dictation. First, we notice the prophecy made about Him in Deuteronomy:

The LORD said to me [Moses]: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. (Deut 18:18)

We have argued elsewhere that God is referring to Jesus Christ.¹⁸² God said He would, "**put My words in his mouth.**" Jesus Himself described this as follows:

I did not speak of My own accord, but the Father Who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it. . . . So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say. (John 12:49-50)

Likewise, He said to the Twelve, "**The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, Who is doing His work,**" (John 14:10) and to the Father, "**I gave them the words You gave Me**" (17:8). All of these descriptions strike us as referring to word-for-word communication of what the Father was telling Jesus to say.¹⁸³

If we include within the genre of "dictation" those instances in which the biblical writer recorded the revelation rather immediately after receiving it then we would suggest that much of the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and Revelation can be ascribed to this mode of revelation and writing.

D) A Denial of the Possession of Prophets:

2 Pet 1:21

significantly differentiated and *imrâ* "places emphasis on the actual words spoken or written as opposed to the general content of a message." (*Scripture and Truth* [Baker, 1992], 30). This would be helpful in distinguishing instances of dictation in the OT, but the TWOT does not mention anything of this distinction, defining the two words as virtual synonyms (54-55; 170).

¹⁸² Regarding the claim that the prediction in Deuteronomy 18:18 is referring to Christ see section 8.3.B.2.

¹⁸³ Other promises of the Holy Spirit giving the Apostles words to say when confronted by authorities (cf. Matt 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12) may be instances of dictation as well and are discussed in section 7.16.C.4.

By claiming that the Prophets certainly experienced dictation from God, we do not wish to imply they experienced possession in the sense of losing control over their mind and body. When the Apostle says "**The spirits [mind] of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets**" (1 Cor 14:32), he debunks the idea that they were "possessed" in this manner.

Nevertheless, it has been common to suggest that particularly Prophets were possessed by the Spirit in a way that controlled both their mind and body, when they received or spoke their revelations. Accordingly, the early Church Fathers typically defined "divine inspiration" in terms of divine possession. Athenagoras (c. 177) wrote that the Spirit of God "moved the mouths of the Prophets like musical instruments."¹⁸⁴ Likewise, Chrysostom (c. 400) taught:

The Holy Spirit took possession of them [Prophets], sometimes suppressed their personality to a certain degree, and then employed their consciousness for his purpose. . . . In the case of the prophets it was the entrance of a foreign element, a foreign power into their lives.¹⁸⁵

Long before that, the Jewish/Greek philosopher Philo (c. 20 B.C. – 50 A.D.) had written:

[A prophet] is the vocal instrument of God, smitten and played by his invisible hand . . . The mind is evicted at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but when that departs the mind returns to its tenancy. Mortal and immortal may not share the same home. And therefore the setting of reason and the darkness which surrounds it produces ecstasy and inspired frenzy . . .

The prophet, even when he seems to be speaking, really [is not], and his organs of speech, mouth and tongue, are wholly in the employ of Another, to show forth what he wills. Unseen by us that Other beats on the chords with the skill of a master-hand and makes them instruments of sweet music, laden with every harmony.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Athenagoras, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: A Plea for the Christians*, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1989), 132.

¹⁸⁵ Chrysostom, *Homily on 2 Corinthians*, 2Cor. 13:2b, 3; online at www.ccel.org.

¹⁸⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Westminster Press, 1975), 305.

Unfortunately, such descriptions of “possessed prophecy” or *possession revelation* are more reflective of pagan prophets rather than biblical ones. What all such descriptions ignore is the Apostle Paul’s clear description of biblical Prophets even when they are prophesying: **“The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets”** (1 Cor 14:32). Accordingly, NT scholar Albert Barnes wrote concerning this verse:

The evident meaning of this is, that they were able to control their inclination to speak; they were not under a NECESSITY of speaking, even though they might be inspired. There was no need of disorder. This verse gives confirmation to the supposition, that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were subjected to substantially the same laws as a man’s natural endowments. They were conferred by the Holy Spirit; but they were conferred on free agents, and did not interfere with their free agency. . . .

In this the spirit of true inspiration differed essentially from the views of the pagan, who regarded themselves as driven on by a wild, controlling influence, that compelled them to speak even when they were unconscious of what they said. Universally, in the pagan world, the priests and priestesses supposed or feigned that they were under an influence which was incontrollable; which took away their powers of self-command, and which made them the mere organs or unconscious instruments of communicating the will of the gods.¹⁸⁷

Such possession is a demonic act, not a divine one, and there are no biblical examples to prove otherwise.

It is to be admitted that biblical Prophets describe **“the strong hand of the Lord”** being **“upon”** them (cf. Isa 8:11; Ezek 1:3) and even whisking them away in a vision that comes upon them (cf. Ezek 3:14; 8:3; 37:1). But these descriptions pertain to how revelation *came to them*, not how they spoke or communicated the revelation. Indeed, biblical Prophets seemed to often have no control over when and how they experienced a revelatory event, but we do not see such lack of control in when and how they spoke the revelation. It is true that Jeremiah wrote the following:

But if I say, “I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name,” His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire

¹⁸⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the NT*, 1 Cor 14:32; online at www.ccel.org.

shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. (20:9)

Most preachers have experienced the same burden. However, we are still able to exercise self-control and neither we nor Jeremiah was possessed and "taken over" in the sense that he became a puppet or robot forced to communicate the revelation he had received.

Some have pointed to the description of prophetic revelation in 2 Peter 1:21 as describing some sort of event that does dispossess the Prophet. There we read: "**Men spoke from God as they were carried along** [*pheromenoi*] **by the Holy Spirit.**" Admittedly, the Greek word here is a strong one, Charles Swindoll commenting:

The Greek word here is *pherō*, and it literally means to be "moved along apart from one's own power." It's a nautical term used for a ship without a rudder or a sail, carried along at the mercy of the waves and the wind and the current. Here the word is used for the prophets, moved not by their own power, but by the power of God as He spoke through them and revealed His will.¹⁸⁸

As we have noted elsewhere, this suggests to some the mindless *mania* and uncontrolled behavior of pagan prophets.¹⁸⁹ But it needs to be reconciled with the Apostle's clear statement in 1 Corinthians 14, distinguishing Christian Prophets from pagan ones and insisting that "**The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets**" (1 Cor 14:32). Accordingly, Michael Green concludes in his commentary on 2 Peter:

The fact of God's inspiration did not mean a supersession of the normal mental functions of the human author. The Holy Spirit did not use instruments; he used *men*. God's way is ever one of truth through personality, as was perfectly demonstrated at the incarnation. Moreover, he did not use any men, but holy men, those who are dedicated and pledged to his service. And even with such men, he did no violence to their personalities, but cooperated with them while revealing himself through them.

"He says they were moved, not because they were out of their minds as the heathen imagine in their prophets, but

¹⁸⁸ Charles Swindoll, *The Mystery of God's Will* (Word, 1999), 32.

¹⁸⁹ Regarding the mindless *mania* and uncontrolled behavior of pagan prophets in distinction to Christian Prophets and behavior see chapter 4.8.

because they dared nothing by themselves but only in obedience to the guidance of the spirit, who held sway over lips as in his own temple" (Calvin). . . .

Peter's words are equally in contrast to the mechanical understanding of inspiration to be found in Philo, his Jewish contemporary. Philo sees it as a compulsive divine possession which turned man into a *theophoros*, 'God bearer' (*Mut. Nom. i*, p.609, *de Somn.* p. 689). Peter sees it as a personal and ethical cooperation between god and holy men. There's no suggestion that the sacred authors are beside themselves like the analogy from Bacchic [pagan] frenzy cited by Philo; they are carried along the path of God's will by their own glad and willing consent.¹⁹⁰

Again, if one is going to interpret Paul at face value, this must be our understanding of biblical prophetic revelation.¹⁹¹

The idea of *possession* in revelation suggests another demonic phenomenon called *automatic writing*. The *Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experiences* has the following on this phenomenon:

The act of writing while in a dissociated or altered state of consciousness. Automatic writing sometimes produces astounding results that seem to be beyond the ordinary knowledge or ability of the writer. Many occultists say automatic writing is the product of communication with a discarnate being. Psychical researchers generally believe it comes from the writer's own subconscious mind, or perhaps from information obtained through extrasensory perception (ESP).

Automatic writing is the most common form of automatism, or unconscious muscular movement often attributed to supernatural guidance. Most automatic writers want either to communicate with the dead or to contact a highly evolved discarnate [spiritual] being who will dispense wisdom.

In some cases automatic writing happens involuntarily, as in the case of Anna Windsor. In 1860 Windsor, a hysteric who suffered fits of delirium, began automatic writing with her right hand, which she derisively called "Stump." Stump had a personality of its own, writing out verses and prose while her left hand did other things.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude (TNTC)* (Eerdmans, 1987), 103.

¹⁹¹ Unfortunately, neither David Aune (*Prophecy in Early Christianity & the Ancient Mediterranean World*), nor the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* provide any commentary on 2 Peter 1:21.

The writer usually is unaware of what is being written. Some people experience a tingling sensation in the arms or hands. Typically, automatic writing is far more rapid than normal writing; as a consequence many words are joined together. The script is larger and more expansive than the writer's own script, and in some cases has duplicated the handwriting of the deceased person who has been contacted. . . .

Automatic writing was used a great deal during the height of Spiritualism [i.e. 18th to 19th century occultism], when mediums found it to be a better means of communicating with the dead than the laborious methods of rapping or the planchette (the precursor of the Ouija). . . .

From the mid-nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, many people attempted automatic writing as a way to communicate with dead friends and relatives. Numerous literary works were produced through automatic writing from unknown discarnates who suddenly announced their appearance. . . .

Automatic writing continues to be used in modern times in attempts to reach the dead or discarnate beings. It was used in the early twentieth century in the famous "psychic excavations" of Glastonbury, England. Automatic writing has periodic upswings of popularity, influenced to a great extent by popular authors on the occult.

Critics warn of dangers in automatic writing. According to some, the writer is vulnerable to harassment or possession by demonic spirits and the evil-minded dead.¹⁹²

Problems associated with motor automatism [like automatic writing] include compulsion, obsession, and a feeling of possession. The automatism may go out of control until a person feels taken over by it. Some people who experiment with automatic writing, inviting communication from any entity who cares to answer, say they feel possessed by demons who torment them mentally and physically, even rape them. . . . The effects usually disappear in time, or after an exorcism.¹⁹³

The kind of demonic possession revelation that can come through *automatic writing* is illustrated in the obviously demonic literature of Helen Schuchman. In the preface to her book, *A Course on Miracles*, she claimed that:

¹⁹² Rosemary E. Guiley, *Harper's Encyclopedia of Mystical & Paranormal Experience* (Harper Collins, 1991), 45-6.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

[Jesus Christ] seemed to be giving me a kind of rapid, inner dictation which I took down in a shorthand notebook. It made me very uncomfortable, but it never seriously occurred to me to stop. It seemed to be a special assignment I had somehow, somewhere agreed to complete.¹⁹⁴

The book in general describes how to perform miracles, and includes references to God, the Holy Spirit, and even occasional references to Christ. However, its contents are very unbiblical claiming that God did not create the world, the world was made as an attack on God, the body was made as a limitation on love, human nature is fundamentally good, miracles are waiting to happen, if we just recognize the fact that we have the power to perform them, death is a dream, there is no judgment, and salvation is entering into the freedom that awaits anyone who has faith in themselves.

The publisher claims that over two million copies of the book have been sold and it has been translated into several languages. The material is supported by the Unity Churches, a metaphysical cult, and has recently been promoted by Oprah Winfrey.¹⁹⁵

The fact that *automatic writing* is closely associated with demonic possession, and has no biblical support, makes it particularly alarming that it was a fundamental phenomenon at the very beginning of the modern *glossaist* [tongues] movement. Hank Hanegraaff, who has himself adopted *charismatic* theology, nonetheless relates that:

Endtime restorationism [the belief that the first century gifts have been restored to the twentieth century Church] had its genesis [remarkably] in the early morning hours of the first day of the twentieth century. A twenty-seven-year-old preacher from Topeka, Kansas, named Charles Parham placed his hands on the head of his young student, Agnes Ozman.

Suddenly, a "halo seemed to surround her head and face" and Agnes began to speak in Chinese. For three solid days [according to Parham's followers] she was utterly incapable of speaking a single word in English [out of control]. Even more incredibly, when she tried to write, only Chinese characters would emerge from her pen.

¹⁹⁴ Helen Schuchman, *A Course in Miracles* (Foundation for Inner Peace, 1992), viii.

¹⁹⁵ References include: Hank Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* (State University of New York Press, 1996), 37–38; Lutzer, 76; and www.Wikipedia.com.

Ozman's experience became the catalyst for other students in Parham's class to seek the gift of tongues. It wasn't long before many of them, like Agnes, began to speak in languages they had never studied.¹⁹⁶

Again, the kind of *possession revelation* that comes through *automatic writing* is not biblical, but clearly demonic.¹⁹⁷ When God commanded a recipient of divine revelation to record it, there is no hint of automatic writing. Rather, it seems God deemed the human recipient sufficiently capable of accurately recording the revelation to effectively communicate it. And if mistakes were made that would obscure God's intended message, surely He could have corrected the messenger.¹⁹⁸

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) We claim that all biblical Prophets who describe how they received their revelations, describe them as coming through visions. Can you think of any exceptions?
- 2) The fact that all prophecy is described in Scripture as coming through visions, what does this say about modern *prophetism* where such things are even rarely claimed?

¹⁹⁶ Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Word, 1997), 125.

¹⁹⁷ Accordingly, the influential twentieth century French Reformed theologian Auguste Lucerf is rather wrong to claim:

It is possible, however, to be too exclusive in condemning the automatic, process en bloc. God is free, absolutely free, as regards the modes of inspiration which it may please Him to adopt. His wisdom is infinitely varied. We must take inspiration as it is given. It would be absurd to deny the intervention of the writer's personality in an epistle like that of Paul to the Galatians. But it is by no means certain that cases of automatism do not exist elsewhere (cf. Exodus 34: 27, 28). I think again of certain passages in Ezekiel and in the Apocalypse. (*An Introduction to Reformed Dogmatics* [Lutterworth, 1949], 310.

¹⁹⁸ For more on how Scripture was written see chapters 8.8-8.10.

- 3) What are some verses of Scripture that indicate how God feels about someone claiming the gift of prophecy or “a word from the Lord” when they actually have neither?
- 4) We claim that God has never simply put thoughts in someone’s mind, and expected them to recognize those thoughts as coming from God, without some sort of miraculous authentication. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 5) What is unbiblical and even dangerous about Wayne Grudem’s definition of the gift of prophecy as “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind”?
- 6) Why is there a modern aversion to the idea that God dictated words to the Prophets? What biblical examples of dictation do we suggest? Do you agree or disagree?
- 7) What are the problems with claiming that biblical Prophets experienced a “possession” that relieved them of control? How would you reconcile 1 Corinthians 14:32 and 2 Peter 1:21?
- 8) What is *automatic writing* and why must anything to do with the Holy Spirit be distinguished from it?

Recommended Reading

- Section 10.11 concerning revelation through visions.
- Chapter 4.8 regarding “Christian ecstasy” in the experience of biblical Prophets.

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.6
The Divine Authority of Biblical Prophets
Equal to Apostles

Table of Topics

A) The Divine Authority of Biblical Prophets

B) OT Evidence for the Authority of Biblical Prophets

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C.1) Christian Prophets & Apostles Were the Foundation of the Church: *Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11*

C.2) Christian Prophets Authenticated Apostles: *1 Cor 14:37-38*

C.3) Why are Apostles First?: *1 Cor 12:28*

C.4) Ignoring & Testing Prophets Does Not Diminish Their Authority *1 Thess 5:19-21*

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- In the OT, if a would-be “prophet” spoke something other than what God had “**commanded**” them “**to say,**” they were to be more than exhorted or even excommunicated, but they were to be exterminated.
 - God ensured that those with the gift of prophecy infallibly spoke so that the people who refused such a prophecy could justly be held accountable.
 - Because God wanted the Prophets words to be His words, He enabled and therefore expected Prophets to speak infallibly. God told Jeremiah, “**Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word**”
 - To disbelieve or disobey a real Prophet of God was to disbelieve or disobey God Himself.
 - Therefore, it becomes apparent that we had better know who really is a Prophet of God, lest we sin against Him as well.
 - Perhaps the clearest indication of the authority of NT Prophets was their equality with NT Apostles.
- Both Apostles and Christian Prophets were the foundations of the New Covenant revelation and the Church.
 - The superiority of Apostles does not involve a greater reliability or amount of authority, but

A) The Divine Authority of Biblical Prophets

In a classic biblical description of God-sent Prophets, God told the people that:

If anyone does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I Myself will call him to account. But a Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say . . . must be put to death. (Deut 18:19-20)

Having the gift of prophecy is very serious business. Obviously, because God said the Prophet's words were "**My words**," biblical Prophets possessed nothing less than divine authority. And it was because of the very serious claim to speak for God to His people, that if a would-be "prophet" merely presumed to have a word from the Lord, but it was not what God had "**commanded**" them "**to say**" they were to be more than exhorted or even excommunicated, but they were to be exterminated.

Because those with the real gift of prophecy speak God's words, they commonly prefaced their statements with, "**This is what the Lord says . . .**" (80 times in Jeremiah alone). Likewise, the Christian Prophet Agabus prefaced his revelation with, "**The Holy Spirit says**" (Acts 21:11). The Prophets words were not their words, but God's words.

In contrast, modern *prophetism* has redefined the Christian Prophet. For example, Dr. Wayne Grudem has written that the words of Christian Prophets in the early Church were: "not equal to Scripture in authority and [were] simply a very human-and sometimes partially mistaken-report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind."¹⁹⁹ Contrary to modern *prophetism*, the Church's historical belief has been that, "**no prophecy of Scripture** [which derived from the same gift of prophecy possessed by Christian Prophets²⁰⁰] **came about by the Prophet's own interpretation**" (2 Pet 1:20). But Dr. Grudem is saying that modern prophecy is precisely the "prophet's" own interpretation/understanding of what God is supposedly saying to him.

The reason that God ensured that those with the gift of prophecy infallibly spoke what He commanded them to say, was to

¹⁹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Crossway Books, 1988), 14-15

²⁰⁰ For arguments that the gift of prophecy is synonymous with the ministry of a biblical Prophet see section 9.4.B.

ensure that the people who refused such a prophecy could justly be held accountable for disobeying the Prophet and therefore disobeying God.

Christian scholars who reflect the historical view of the Church regarding the gift of prophecy and reject the popular view of modern *prophetism* include the following. Dr. Robert L. Thomas of the Master's Seminary notes, "Prophecy would have been an exercise in futility if recipients of its messages had the choice of accepting or not accepting its stipulations."²⁰¹

Robert L. Saucy, Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot School of Theology writes:

Prophecy in the biblical sense [is] speech which is inspired by the Spirit and therefore totally true and authoritative. . . . Since the source of genuine biblical prophecy is the Holy Spirit, attempts at arguing for different levels of prophetic authority are tenuous. . . . 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"²⁰²

Finally, David Aune,, Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins in the Department of Theology at Loyola University, and a recognized foremost expert on the topic of Christian prophecy has written:

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).²⁰³

B) OT Evidence for the Authority of Biblical Prophets

²⁰¹ Robert L. Thomas, "Prophecy Rediscovered? A Review of *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 [January-March 1992]: 92.

²⁰² Robert L. Saucy, "Prophecy Today? An Initial Response," *Sundoulos* [Spring 1990].

²⁰³ David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (Eerdmans, 1983), 204).

Because God wanted the Prophets words to be His words, He enabled and therefore expected Prophets to speak infallibly. Accordingly, in the first description of biblical prophecy, it is characterized as putting words in another's mouth. God said to Moses:

You shall speak to him [Aaron] and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. . . . your brother Aaron will be your Prophet. (Ex 4:15-16; 7:1)

Accordingly, prophecy was often described as God putting His words into the Prophet's mouth (cf. Num 23:5; Isa 51:16; Jer 1:9). Along the same lines, God told Jeremiah, "**Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word**" (Jer 26:2). Accordingly, the words of biblical Prophets are synonymous with Scripture (cf. Luke 1:70; 24:27; Rom 1:1; 3:21), possessing every bit of its authority.

To disbelieve or disobey a real Prophet of God was to disbelieve or disobey God Himself (cf. Num 23:5, 12, 16; Jer 1:9; 5:14; 11:6; Isa 51:16; Ezek 3:4; Zech 7:12; Luke 1:70; Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21). Accordingly, the Scriptures teach that disobeying God's Prophets resulted in exile (cf. Neh 9:30), rebelling against God and being cursed (cf. Dan 9:9-11), and making "**the Lord Almighty . . . very angry**" (Zech 7:12). Therefore, it becomes apparent that we had better know who really is a Prophet of God, lest we sin against Him as well.

The influential Evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003) summarizes the historical view of the Church regarding OT Prophets when he writes:

In both speech and writing the OT Prophets are marked off by their unswerving assurance that they were spokesmen for the living God. They believed that the truths they uttered about the Most High and his works and will, and the commands and exhortations they voiced in his name, derived their origin from him and carried his authority.

The constantly repeated formula "thus saith the Lord" is so characteristic of the Prophets as to leave no doubt that they considered themselves chosen agents of the divine self-communication. Whoever impugns the confidence of the Prophets that they were instruments of the one true God in their disclosure of truths about his nature and dealings with

man is driven, consistently if not necessarily, to the only possible alternative of their delusion.²⁰⁴

The divine authority of the OT Prophets is especially important in the modern debate regarding the authority of the biblical gift of prophecy, because as argued in section 9.4.A, a Christian Prophet with the NT gift of prophecy like Agabus had the same authority as an OT Prophet

²⁰⁴ C. F. H. Henry, "Bible, Inspiration of", in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (EDT)*, Walter Elwell ed. (Baker, 1984), 146.

C) Christian Prophets Were Equal to Apostles in Authority

C.1) Christian Prophets & Apostles Were the Foundation of the Church: *Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11*

While the divine authority of OT prophesying is obvious and widely recognized, it is apparent in the NT as well, although ardently attacked by modern *prophetists*. Perhaps the clearest indication of the authority of NT Prophets was their equality with NT Apostles. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul said of Christian Prophets:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [NT Christian] Prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. (Eph. 3:4-5)

In terms of speaking direct revelation from God, Christian Prophets in the early Church possessed the same ability as the revelatory Apostles.²⁰⁵ This is why the Apostle Paul makes the rather remarkable statement that the Church was **"built on the foundation of the Apostles and [NT] Prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone"** (Eph. 2:20). Both revelatory Apostles and Christian Prophets uniquely possessed the New Covenant revelation upon which the Church was founded, and because all divine revelation is absolutely and equally authoritative, Apostles and Prophets were equally authoritative.

More than this, because revelatory Apostles possessed the same authority as Christ, so then did Christian Prophets. Christ is the revelatory **"cornerstone"** not because He possessed more trustworthy divine revelation than the Apostles or Christian Prophets, but because as the **"cornerstone"** of a building, Christ provided His revelation first.

Let us note that the Apostle is referring to Christian **"Prophets"** in Ephesians 2:20, not OT Prophets. First, we notice the order, **"[NT] Apostles and Prophets,"** suggesting that if OT Prophets were meant, they might have been listed first. Secondly, the only other references to Prophets being coupled with Apostles (or references to Prophets at all) in Ephesians clearly refer to Christian Prophets (cf. 3:5; 4:11).

²⁰⁵ To see definition of revelatory Apostle see 8.1.A.

In 3:5 the Apostle writes with almost identical wording to 2:20, that, **"the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men [i.e. OT Prophets] in other generations . . . has now [in the apostolic age] been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [Christian] Prophets."** Because the **"Prophets"** coupled with the **"Apostles"** in 3:5 are clearly Christian Prophets, common sense would lead us to believe that when the same coupling is expressed 6 verses earlier in 2:20 that Christian Prophets are meant as well. In fact, it was the divine revelation concerning **"the mystery of Christ"** (3:5) that was the essence of the foundational revelation of the Christian Prophets referred to in 2:20.²⁰⁶

Thirdly, as Dr. Farnell writes:

The context of Ephesians 2:20 also favors the view that New Testament Prophets are meant. If Old Testament Prophets were meant, it is difficult to account for Christ being the Cornerstone, that is, the first stone laid in the foundation. Christ, as the New Covenant Mediator, is in view in verses 14–18, and He came in that role long after the Old Testament Prophets. The fact that a cornerstone of a building is laid before any other stones suggests the chronological order of first, Jesus, then the Apostles, and then New Testament Prophets.²⁰⁷

The biblical fact that Christian Prophets possessing the gift of prophecy possessed the same divine revelation as the revelatory

²⁰⁶ Pentecostal NT scholar Gordon Fee writes concerning the **"Prophets"** mentioned in Eph 2:20:

Many interpreters in an earlier day [e.g. Barnes] were prone to see here a reference to the OT Prophets, but absolutely nothing favors such a view and everything is against it. See the refutations in the older commentaries (e.g., Meyer 143-44, Eadie 193--95). (*God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Hendrickson, 1994], 687, n. 98)

For support of our claim that the **"Prophets"** mentioned in Ephesians 2:20 do not refer to OT Prophets see Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.Com, 2003); Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians (TNTC)* (Eerdmans, 1999), 94; John MacArthur, *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Parsons Technology, 1997); Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Eerdmans, 1999), 214.

²⁰⁷ David F. Farnell, "Is the Gift of Prophecy for Today?" Parts 1-4 in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149, 150 (July-September 1992 through April-June 1993), 73-79

Apostles, clearly argues against the second-rate counterfeit prophecy claimed in *prophetism*. Indeed, Dr. Grudem admits:

Now *if* New Testament congregational prophecy was like . . . New Testament apostolic words in its authority, then [*historicism* ²⁰⁸] would indeed be true. ²⁰⁹

More specifically concerning the above verses in Ephesians, Dr. Grudem admits:

If [Eph 2:20 is] referring to all the [Christian] Prophets in all the local congregations in first century churches . . . then it would seem that they are portrayed in a unique 'foundational' role in the New Testament church, and we have to agree with [*historicists* and] would expect this gift to cease once the New Testament was complete. ²¹⁰

Not surprisingly, then, *prophetists* such as Dr. Grudem have attempted to creatively, although unconvincingly, reinterpret the above passages in Ephesians, claiming that they are referring to "Apostles who prophesy," with no reference to Christian Prophets at all. Accordingly, Dr. Grudem, in an 18 page discussion concludes:

[It] seems best to conclude that Ephesians 2:20 means that the church is 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles who are also Prophets.'" ²¹¹

Likewise, in a footnote of his *Systematic Theology* he writes:

I have a long discussion of Eph. 2:20 in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, pp. 45-63, in which I argue that Paul says that the church is "built up on the foundation of the Apostle-Prophets" (or "Apostles who are also Prophets"). This is a grammatically acceptable translation of the phrase *tōn apostolōn kai Prophetōn*. As such, the passage refers [only] to the Apostles [and not Christian Prophets at all], to whom the mystery of Gentile inclusion in the church was revealed (see Eph. 3:5, which specifies that this mystery "has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets, or

²⁰⁸ *Historicism* is our word for the view that recognizes the fact that the *Scripture & sign gifts* being claimed today in *charismaticism* ceased in the 4th century and were considered to be nonexistent until being claimed almost 1600 years later in early Pentacostalism.

²⁰⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1039.

²¹⁰ Grudem, *Prophecy*, 46.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 62.

"Apostle-Prophets" or, "Apostles who are also Prophets" by the Spirit").²¹²

Unfortunately, even the very respected NT scholar D. A. Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School writes:

[Grudem's] lengthy discussion demonstrates, at the least, how complex is the detailed exegesis of that verse, and how cautious our deductions should be under any interpretation of it. If we conclude, against Grudem, that the "prophets" in question here enjoy a role with the Apostles in providing the revelatory foundation for Christianity (although that is not quite what is said [on the contrary it is expressly implied]), we must hasten to admit that this is an anomalous [unusual] use of "Prophets" in the New Testament.

It is as illegitimate for [*historicists*] to use this verse as the controlling factor in his understanding of the New Testament gift of prophecy as it would be to conclude from Titus 1:12 ("Even one of their own prophets has said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons'") that New Testament prophets were pagan poets from Crete.²¹³

Several responses to Dr. Carson are in order. First, it seems rather convenient to suggest that the grammatical construction of the clearest statements regarding NT Prophets are too "complex" to make confident "deductions" about their interpretation. In one fell swoop, Dr. Carson has essentially dismissed these Ephesian passages from the discussion of the nature of NT prophecy. And note that neither he nor Dr. Grudem must clearly prove their position, but merely placing these passages in the trash can of "obscured by complexity" is enough. Nevertheless, another Greek scholar, Thomas R. Edgar, Professor of New Testament at Capital Seminary remarks:

Carson's assertion that the exegesis of this verse [Eph. 2:20] is so complex that any deductions from it should be used with caution is incorrect. . . . Ephesians 2:20 could not be more clear. The verse contains no difficult words, nor any difficult or unusual grammatical constructions.²¹⁴

²¹² Grudem, *Theology*, 1051, n. 4.

²¹³ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* 97 (Baker, 1987).

²¹⁴ Thomas R. Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* (Kregel, 1996), 78

Secondly, even if we admit the relative rarity of NT statements referring to Christian Prophets as a, “revelatory foundation for Christianity,” this is no argument against the fact that this is precisely what is being stated three times in Ephesians (cf. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). As noted above, if there is an unexpected shortage in the amount of NT Scripture describing the revelatory functions of NT Prophets, it is precisely because they were in continuity with OT Prophets, and the early Church understood that the abundant descriptions of their predecessors nullified the need to repeat it in the NT.

Thirdly, Dr. Carson’s bias against the clarity of Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 seems exposed when he claims that their value and clearness regarding Christian Prophets is no better than an off hand remark regarding pagan prophets in Titus 1:12. The Apostle Paul is not teaching about Christian Prophets in Titus 1:12, but he is in the Ephesians passages.

Let us understand, then, what proponents of the enormously popular *prophetism* need to agree to in order to claim that their position is biblical and acceptable to God. In essence, when we read the following passages, we are to conclude that the Apostle is *only* referring to Apostles and *not* Christian Prophets *at all*:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the Apostles and [*kai*] Prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. (Eph 2:19-20)

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations [OT Prophets] as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy Apostles and [*kai*] Prophets. (Eph. 3:4-5)

We trust most will not be able to agree with the *prophetist* interpretation of this text, and if so, then most should also reject *prophetism* all together, because, as Dr. Grudem himself admits, “if New Testament congregational prophecy was like . . . New Testament apostolic words in its authority, then [*historicism*] would indeed be true”²¹⁵ and *prophetism* would indeed be a monumental fraud.

²¹⁵ Grudem, *Theology*, 1039.

As summarized by both Dr.'s Grudem and Carson, the foundation of the *prophetists'* reinterpretation of the Apostle's references to Christian Prophets in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 is based on what even they admit to be an inconsistent rule of Greek grammar. The Greek text of 2:20 reads simply "**tōn apostolōn kai prophētōn**" (lit. "**the Apostles and Prophets**"). The rule of Greek grammar concerns the use of *kai* ("and") between the two nouns *apostolōn* and *prophētōn*, prefaced with one definite article, *tōn* ("the"). Greek grammarians admit that in such a construction there is a slight possibility that the "**and**" in the text does not have its normal meaning of distinguishing two different things. However, even Dr. Carson admits that the rule is inconclusive, and that only the context, which any careful reader can ascertain, will determine the correct translation of such constructions.²¹⁶

If the context is to be the determining factor of the meaning of Ephesians 2:20, than the *prophetist's* interpretation of it is, as Robert Gaffin, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster wrote several years ago, "unlikely, even forced."²¹⁷ Dr. R. Fowler White, Professor of New Testament and Biblical Languages at Knox Seminary summarizes Dr. Gaffin's view concerning the context of Ephesians 2:20:

First, in Eph 4:11 the Apostle plainly distinguishes Apostles and Prophets as separate groups. Second, in 1 Cor 12:28, the only NT text outside Ephesians where Apostles and Prophets are mentioned together, Paul again clearly distinguishes between them. Third, Paul nowhere else designates the Apostles, either individually or collectively, as "Prophets," thus casting doubt on any proposal that he did so in Eph 2:20. Fourth and finally, since Paul nowhere else identifies Apostles as Prophets, an attempt on his part to do so in Eph 2:20 would have been lost on his readers "without at least some word of explanation, especially since he goes on in the same context (4:11) to reinforce the conventional usage."²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Carson, 96, n. 73.

²¹⁷ R. B. Gaffin, Jr., "The New Testament as Canon," in *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic: A Tradition, A Challenge, A Debate*, ed. H. M. Conn (Baker, 1988), 175.

²¹⁸ R. Fowler White, "Gaffin and Grudem on Eph. 2:20: In Defense of Gaffin's Cessationist Exegesis" *WTJ* 54 (Fall 1992) 321-330. Online at http://www.the-highway.com/cessation_White.html. Dr. Fowler is summarizing Dr. Gaffin's landmark study *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 94-95.

Neither Dr. Carson nor Dr. Grudem seem to acknowledge that the immediate context of Ephesians (cf. 4:11) and the broader NT context (cf. 1 Cor 12:28) of Ephesians 2:20, which Dr. Carson deems so important to understanding it, clearly describe Apostles and NT Prophets as two different ministries.

The rather desperate lengths that *prophetists* are willing to take would seem illustrated in Dr. Grudem's admission that Ephesians 4:11 is a reference to Christian Prophets, distinct from Apostles, but he contends the Apostle is referring to a different type of Christian Prophet than the ones in 2:20.²¹⁹ Again, this is a convenient interpretation for *prophetism*, just not a convincing or very honest one. Nothing in the intervening verses reflects a shift in meaning to a second group of Prophets in the Apostle's mind. It can be added that it is just this type of textual manipulation that Dr. Grudem engages in, in the name of "Greek rules of grammar," that gives seminary scholars the same kind of reputation for some in the Church, that lawyers have in society in general.

Seemingly less biased NT scholars have rejected the *prophetist's* view of Ephesians 2:20. For example, the eminent NT scholar F. F. Bruce (1910–1990) wrote:

These Prophets [in Eph. 2:20], as elsewhere in this epistle where they are conjoined with Apostles (Eph. 3:5; 4:11), are Christian Prophets. The fact that the definite article is not repeated before "Prophets" does not imply that the Prophets and Apostles are identical.²²⁰

Indeed, Greek scholar Daniel Wallace has demonstrated that the construction that Dr. Grudem proposes is found nowhere else in the NT.²²¹

After a relatively detailed analysis of Dr. Grudem's thesis, Harold Hoehner (1935-2009), former Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary concluded: "In the present context the church's foundation consists of apostles and [Christian] prophets."²²²

²¹⁹ Grudem, *Prophecy*, 59.

²²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians (NICNT)* (Eerdmans, 1984), 304.

²²¹ Daniel B. Wallace, "Semantic Range of the Article-Noun-*kai*-Noun Plural Construction," *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983), 82.

²²² Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker, 2002), 404. See full discussion, pp. 397-404

Regarding the **"prophets"** in Eph 2:20 John Stott concludes as well:

The reference must again be to a small group of inspired teachers, associated with the apostles, who together bore witness to Christ and whose teaching was derived from revelation (cf. Eph 3:5) and was foundational. In practical terms this means that the church is built on the New Testament Scriptures.²²³

Noted NT scholar Peter O'Brien concludes regarding the **"Prophets"** in Eph 2:20:

The *prophets* are New Testament prophets, not Old Testament ones. . . . Together with the apostles, [Christian] prophets were the first authoritative recipients and proclaimers of God's revelation in Christ. . . . 'The apostles and Christian prophets are both seen as those whom God made known the revelation of the gospel', and who were the first proclaimers of it. To assert then, that these Gentile believers were built upon the apostles and [Christian] prophets is to state that their membership in God's people rests on the normative teaching that arises from divine revelation.²²⁴

Likewise, NT scholar Andrew T. Lincoln writes of these **"Prophets"**:

The prophets are NT prophets. . . . The apostles and [NT] prophets are foundational in the sense of being primary and authoritative recipients and proclaimers of revelation.²²⁵

Even the Pentecostal NT scholar Gordon Fee states: "the evidence of [Eph] 4:11 and I Cor 12:28 seems determinative here that the Apostle intends two different kinds of establishing ministry . . ." ²²⁶

Therefore, the clear meaning of Ephesians regarding the revelatory equality of Christian Prophets and Apostles stands, and a critical argument supporting *prophetism* is non-existent. It is perhaps because of the scholarly refutations that Dr. Grudem's

²²³ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Intervarsity, 1979), 107.

²²⁴ O'Brien, 216.

²²⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC) (Dallas, 1990), 153.

²²⁶ Fee, *Presence*, 687, n. 97.

approach has received,²²⁷ that more recently he has said the issue

²²⁷ For responses to Dr. Grudem's interpretation of Ephesians 2:20 see the sources noted above. Including an excellent article by Bruce R. Compton, "1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and The Cessation Of Miraculous Gifts" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 9 (2004): 97-144.

Thomas Edgar gives a rather simple rebuttal to Grudem's thoughts when he writes:

Let us look at a construction similar to Ephesians 2:20 in which the same term Apostle is used together with the term elders. The same construction—one article before two plural nouns joined by "and" is used in Acts 15:2 where it refers to the "Apostles and elders."

If we apply the same principle as Grudem does in interpreting Ephesians 2:20, we will have a new group of individuals called, "Apostle-elders," which will exclude those at Jerusalem who are normally called "elders." However, this interpretation is incorrect. There were elders in Jerusalem. The "Apostles and elders" are mentioned in Acts 15:4 where the grammatical construction clearly indicates that the Apostles and elders are two separate groups. Also, the article appears before each group in Acts 15:6, 22-23. Yet in Acts 16:4, referring to the same incident, the two groups are once again preceded by only one article. Thus, in Acts 15:2 and 16:4 the same groups are referred to with one article, as in Ephesians 2:20; and in Acts 15:6, 22-23 they are also referred to with two articles, indicating that the author has in mind two separate groups.

The instances that have only one article merely group the two separate groups, "Apostles and elders," due to something the author views as common to both. For example, as Wallace points out in Matthew 3:7, only one article precedes the "Sadducees and Pharisees," yet they are two distinct entities." Therefore, the idea that Ephesians 2:20 refers only to one group is both grammatically and logically untenable. (78)

Perhaps a more complex discussion is provided by Dr. Fowler who summarizes some of the main points of Wallace's study:

Despite his claims to the contrary, Grudem's exegesis is not at all compelling from a grammatical point of view. For one thing, Grudem interprets the syntax of *tōn apostolōn kai prophētōn* without due regard for the fact that this construction involves plural nouns. As odd as it may sound, with the exception of Eph 4:11 (on which I shall comment below), Grudem fails to cite a single example of the construction in question in Eph 2:20: every one of the texts he adduces in favor of his exegesis is an example of a construction involving something other than two plural nouns.

Even if Grudem were to correct this problem, his case would have another serious obstacle to overcome. The obstacle is that Grudem interprets the syntax of the article-noun-*kai*-noun plural construction in Eph 2:20 in a way which, as D. B. Wallace has demonstrated, has neither clear nor ambiguous parallels in the NT. In addition, Wallace has shown that even the one true grammatical parallel that Grudem

that he has devoted multiple pages in defending, turns out to be unimportant:

I do not think that Eph. 2:20 has much relevance to the entire discussion of the nature of the gift of prophecy. Whether we see one group here as I do (Apostle-Prophets) or two groups, as [*historicists*] do (Apostles and Prophets), we all agree that these Prophets are ones who provided the foundation of the church, and therefore these are Prophets who spoke infallible words of God.

Where we disagree is on the question of whether this verse describes the character of all who had the gift of prophecy in the New Testament churches. I see no convincing evidence that it describes all who prophesied in the early church. Rather, the context clearly indicates a very limited group of Prophets who were (a) part of the very foundation of the church, (b) closely connected with the Apostles, and (c) recipients of the revelation from God that the Gentiles were equal members with Jews in the church (Eph. 3:5). Whether we say this group was only the Apostles, or was a small group of Prophets closely associated with the Apostles who spoke Scripture-quality words, we are still left with a picture of a very small and unique group of people who provide this foundation for the church universal.²²⁸

cites (Eph 4:11, *tous de poimenas kai didaskalous*) has been widely misunderstood because few exegetes have ever seriously investigated the semantic range of the article-noun-*kai*-noun plural construction. In fact, Wallace boldly challenges the exegesis of Eph 4:11 by Grudem and others, emphatically insisting "that such a view has no grammatical basis" in NT usage. According to Wallace's findings, the least likely interpretation of Eph 4:11 is that it means "the pastor-teachers, that is, the pastors who are also teachers"; more likely, it means "the pastors and other teachers." . . .

Wallace's study confirms that, while Grudem's exegesis is a theoretically possible meaning of the construction in question, it is nevertheless, statistically speaking, the least likely meaning of that construction. To be sure, non-statistical factors are relevant to this discussion and we shall consider them in the headings that follow. At this juncture, however, let us observe that the syntactical evidence is decidedly against Grudem's exegesis of Eph 2:20 statistically speaking, the most likely meaning of the text is that it represents Apostles and Prophets as two distinct groups united by their function as foundation stones, that is, as two distinct gifts united in foundational, revelatory witness to Christ and the mystery revealed in him.

²²⁸ Grudem, *Theology*, 1051, n. 4.

Likewise, a foremost promoter of *prophetism* and former associate Professor of Theology at Wheaton, C. Samuel Storms has written regarding Ephesians 2:20:

Paul is describing a limited group of Prophets who were closely connected to the Apostles, both of which groups spoke Scripture-quality words essential to the foundation of the church universal.²²⁹

Now, evidently, Dr. Grudem and other *prophetists* are more willing to concede that Ephesians 2:20 is indeed speaking of Christian Prophets. But in order to maintain biblical support for *prophetism* they attempt another strategy: simply stating what cannot be proven. We heartily agree with Dr. Grudem's and Storms' concession to the divine, apostolic-like authority that these Prophets mentioned in Eph 2:20 and 3:5 had, but there is no biblical evidence in Ephesians that the Apostle distinguished them from others with the gift of prophecy as listed in 4:11, nor is there any evidence in the NT that they were "a very small," "unique," or "limited" group that is to be distinguished from other Christian Prophets in the early Church. Once again, a fundamental argument for modern *prophetism* is false, and proponents of it would do well to take heed of this and stop misrepresenting God on this issue.

C.2) Christian Prophets Authenticated Apostles: *1 Cor 14:37-38*

We find additional proof that the authority of Christian Prophets was equal to that of Apostles in 1 Corinthians. Because authentic NT prophecy was direct "**revelation from the Lord**" (14:30) the Apostle said, "**If anybody thinks he is a Prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge** [i.e. confirm, authenticate] **that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command**" (14:37). The Apostle is asking those with the gift of prophecy in the Corinthian congregation to authenticate the Apostle's authority as an Apostle. How could the Apostle expect a NT Prophet to confidently confirm that his apostolic statements were infallible, extra-biblical divine revelation if they did not also possess the same thing? The Apostle wanted to use the revelatory abilities and recognized divine authority of the authentic Christian Prophets in Corinth to strengthen his position on the issues he is discussing as

²²⁹ C. Samuel Storms in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* Wayne Grudem, ed., (Zondervan, 1996), 81

their Apostle. If the Corinthian Prophets confirmed that what the Apostle was saying was a command from God, it was to be obeyed as such. Therefore, the Apostle knew that the true Prophets could authenticate him.

Which makes Dr. Grudem's claim that in these verses the Apostle, "claims authority far greater than any Prophet at Corinth"²³⁰ unlikely.²³¹ On the contrary, the Apostle is not attempting to put authentic NT Prophets under his thumb, but rather work with them to instruct and correct the Corinthian church.

On the other hand, a true Apostle can expose false prophets. Paul goes on to state that if "**anyone**," (obviously *not* a real Christian Prophet) did not agree that the Apostle's words were divinely authoritative, that person was to be rejected as having any authority at all (cf. 14:38).²³² Evidently, several people were claiming that they spoke directly for God (sound familiar?). How were the Corinthians to know if they were authentic? An additional test that the Apostle suggests is that they would know and agree that the instruction that the Apostle was writing was divine revelation from God. If they *did* recognize it, they were to be heeded with the authority that authentic NT Prophets had. If they refused to recognize this they were fake prophets. Such a rejection was not because the dissenting person was some sort of second-rate prophet who did not have the kind of divine revelation or authority of Apostles, but because they were not a Prophet at all. And he hoped that the fake prophets who would refuse his instruction would be "**ignored**."

C.3) Why are Apostles First?: 1 Cor 12:28

While the rightly respected NT scholar John Stott agrees with our interpretation of the "**Prophets**" in Ephesians 2:20 as discussed above, and contrary to *prophetism*, he agrees with several other perspectives of the modern prophet movement. Accordingly, he writes in his excellent commentary on Romans:

²³⁰ Grudem, *Theology*, 1054.

²³¹ Unfortunately, John MacArthur suggests the same when he comments: "The Prophets were **second** to the Apostles, and their message was to be judged by that of the Apostles (1 Cor. 14:37). MacArthur, 1 Cor 12:28.

²³² Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NIGTC)* (Eerdmans, 2000), is not very helpful here. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT)* (Eerdmans, 1987) does not address the issue either.

So that reference [Eph 2:20] to foundation-prophets is likely to be to the biblical prophets, including those New Testament authors who were prophets as well as apostles, such as Paul and John.

In two lists of charismata, however, prophets are placed in a secondary position to the apostles, suggesting that there was a lesser prophetic gift, subsidiary to that of the biblical prophets. Words spoken by such prophets were to be 'weighed' and 'tested', whereas the apostles were to be believed and obeyed, and no sifting process was deemed appropriate or necessary in their case.²³³

For Dr. Stott, then, these perspectives suggest that Christian Prophets possessed less divine authority than Apostles. Our next two points explain why we would disagree.

While we claim Christian Prophets possessed the same revelatory abilities and authority as Christian Apostles, the Bible does seem to rank Apostles above Prophets when these gifts are listed. Paul says, "**And in the church God has appointed first of all Apostles, second Prophets, third Teachers. . .**" (1 Cor 12:28; cp. Eph. 2:20; 3:4-5; 4:11). We have established elsewhere that Paul intends to prioritize these gifts in order of importance to the Church.²³⁴ So again, why would Apostles be more important than Prophets?²³⁵

²³³ John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Intervarsity, 1994), 327.

²³⁴ For the devaluation of the gift of tongues see section 12.4.A.1.

²³⁵ On the ranking of Apostles over Prophets in 1 Cor 12:28 Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 1985) has no comment.

C. K. Barrett writes: "Perhaps their only really distinctive feature in the present list is that they [the Prophets] were itinerant." (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (BNTC) [Hendrickson, 2000], 295.

Dr. Fee suggests, "one has precedence over the other in the founding and building up of the local assembly" (*Corinthians*, 620).

Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer perceive Apostles as "the first order in the Church," since elsewhere in Paul and in Acts it is an essential qualification for the apostolate to have seen the raised Lord (***A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*** [T. & T. Clark, 1967], *in loc.*).

J. D. G. Dunn concedes that Apostles represent in Paul a wider circle than the Twelve, but believes that they still constitute a special group of "founder members" who are personally commissioned on the basis of such passages as Rom 1:5; 11: 13; 1 Cor 3:5- 10; 9:1, 2; 15:7-11; Gal 1: 1 and t: 11, 15-17). (*Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious*

Elsewhere we have written in regard to the kind of divine revelation given to Apostles and Prophets:

It would seem the clearest difference in these gifts is that those of the Apostles operated in a more *abiding* way with a more general application to the universal Church, while prophetic revelation came in a more spontaneous way with a more specific application to an individual or local church. By *abiding* revelation we mean that the gifts of divine wisdom and knowledge gave the Apostles a store or depository of divine knowledge to write from, rather than being directly, spontaneously, and continuously "inspired" as they wrote.

Accordingly, the Apostle seems to distinguish the gift of "**knowledge**" from a "**revelation**" or a "**prophecy**" in 1 Corinthians 14:6, suggesting that the latter two may be a more spontaneous, immediately given revelation, while "**knowledge**" may suggest a one time deposit of divine revelation and knowledge which numerous subsequent "words" or messages of divine wisdom and knowledge were based upon. . . .

As noted above, we would suggest that the gift of prophecy operated on a more spontaneous, circumstantially driven nature, most often applying to specific needs of the moment. This distinction cannot be pressed too dogmatically as NT Prophets were also recipients of new extra-biblical doctrine authoritative and applicable to the universal Church (cf. Eph 2:20; 3:5). Nonetheless, the abiding and more general supernatural knowledge of NT Apostles has historically been distinguished from the more spontaneous and specific revelation of Prophets.

This may be the best explanation of why Paul considers the gift of Apostleship "**first**" and Christian "**Prophets second**" "**in the church**" (1 Cor 12:28), and always lists Apostles before NT Prophets (cf. Eph 2:20; 4:11). Both possessed absolutely authoritative revelation from God, but the revelation of Apostles was more important as it more often dictated what the universal Church was to obey and believe.

and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament [Westminster Press, 1975], 1015-16.

F. W. Grosheide argues that Prophets are second to Apostles because, although both proclaim the gospel, "their office is not ... as universal as that of the Apostles" (Thiselton, 1015).

R. Schnackenburg supports this thesis. ("Apostles", *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, 295).

Perhaps it was the more local and specific revelation of the Prophets that made them "**second**" in the Church.

Accordingly, Dr. Hodge wrote concerning Paul's mention of the gift of "**prophecy**" in Romans 12:6:

From these and numerous similar passages, it appears that the prophets in the Christian church were men who spoke under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God, and delivered some divine communication relating to doctrinal truths, to present duty, to future events, etc., as the case might be.

The point of distinction between them and the Apostles, considered as religious teachers, appears to have been that the inspiration of the Apostles was abiding, they were the infallible and authoritative messengers of Christ; whereas the inspiration of the Prophets was occasional and transient. The latter differed from the teachers, inasmuch as these were not necessarily inspired, but taught to others what they themselves had learned from the Scriptures, or from inspired men.²³⁶

For example, the prophecies in chapters 2-3 of Revelation illustrate the more temporal and specific nature of prophetic revelation. These prophetic utterances were customized to the strengths and needs of individual churches. This is similar to the specificity of Nathan's prophecy to King David concerning his "private" sin (cf. 2 Sam 12:1ff), or Agabus' personal prophecy to the Apostle Paul. Accordingly, it would seem the revelation that Christian Prophets received was especially characterized by the needs of a particular people at a particular time and did not normally have the enduring or universal authority of the revelations of Apostles. This is perhaps why Apostles wrote the great majority of NT Scripture, rather than Christian Prophets.²³⁷

²³⁶ Excerpt from section 8.2.D. Likewise, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) had written:

Now the prophetic light is not in the prophet's intellect by way of an abiding form, else a prophet would always be able to prophesy, which is clearly false. For Gregory says (Hom. on Ezek.): "Sometimes the spirit of prophecy is lacking to the prophet, nor is it always within the call of his mind, yet so that in its absence he knows that its presence is due to a gift." (online at <http://www.aquinas.avemaria.edu/Aquinas-Corinthians.pdf>)

²³⁷ Other than Revelation, Jude is probably the best candidate for Scripture written by a Christian Prophet.

Of course, *prophetism* would use such a ranking to insist that the *authority* of NT Apostles was greater than NT Prophets because the latter were prone to errors in their revelation. However, the superiority of Apostles does not involve a greater reliability or amount of authority, but rather, the greater *scope* of their authority. This would seem to be illustrated in a couple of general ways, none of which contradict the additional NT data that Prophets were recipients of the foundational NT revelation (cf. Eph 2:20; 3:4-5).

First, it may be suggested that while an Apostle's ministry normally included whole regions of churches, the Prophets primarily confined themselves to a local congregation. In fact, it may be suggested that in general, Apostles were on the move, visiting many congregations, while Christian Prophets were more stationary. Indeed, we read in the influential early Church document the *Didache* (c. 70):

Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord. But he is not to stay for more than one day, unless there is a need, in which case he may stay another. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet. . . .

But every genuine prophet who wishes to settle among you "is worthy of his food." Likewise, every genuine teacher is, like "the worker, worthy of his food." Take, therefore, all the firstfruits of the produce of the wine press and threshing floor, and of the cattle and sheep, and give these firstfruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests.²³⁸

Accordingly, John MacArthur writes:

It seems that the office of Prophet was exclusively for work within a local congregation, whereas that of Apostleship was a much broader ministry, not confined to any area, as implied in the word *apostolos* ("one who is sent on a mission"). Paul, for example, is referred to as a Prophet when he ministered locally in the Antioch church (Acts 13:1), but elsewhere is always called an Apostle.²³⁹

Again, we would state this as a generality, as Agabus obviously operated outside of "a local congregation."

Likewise, another commentator writes:

²³⁸ *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (The Didache)*, 11.3-5; 13.1-3; online at www.ccel.org

²³⁹ MacArthur, 1 Cor 12:28.

Another distinction between Apostles and Prophets is in their sphere of responsibility. Whereas the Apostles' responsibility was to minister to the church at large and to extend its borders, those who were Prophets only, while they may have been generally available, usually served in settled situations, being attached to a single local church (Acts 13:1; 15:32).²⁴⁰

Because prophetic ministries were generally focused on more specific locales, most believe their revelations had a corresponding specificity in their application as well. For example, we recognize this very difference in the scope of the divine revelation the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians, and the personal prophecy given to the Apostle by Agabus (cf. Acts 21:10-11). The former was for the universal Church for all time, while the latter was for one person regarding a specific event. Along these lines, Anthony Thiselton shares, "virtually all studies of the subject [NT prophecy] agree that it addressed issues of the moment."²⁴¹ Likewise, Dr. MacArthur writes:

Another distinction between the two offices may have been that the apostolic message was more general and doctrinal, whereas that of the Prophets was more personal and practical.²⁴²

This may explain why the NT Church had female Prophets, but not female Apostles. The biblical limitations placed on female authority over congregations and men would prohibit them in exercising the greater *scope* of apostolic authority. However, because a Prophetess' revelations and authority would be more confined to other females in the congregation, so would the scope of her revelations and authority.²⁴³

In summary, then, Paul ranked Apostles above Prophets because of their greater *scope* of ministry, not because of some deficiency in the divinity or reliability of a Prophet's authority. And, as noted, the distinctions suggested above must not be pressed too far, such that the revelatory equality between Apostles and NT Prophets reflected in Ephesians is dismissed.

While the distinction above can be suggested generally, the balance in all this data may best be reflected in Revelation. As

²⁴⁰ Reference unavailable.

²⁴¹ Thiselton, 960.

²⁴² MacArthur, 1 Cor 12:28.

²⁴³ For further on female Prophets see section 9.7.F.

illustrated in the next chapter, this is the best example of what the NT gift of prophecy was like. Accordingly, it is interesting to note that this NT prophecy included both specific, localized, rather temporarily applicable revelation **“to the seven churches”** (Rev 1:11; cf. chs. 2-3) of Asia Minor c. 95 A. D, and revelation universally applicable to the entire Church and the Church age. Both kinds of revelation were absolutely authoritative, and products of the NT gift of prophecy, but with a difference in scope.

C.4) Ignoring & Testing Prophets Does Not Diminish Their Authority *1 Thess 5:19-21*

The Apostle Paul told the Thessalonians: **“Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good”** (1 Thess 5:19-21). Here, *prophetists* find a couple of reasons to claim that Christians did not think NT Prophets reliably spoke the word of God. What *prophetists* sometimes imply is that the gift of prophecy was viewed as such an unreliable medium of revelation in the early Church, that **“contempt”** for Christian Prophets was rather widespread, prompting Paul to address it.

Even if that was true, since when are God's Prophets blamed for the disrespectful response of people? If there was any **“contempt”** toward the real gift of prophecy in the early Church, it was not because Christians believed the words of real God-sent prophecies were mixed with error. Accordingly, we do not interpret the contempt the Apostle Paul received from the Corinthian church ²⁴⁴ as a reflection on the questionable value of apostolic revelation. Likewise, Christians today show contempt for Scripture itself, but this is not a reflection on the reliability and authority of Scripture, but on the heart of the Christian. Accordingly, it was precisely because real Christian Prophets were a source of reliable divine revelation, that Paul told the Thessalonians, **“do not treat prophecies with contempt.”**

Neither does Paul's instruction to **“test everything,”** apparently including prophecies, suggest a diminished authority for Christian Prophets. Nevertheless, the rightly respected Pentecostal NT scholar Gordon Fee writes regarding the Apostle Paul's understanding of Christian Prophets:

²⁴⁴ For further discussion on the contempt that the Apostle Paul received from the Corinthian church see 12.5.D.

Although the prophetic tradition of the OT probably lay behind Pauline understanding [e.g. OT Prophets possessed absolute divine authority], at no point does he understand the prophet to be speaking anything other than an *ad hoc* [impromptu, unprepared] word. This is evidenced by the fact that for Paul it must be "weighed" or "tested." Thus, there is never any sense that a prophetic word was to be raised to the level of "inspired text."²⁴⁵

Likewise, in his excellent commentary on 1 Thessalonians, John Stott writes:

[The Apostle Paul] gave the Thessalonians no command to test his teaching, as they were to test the words of the prophets, in order to sift the wheat from the chaff, the good from the evil, the genuine from the spurious. They were to weigh prophetic utterances, because not all of them were from God; but they were to listen to everything the Apostle wrote, and were expected to believe and obey it all. Thus Paul unequivocally put his authority as an apostle above that of the prophets.²⁴⁶

In chapter 9.10, we argue against Dr. Stott's suggestion that the Apostle thought each individual utterance of a Prophet was to be sifted through to find what was true and false. On the contrary, it was the Prophet themselves who were to be tested, and once a Prophet was authenticated, they were to be believed and obeyed.

Secondly, it is wrong to interpret Paul's command to "**test**" prophecy as an indication of its *lack* of authority, when in reality this illustrates just the opposite. For example, when Luke commends the Bereans because they "**examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true**" (Acts 17:11), he did not mean to communicate that Paul's words were unreliable divine revelation as *prophetism* would suggest. In fact, because Apostles and Prophets did speak divine revelation, it was all the more imperative that *false* Apostles and Prophets were exposed in the Church through testing.

Finally, it would seem that *prophetist* theologians would have us assume that OT Prophets *were not tested*, therefore making them more authoritative than their NT counterparts. However, we can be

²⁴⁵ Fee, *Presence*, 170

²⁴⁶ John Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Intervarsity, 1991), 130.

sure that not only were authentic OT Prophets ignored many times, they were also tested as God had commanded the Israelite community to do (cf. Deut 18:22). None of this, however, changed the fact that they were speaking direct revelation from God and that there were severe consequences for not listening to, and obeying what they said.

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) What was the instruction in the OT if a would-be "prophet" spoke something other than what God had "**commanded**" them "**to say**"?
- 2) Why did God ensure that those with the gift of prophecy spoke infallibly?
- 3) How would you describe the authority of a biblical Prophet?
- 4) What biblical evidence do we give to claim that the authority of NT Prophets was equal with NT Apostles? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 5) What is our suggestion as to why Paul ranked Apostles "**first**" and Prophets "**second**" (1 Cor 12:28) in the Church?
- 6) Why do we claim that the fact that the NT implies that Christians might ignore or test a NT Prophet says nothing negative about their perceived authority? Do you agree or disagree and why?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.7

Examples of NT Prophets

No Hint of Prophetism

Table of Topics

A) Zechariah, Simeon, & Anna: *Luke's Prophets*

B) Antiochan Prophets: *Acts 13:1-3*

C) Disciples (not Prophets) in Tyre & Caesarea:
Acts 21:4-12

D) Agabus: *Acts 21:11*

E) The Corinthian Prophets: *14:29-30, 36*

F) Prohibition of Women Prophets: *1 Cor 14:31-38; 11:3-5*

G) Peter's Prophets: *1 Pet 4:11*

H) The Prophet John: *Revelation*

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- In none of the examples of NT Prophets is there a hint of the second-rate prophecy of modern *prophetism*.
- One indication that *prophetism* is unbiblical is that *prophetists* consistently warn Christians *never* to heed their "prophets" in a biblical manner.
- Not surprisingly, *prophetists* disparage Agabus' ministry because he presents such a clear rebuke to their second-rate gift of prophecy.
- The instruction regarding the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians

While the obvious equation of Christian Prophets with NT Apostles in Ephesians is perhaps the strongest biblical evidence for the divine authority of the former, there is other clear evidence as well.

A) Zechariah, Simeon, & Anna: *Luke's Prophets*

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, "**prophesied**" (Luke 1:27) about both Christ and John and it is clear that he spoke a direct, infallible, Scripture-quality revelation from God, that included supernatural predictions of the future (Luke 1:67-79). Likewise, Simeon was undoubtedly a Prophet, faithfully communicating divine revelation concerning Christ and predicting things concerning His future as well (cf. Luke 2:25-35). Finally, the "**Prophetess Anna . . . spoke about the child**" (Luke 2:36, 38) Jesus, no doubt communicating and predicting accurate divine revelation that was to be believed. In none of these NT Prophets is there a hint of the second-rate prophecy of modern *prophetism*.

B) Antiochan Prophets: *Acts 13:1-3*

In words rather identical to how Agabus prefaced his prophesying, Christian Prophet(s) spoke in the same way at Antioch. Luke records:

In the church at Antioch there were Prophets and Teachers . . . As they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said [through one of the Prophets], "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.**" So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)**

The clearest understanding of the source of this direct quote of the Holy Spirit's command is that it came from one or more of the NT Prophets present there.²⁴⁷ We have noted elsewhere the

²⁴⁷ I. H. Marshall comments on how the Spirit "spoke" here:

The Spirit is named as the author, since it is he who appoints leaders in the church (20:28) and guides the church at crucial points. But the Spirit speaks through human agencies (4:25), and it must be assumed that one of the prophets in the church received the message. (*Acts (TNTC)* [Eerdmans, 1999], 216)

Apostles like Paul received divinely authoritative revelation from Christian Prophets (cf. Acts 16:6-7; 20:22; 21:10-11)²⁴⁸ In the passage above, the “**Prophets**” present had, no doubt, already been miraculously authenticated as Prophets and their words were quickly and unquestionably obeyed as the direct words of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, those who heard it immediately obeyed this extra-biblical revelation, accepting it as God’s specific will for Saul and Barnabas, regardless of the hardships and dangers they were sending them into.

One indication that the modern second-rate “prophecy” of *prophetism* is just that, is that *prophetists* themselves repeatedly and consistently warn Christians *never* to heed their “prophets” in this manner. Accordingly, we quoted Dr. Grudem above: “There is almost uniform testimony from all sections of the charismatic movement²⁴⁹ that prophecy is imperfect and impure, and will contain elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted.” It seems apparent that Saul and Barnabas did not view real NT Prophets as modern *prophetists* do.

C) Disciples (not Prophets) in Tyre & Caesarea: *Acts 21:4-12*

When the Apostle and his companions reached the city of Tyre, Luke records:

Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through the Spirit they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. (Acts 21:4)

This text is among the most cited biblical evidence in *prophetism* for the idea that NT Prophets were not regarded with divine authority. For example, Dr. Grudem writes:

In Acts 21:4, we read of the disciples at Tyre: “Through the Spirit they told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.” This seems to be a reference to prophecy directed towards Paul, but Paul

F. F. Bruce concurs, stating, “the Holy Spirit made known his will to them—doubtless through an inspired utterance from one of their number.” (*The Book of the Acts (NICNT)* [Eerdmans, 1988], 245)

²⁴⁸ For further on Apostles receiving revelation from Christian Prophets see section 8.3.C.

²⁴⁹ For a definition of *charismaticism* see endnote in chapter 8.2.

disobeyed it! He never would have done this if this prophecy contained God's very words and had authority equal to Scripture.²⁵⁰

According to *prophetists*, these "**disciples**" were NT Prophets that the Apostle outright disobeyed, therefore illustrating the relative lack of respect given Christian Prophets in the early Church.

Obviously, there are several problems with such an interpretation. First, Luke specifically calls them "**disciples**," not Prophets. Noting his habit throughout his Gospel and Acts of clearly identifying Prophets (cf. Luke 1:67-79; 2:36-38; Acts 11:27; 13:1-3; 15:32; 21:9-10), the assumption that *prophetism* is making regarding these "**disciples**" would not seem to be a very safe one.

Secondly, *prophetists* would have these "Prophets" contradicting the Christian Prophet Agabus who would shortly afterwards predict that the Apostle *would* be going to Jerusalem such that, "**the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles**" (Acts 21:11), all in accordance with God's will. Therefore, if "**the disciples**" in Tyre were Prophets, they were false ones. Real Prophets from God do not contradict one another.

Thirdly, the pleading done by "**the disciples**" (v. 4) in Tyre seems to be intended to be interpreted no differently than what Luke describes a few verses later as, "**we and the people there [Caesarea] pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem**" (v. 12). Those referred to as "**we and the people**" in verse 12 are not Prophets, and neither should "**the disciples**" mentioned in verse 4.

However, we note that even after the Christian Prophet Agabus supernaturally and perfectly predicted that Paul would be going to Jerusalem (v. 11), Luke records that, "**we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem**" (v. 12). *Prophetists* might again interpret this as a disparagement of Agabus' authority. However, Agabus is not commanding Paul to go to Jerusalem here, and the response of these people demonstrates how much they trusted the predictions of Christian Prophets. The best explanation of their response is that it was merely an emotional one, prompted by the authoritative warning and prediction of Agabus. In fact, after coming to their senses, Luke records, "**we said . . . 'The Lord's will be done'**" (v. 14), agreeing with the Christian Prophet's prediction.

²⁵⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1052. Underlining added.

Finally, an urging “**through the Spirit**” (Acts 21:4) could be produced by a number of spiritual gifts other than prophecy, including “**exhortation** (*paraklēsei*)” or “**mercy**” (Rom 12:8 NASB), the latter being especially prone to not want someone to suffer. It had already been revealed that Paul would be in danger when he went to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 20:22-23), and therefore, “**the disciples**” in Tyre would not have needed the gift of prophecy to know that.

All of this is in contrast to the Prophet Agabus mentioned in the same context. He is specifically identified as a Prophet and he reveals previously unknown details about Paul's impending hardships in Jerusalem. He does not prohibit Paul from going to Jerusalem, but in fact prophetically confirms that he is going (cf. Acts 21: 10-11).

D) Agabus: *Acts 21:11*

We have already noted the example of Agabus above whom Luke records prefacing his statement with, “**The Holy Spirit says . . .**” (Acts 21:11), obviously suggesting an infallible, divinely authoritative statement that must be believed and obeyed as God's very word. Not surprisingly, *prophetists* do all they can to disparage Agabus' ministry because he presents such a clear rebuke to their second-rate version of the gift of prophecy. Accordingly, Dr. Grudem, in another attempt to lessen the divine authority of NT Prophets writes:

[T]he common Old Testament phrase, “Thus says the Lord” [is] a phrase nowhere spoken in the New Testament by any prophets in New Testament churches.²⁵¹

Dr. Grudem is, of course, technically correct, but surely when Agabus says “**Thus saith the Holy Ghost**” (Acts 21:11 KJV) it makes the point of his statement meaningless and again exposes his obvious bias.

Dr. Grudem recognizes that Agabus' use of such words severely discredits his attempt to redefine NT prophecy into something less than direct, reliable revelation from God. His answer follows:

It is true that Agabus uses [the] phrase (“Thus says the Holy Spirit”) in Acts 21:11, but the same words (Gk. *tade legei*) are used by Christian writers just after the time of the New Testament to introduce very general paraphrases or greatly

²⁵¹ Ibid., 1055.

expanded interpretations of what is being reported (so Ignatius, *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 7:1-2 [about A. D. 108] and *Epistle of Barnabas* 6:8, 9:2, 5 [A. D. 70-100]). The phrase can apparently mean, "This is generally (or approximately) what the Holy Spirit is saying to us."²⁵²

Is that what those who heard Agabus thought? That when he said, "**The Holy Spirit says**" it meant that what follows "is generally (or approximately) what the Holy Spirit is saying"? Did Agabus' audience believe that the Prophet's "approximation" of what "**the Holy Spirit says**" was to such a degree that Agabus' quote of the Holy Spirit could contain, "imperfect and impure . . . elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted," which is precisely how Dr. Grudem describes Agabus' gift of prophecy?"²⁵³ No way. And if you cannot confidently dilute and distort Agabus' clear claim in the manner that Dr. Grudem does, then you must abandon modern *prophetism* for the unbiblical fraud it is. You simply cannot accept Luke's description of the NT Prophet at face value and at the same time have any respect whatsoever for the modern prophetic movement.

NT scholars without an agenda see the obvious in Agabus.²⁵⁴ I. Howard Marshall, Emeritus Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Aberdeen writes: "Thus says the Holy Spirit corresponds to 'Thus says the Lord' on the lips of Old Testament Prophets."²⁵⁵ Likewise, Robert L. Thomas, Professor of the Masters Seminary states, "**The** substitution of "Holy Spirit" for "Yahweh" is consistent with the theological tendency in Acts to attribute divine work to the Holy Spirit,"²⁵⁶ not degrade it as something less than OT prophecy.

Also, Robert Gaffin notes:

In the plainest possible terms, here the words of Agabus in his identity as a prophet are the words of the Holy Spirit himself, a

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 1056.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1055.

²⁵⁴ See also William Neal, *Acts*, New Century Bible Commentary (Eerdmans, 1973), 217; G. H. W. Lampe, "Acts," in *Peake's Commentary*, ed. Matthew Black (Thomas Nelson, 1962), 919. Bruce does not emphasize the divinity of Agabus' prophecy (401). Neither does MacArthur (*MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Parsons Technology, 1997) *in loc.*)

²⁵⁵ Marshall, 340.

²⁵⁶ Robert L. Thomas, "Prophecy Rediscovered? A Review of *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*," *BSac* 149 [1992], 91

quote of what the Spirit says. Not only what the prophet receives [contra to Dr. Grudem ²⁵⁷] but what he says and communicates to others is inspired formula with 'Holy Spirit' substituted for 'Lord.' . . . [T]here is no good reason to suppose that this incident is not typical or not indicative of the origin and character of New Testament prophecy. ²⁵⁸

Indeed, when Luke records that some Christians prayed that God "**spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David,**" and then quotes Psalm 2 practically verbatim, we do not get the idea that the Holy Spirit speaking "through the mouth" of a human was considered by the early Church as the kind of unreliable revelation that *prophetism* needs to prove.

Dr. Thomas also notes that in Revelation 2-3 the phrase, "**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says [legei] to the churches**" (Rev 2:7, cf. v. 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22) referred to direct, infallible quotes of Jesus Christ made in a NT prophecy. ²⁵⁹ Contrary to Dr. Grudem then, what Agabus said in Acts 21:11 was considered in the early Church (c. 95, date of Revelation) as something other than, "generally (or approximately)" what God is saying, such that there could even be, "imperfect and impure . . . elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted."

The use and meaning of identical language in Revelation 2-3, and that used by Agabus, also sheds light on the real significance of ones like Bishop Ignatius quoted by Dr. Grudem. As we demonstrate in chapter 9.13, early Church history is clear that the gift of prophecy continued to operate until about 250 A. D. Therefore, it is equally obvious based on Ignatius' time of death (c. 108), his widespread prominence and authority among several churches, and his own statement which follows to the church in Philadelphia on his way to be executed, that he was a Christian Prophet speaking direct divine revelation from God:

[W]hen I was among you, I cried, I spoke with a loud voice: "Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons." Now, some suspected me of having spoken thus, as knowing beforehand the division caused by some among you. But He [God] is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I got

²⁵⁷ For further on Dr. Grudem's contention that real divine revelation *comes* to a Christian Prophet, but they are not able to sufficiently communicate it, see section 9.2.A.

²⁵⁸ Robert Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost* (P & R, 1979), 65.

²⁵⁹ Thomas, 91.

no intelligence from any man. But the Spirit proclaimed these words: "Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; avoid divisions; be the followers of Jesus Christ, even as He is of His Father." . . . I learned nothing of it from the mouth of any man. But the Spirit made an announcement to me . . . ²⁶⁰

David F. Farnell offers several arguments that deny Dr. Grudem's contention that Ignatius's prophecy was the same second-rate prophecy of modern *prophetism*. ²⁶¹ First, Ignatius claimed that he spoke with God's voice. This assertion would hardly support Dr. Grudem's contention that New Testament Prophets could be mistaken, especially when Ignatius equated his prophecy with "God's own voice." This clearly intimates that New Testament "congregational" prophecy was considered totally authoritative in the postapostolic early Church.

Second, Ignatius claimed to have supernatural knowledge of the divisions in the Philadelphian community of believers. This information did not come "from any human being" but from the Holy Spirit (7.2). He rested the accuracy and authority of his prophecies on the miraculous source of his information. For Ignatius, the Holy Spirit served as the guarantor of the accuracy of his prophesying.

Third, Dr. Grudem's assertion that the prophecy of 7.2 is a "summary" of 7.1, which supports his contention for prophecy of "general content," is doubtful. The prophecy of 7.2 supplies too much precise information for his argument to be valid that 7.2 summarizes 7.1. Ignatius seems to have given a separate prophecy in 7.2, which added additional explicit prophetic content to that of 7.1.

Fourth, Ignatius introduced his prophecy in 7.2 by the phrase "the Spirit proclaimed these words." This phrase signals a conscious attempt by Ignatius to imitate biblical Prophets who were considered inspired in the very words they utilized in prophecy. In light of this, it is more likely that Ignatius considered his prophecy to be "word-for-word" inspired and fully authoritative rather than only "generally" inspired in content.

Therefore, instead of proving Dr. Grudem's point that ones like Ignatius thought they were speaking "generally (or approximately)" what the Holy Spirit said, such that there could be, "imperfect and

²⁶⁰ Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians*, 7.2; online at www.ccel.org.

²⁶¹ David F. Farnell, "Is the Gift of Prophecy for Today?" Parts 1-4, *BSac* 150:597 (Jan 93), 72.

impure . . . elements that are not to be obeyed or trusted,” Ignatius proves that Christian Prophets spoke with the same binding authority and reliability as OT Prophets.

As for Dr. Grudem’s references in the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the author is merely paraphrasing quotes from OT Scripture, describing them as words of the Holy Spirit. This is a completely different context than a Prophet like Agabus speaking extra-biblical revelation that could not be authenticated for accuracy with established Scripture, and so caution should be used in making any parallels with NT prophecy. Nevertheless, the most that this extra-biblical document, deceitfully forged in Barnabas’ name can prove, is that one writer, perhaps in the first century, felt he could attribute sayings of the Holy Spirit with imprecise quotations of the OT. This hardly qualifies as any kind of evidence whatsoever of what the early Church believed about the reliability and authority of Christian Prophets.

E) The Corinthian Prophets: 14:29-30, 36

There is a great deal of instruction regarding the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14 and it substantiates the claim that it was considered Scripture-quality revelation from God. We have already noted in the previous chapter that the Apostle called upon the real Prophets in the congregation to authenticate his writing as divine revelation (cf. 14:37-8). In addition, the Apostle’s description of the gift of prophecy as “**revelation**” reflects its divine authority. For example, he writes:

Two or three Prophets should speak, and the others [Prophets] should weigh carefully what is said. And if a [divine] revelation [apokaluphthē] comes to someone [a Prophet] who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. (14:29-30; cf. vs. 6, 26)

Paul’s use of the Greek word *apokalupsis* to describe the contents of prophetic speech in the early Church helps to further define the abilities of NT Prophets. The *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* states that it is: “a compound word formed from *kalypto* (hide, conceal) and *apo* (from). [It] carries the idea of unveiling something previously

hidden.”²⁶² No doubt, a word that describes new divine revelation from God.²⁶³

Such a clear statement concerning the revelatory abilities of NT Prophets is evidently so damaging to *prophetism* that Dr. Grudem responds, after quoting v. 30:

Here he [Paul] uses the word revelation in a broader sense than the technical way theologians [how about the NT!] have used it to speak of the words of Scripture-but the New Testament elsewhere uses the terms reveal and revelation in this broader sense of communication from God that does not result in written Scripture or words equal to written Scripture in authority (see Phil. 3:15; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 1:17; Matt. 11:27).²⁶⁴

A look at the texts quoted will prove Dr. Grudem's claim is false. They all refer to reliable, authoritative revelation from God:

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. (Phil 3:15)

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven. (Rom 1:18)

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (Eph 1:17)

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. (Matt 11:27)

Paul's use of *apokalupthē* to describe the divine revelation of the Corinthian Prophets, is identical to his use of the same word when he describes Prophets in Ephesians as having, "**insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed** [*apekakupthē*]

²⁶² Mundle, W. "Revelation" in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Colin Brown, ed., 4 vols., (Zondervan, 1986), IV:309

²⁶³ For confirmation of this see Archibald Robinson and Alexander Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (ICC)* (T & T Clark, 1914), 267, 321-2.

²⁶⁴ Grudem, *Theology*, 1056.

by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [NT] Prophets" (Eph. 3:5).

Contrary to Dr. Grudem's implication, the fact that all divine revelation is not inscripturated does not make it any less divine or authoritative. Paul recognizes that even the prophetic revelations in the Corinthian congregation were not "to result in written Scriptures," but that does not mean that such revelation was not "equal to written Scripture in authority" as Dr. Grudem claims. In the early Church, infallible, reliable, authoritative divine revelation was just that, whether it found itself recorded in Scripture or not. Accordingly, no Greek lexicon would support Dr. Grudem's suggestion that The Apostle's use of divine "**revelation**" here meant anything less than a communication from God that was to be whole-heartedly believed and obeyed. There simply is no biblical, lexical, or logical evidence to conclude that something God says, does not carry His authority.

Along the same lines, Dr. Grudem sees a disrespect for Christian Prophets in 14:30 where the Apostle writes:

Let two or three Prophets speak, and let the others [Prophets ²⁶⁵] pass judgment. ³⁰But if a revelation is made to another [Prophet] who is seated, the first one must keep silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy [if you are a Prophet ²⁶⁶] one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; ³²and the spirits of Prophets are subject to Prophets; ³³for God is not a God of confusion ["disorder" NIV] but of peace.

Dr. Grudem interprets this passage as follows:

Paul allows one Prophet to interrupt another one . . . Again, if Prophets had been speaking God's very words, equal in value to Scripture, it is hard to imagine that Paul would say they should be interrupted and not allowed to finish their message.

²⁶⁷

Why would we understand the Apostle as saying that these Prophets were to interrupt each other? The love with which a real Prophet was to exercise his gift, "**is not rude**" (13:5). Contrary to Dr. Grudem, the clearest understanding of, "**you can all prophesy**

²⁶⁵ For arguments that "**the others**" who are to evaluate the Prophets are other Prophets see section 9.10.A.

²⁶⁶ For arguments that "**you can all prophesy**" refers to Prophets and not just anyone, see section 9.2.B.2.

²⁶⁷ Ref. unknown.

one by one" is that *after* one Prophet was finished, a prophecy would come to another Prophet. The difference between Dr. Grudem and Paul is that the Apostle expected that when the Holy Spirit chose to communicate a divine "**revelation**" (v. 30) through a group of Prophets, that same Spirit would orchestrate their messages such that after speaking through one Prophet, He would then speak through another. In this way, the one, organic divine "**revelation**" would be completely and coherently communicated without error or "**confusion**" (v. 32). In fact, this kind of supernatural orchestration was intended to be yet another proof that these men were being supernaturally inspired.

Finally, Dr. Grudem's assumption that some of the intended message is "lost" because the first Prophet stops to allow the second to speak is pure presumption. Prophets "interrupting" one another, as he puts it, may reflect what is experienced in *prophetism* today, but not the supernatural nature of NT prophecy.

Dr. Grudem would also seem to misinterpret The Apostle's rhetorical, and even sarcastic question to the Corinthians: "**Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?**" (14:36). Dr. Grudem's take on this verse is that, "Paul suggests that no one at Corinth, a church that had much prophecy, was able to speak God's very words."²⁶⁸ First of all, The Apostle has said that it is "**revelation**" from God that the Prophets are communicating (vs. 6, 30), and as pointed out above, it is rather impossible to water down this biblical term to mean "divine, but error prone suggestions" as Dr. Grudem desires.

Secondly, the Apostle's wording here clearly includes the Corinthians as being recipients of divine revelation. He merely asks whether they think they are the "**only**" recipients of God's word. And The Apostle knew that the revelation that would come through the authentic Prophets in Corinth would be in agreement with the divine revelations being granted elsewhere, because all of them had one Source. This is why later in the passage the Apostle tells them that any authentic Prophets in their congregation will be able to confirm that the revelation Paul is writing them is from God.

F) Prohibition of Women Prophets:

1 Cor 14:31-38; 11:3-5

Additional proof in I Corinthians 14 of the authority that came with NT prophecy was the Apostle Paul's prohibition of women

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

prophesying in the context of the public assembly of believers. The Apostle writes:

For you [Prophets] can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches [ekklesiās: “assembly, congregation]. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church [ekklesia]. (vs. 31-35)

Contrary to much practice in *prophetism*, it is clear that women were not to prophesy in the public church meetings. It is important to understand why. The most biblical answer comes from other instruction from the Apostle regarding the public speaking of women. Many years after writing the Corinthians, he wrote Timothy a letter on, **“how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God”** (1 Tim. 3:15). In practically identical language to what he told the Corinthian women he said: **“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent”** (1 Tim 2:11-12).

The Bible is quite clear then that spiritually authoritative speech or instruction is not the place of a Christian woman in the context of a church assembly, or elsewhere when Christian men are present. This is precisely why women were not to prophesy in the Corinthian assembly. To do so would be to authoritatively **“teach”** and **“have authority over a man”** because NT prophecy was divinely authoritative speech.

The fact that the “speaking” that the Apostle prohibits for women refers specifically to tongues and prophecy is evident from the context. Accordingly, if Christian prophesying were merely for **“encouragement, strengthening, and comfort”** (v. 3), we might imagine that women would be allowed to prophesy in the public church setting. But because prophesying carried divine authority, it was not to be exercised in the **“church,”** which clearly refers to the larger, formal, public gathering apart from more informal home meetings (cf. 1 Cor 11:18-22), as it does throughout chapter 14 (cf. vs. 4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 26, 28).

Accordingly, the Apostle, (perhaps especially) reminds the female Prophets in Corinth just prior to his prohibition: **"The spirits of Prophets are subject to the control of Prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace"** (vs. 32-33). Therefore, no female Prophet could blurt out a prophecy and claim she couldn't help herself. Nor could she claim that God had told her to violate His own principle of gender order in the congregation, therefore causing **"disorder"** in a church service that is ultimately supposed to be for the purpose of glorifying and pleasing God, not people, including female Prophets.

Finally, let us be clear that the female "speaking" that the Apostle prohibits certainly includes prophesying, as well as **"Tongues . . . revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word[s] of instruction"** (14:6; cf. v. 26), as this is the whole and immediate context of his statement in 14:34-5. His concern is not

merely women asking questions,²⁶⁹ or judging prophecies,²⁷⁰ and

²⁶⁹ Christopher Forbes concludes that Paul only means to prohibit women in the assembly from asking questions, and assumes Paul is not referring to tongues speech or prophecy at all, in spite of the fact that this is the context of the whole section (*Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment* [J. C. B. Mohr, 1995], 274-77).

²⁷⁰ It is the view of both Drs. Grudem (*The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* [University Press in America, 1982], 242-55) and D. A Carson (*Showing the Spirit* [Baker, 1987], 130) that we are to understand Paul as limiting his prohibition of women speaking in the church service to only their judging of prophecies. First of all, this approach seems to deny the good possibility that Paul envisioned other Prophets judging one another (cf. 1 Cor 14:29-30; cf. section 9.7.E), not the whole congregation in some sort of democratic fashion.

Apart from the obvious contextual and practical difficulties with such an assumption, Samuel E. Waldron, Professor of Systematic Theology at The Midwest Center for Theological Studies writes:

Wayne Grudem argues that 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 simply forbids women to engage in judging the Prophets (I Cor. 14:29b). Though his argument is ingenious, it is completely unconvincing. It is impossible in the present limited context to demonstrate thoroughly all the reasons why this is so. The major reason, however, is that his interpretation ignores the contextual use of both [*laleō*] (speak) and [*sigāō*] (keep silent).

The verb (speak) used in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is used 24 times in I Corinthians 14. Eighteen times it refers to tongues-speaking, two times to prophesying (vv. 3 and 29), and 2 times (vv. 6 and 19) to general speaking or teaching. The verb [*sigāō*] (keep silent) is used in tandem with [*laleō*] in verses 28, 30, and 34. (These are its only uses in I Corinthians 14). It is used to command tongues-speakers, Prophets, and women in turn not to speak in the assemblies of the church, but to keep silent. The use of both these verbs in this context then, tend to support the view that in 1 Cor. 14:34-35, Paul is forbidding women to prophesy and to speak in tongues in the church. In contrast, these verbs are never used with reference to judging the Prophets. These facts by themselves are fatal for Grudem's view.

Grudem, however, rejects this interpretation on the grounds that it conflicts with I Cor. 11:5 and I Cor. 14:23-31. If I Corinthians 11:5 referred to women praying or prophesying in meetings of the church, Grudem might be right to see a conflict. The fact is, however, that there is no evidence that I Cor. 11:2-16 refers to meetings of the church. It likely has reference to less formal, public situations. The more formal, church situation is in view in I Cor. 14:33b-35--as Paul makes clear by his threefold use of the word church.

As for I Cor. 14:23-31, the seemingly blanket permission for all to minister in the meetings of the church is clearly being qualified in verses 27-35. Furthermore, the "alls" and "eaches" of the previous

certainly not confined to merely distracting “female chatter.”²⁷¹ Clearly, even the second-rate version of prophecy that merely encourages the congregation is included in the Apostle’s prohibition. When the Apostle makes the rather unqualified statements that,

verses are clearly hyperbolic. Paul clearly did not believe that all could speak in tongues (v. 23) or that all could prophesy (v. 24). He acknowledges that all did not even possess these gifts (1 Cor. 12:31 and 14:1). Finally, when Paul says in v. 31, “you can all prophesy,” he is referring to Prophets (v. 29) and not Prophetesses (Luke 2:36; Rev. 2:20; Acts 21:19). (*To Be Continued?* [Calvary Press, 2005], 93)

Dr. Carson suggests two other points that can be answered on his opinion that Paul only means that women in the church cannot judge prophecies:

First, the major objection is that it seems inconsistent for Paul to permit women to prophesy [1 Cor 11:5], and then to forbid them from weighing prophecies [which would also be exercising public and doctrinal authority over men]. But the objection carries little weight provided the view of prophecy I am outlining is understood [non-authoritative speech] to be the one with which Paul operated. It constitutes a problem only if prophecy has the same authority status that the great writing Prophets of the Old Testament enjoyed [how about Agabus?]. (130)

We would simply offer virtually this entire chapter to suggest that while Dr. Carson is in rather full agreement with Dr. Grudem, he is in fundamental disagreement with the Scriptures in his understanding of NT Prophets. Unfortunately, his perspective leads him to make what would seem to be another unbiblical suggestion:

In certain respects, then, it is proper for Paul to elevate teaching above prophecy [where does he do this?], especially if the teaching is considered part of the nonnegotiable apostolic deposit that serves in part as one of the touchstones enabling the congregation to weigh the prophecies granted to the church, and especially if the prophecies themselves, unlike the apostolic deposit, are subject to ecclesiastical appraisal. (Ibid.)

It would seem Dr. Carson ignores two things. First, if anything, Paul ranked Prophets above Teachers when he wrote: “**in the church God has appointed first of all Apostles, second Prophets, third teachers . . .**” (1 Cor 12:28). Secondly, if the ministry of Teachers is such an essential way that the early Church was to authenticate Prophets, how would they have evaluated Agabus? As we have pointed out, real Prophets often received revelation which could not be authenticated by existing Scripture, which is why their real fundamental authentication was the ability to foretell the future.

²⁷¹ Anthony Thiselton seems to imply that the public “speaking” being referred to in 14:34-5 is merely female chattering (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Eerdmans, 2000], 1157).

“women should remain silent in the churches,” “They are not allowed to speak,” and “it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” in a chapter correcting abuses of tongues and prophesying, it is rather impossible, if not sinful to assume that he actually excludes these things from his command.

Like female Teachers, female Prophets were expected to focus their ministry on other women, as implied by 1 Timothy 2:11-12 above, and Titus 2:3 where Paul writes that **“older women”** are:

to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands. (Tit 2:3-5)

One notices that even in the context of women teaching women, the Apostle does not mention the authoritative teaching of biblical doctrine, but rather moral commands.

Paul’s instruction that women Prophets are not to operate in the public worship service accords very well with all of the descriptions we have of females prophesying in Scripture. We read of Miriam:

Then Miriam the Prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them [the women]: “Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.” (Exod 15:20-21)

Instead of Miriam prophesying before the Jewish nation as a whole, she led a procession of women and directed her song to them.

Likewise, the description of Deborah’s prophetic ministry says nothing of public, authoritative meetings like those exercised by the male Jewish Prophets of the OT. We read:

Now Deborah, a Prophetess . . . was judging Israel at that time. And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah . . . and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. Now she sent and summoned Barak . . . and said [privately] to him, “Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor.’” (Judg 4:4-6)

The description of the Prophetess Huldah also agrees with the Apostle’s instruction when we read: **“Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the Prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah . . .”** (2

Kgs 22:14). While Huldah obviously ministered to men here, it was not before the nation of Israel like other male Prophets.

Likewise, as we move to the NT, we read of the Prophetess Anna:

Coming up to them [Joseph and Mary] at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke [individually afterwards] about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38).

There is no indication here that the Jewish Prophetess stood up in the Jewish temple which "**she never left**" (v. 37), in order to give an authoritative, public prophecy to a crowd including men. Such a thing simply would not have been accepted or respected.

Finally, we read of Phillip's "**four unmarried daughters who prophesied**" (Acts 21:9). Imagine living in that house! While there is no description of the settings in which they did so, there is a rather odd description of a setting in which they did not. Immediately after mentioning Phillip's daughters, Luke records:

After we had been there [Caesarea, where these Prophetesses lived] a number of days, a Prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.' " (Acts 21:10-11)

The question that comes to mind is why didn't God have one of Phillip's four daughters prophesy to Paul and his missionary team, instead of having Agabus travel to Caesarea in order to deliver the prophecy? While we cannot be dogmatic in our answer, the circumstances seem conspicuous enough that something is being said here about the biblical difference between female and male Prophets.

Accordingly, we quote Origen (c. 220) in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:34-5, a man who exercised considerable and widespread authority throughout the early Church, and perhaps reflects the consensus at the time:

If this was the case [that no female Prophets are to prophesy in the church assembly], what are we to make of the fact that Philip had four daughters who prophesied?' If they could do it, why can we not let our own Prophetesses speak? We may answer this question as follows. First, if our Prophetesses have spoken, show us the [authenticating] signs of prophecy in them. Second, even if the daughters of Philip did prophesy,

they did not do so inside the church. Likewise in the Old Testament, although Deborah was reputed to be a Prophetess, there is no indication that she ever corporately addressed the people in the way that Isaiah or Jeremiah did.²⁷²

In light of the Apostle's clear command for Christian women *not* to prophesy in the public church service, and calling such a thing "**disgraceful**" one is left rather speechless and dismayed at the arrogance, flippancy, and consistency with which God's clear desires are ignored and violated by a multitude of women in *prophetism*. So much so, that one has to wonder how many of these disobedient "prophetesses" are even Christians.

Paul told this very congregation just two verses after prohibiting female prophetic speech in the assembly:

If anybody thinks he is a Prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you [including the prohibition of women prophesying] is the Lord's command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored" (vs. 37-8)

Why then are "prophets" today who *do not* "**acknowledge**" the Apostle's words as "**the Lord's command**" and "**ignore**" his prohibition of female Prophets speaking in the assembly, still allowed to continue to prophesy in a congregation? And the Apostle obviously implicates local church leaders in his warning as well, suggesting that if they allow women to prophesy in the public assembly, their leadership should be "**ignored**" as well. No doubt both women "Prophets" and church leaders are sinning against Christ when they practice and allow something that Scripture clearly prohibits.

Unfortunately, the Church has allowed precisely what the Apostle was wanting to rid the Church of: pagan feminism. Accordingly, H. Wayne House, **Distinguished Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies at Faith Seminary** writes:

Women had an important place in the [pagan] mystery cults [in Corinth at the time Paul wrote to them], especially in the emotional and vocal realm [i.e. tongues and prophecy]. This was especially true in the Dionysian cult. Livy in his *History of Rome* wrote that the majority of Dionysian worshipers [known

²⁷² Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, 4.74.6-16; online at www.ccel.org.

for the kind of *emotionalism* found in *charismaticism* ²⁷³] were women. . . . This aspect of the pagan cult could be what Paul was counteracting in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36. ²⁷⁴

Likewise, John MacArthur writes:

We know from secular history that various movements of women’s liberation and feminism appeared in the Roman empire during New Testament times. . . . Much as in our own day, some women were demanding to be treated exactly like men It is likely that some of the believers at Corinth were influenced by those movements. ²⁷⁵

Along these lines, the heretical sect of the Montanists, condemned precisely because of its claim to a restored gift of prophecy, ²⁷⁶ was prominently led by female “prophets.” Accordingly, Arthur McGiffert, Professor of Church History at Lane Theological Seminary, has suggested that a pagan feminism “was a characteristic of the Montanists. . . .” ²⁷⁷

Likewise, pagan feminism had its impact on certain heretical cults attached to early Christianity. Along these lines, Phillip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State, relates concerning Gnostic literature that:

[W]omen characters play a vital role throughout the documents. This vision had its impact on many mainstream believers, especially feminists, who felt that they were rediscovering a whole suppressed side of the Christian tradition. ²⁷⁸

²⁷³ For further discussion of *emotionalism* in ancient and modern worship see chapters 4.8-11.

²⁷⁴ H. Wayne House, “*Tongues and the Mystery Religions at Corinth*”, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 140, [1983], 134-50. 141.

²⁷⁵ MacArthur, 11:5.

²⁷⁶ For further discussion of the condemnation of *prophetism* in 2nd century Montanism see section 9.13.D.

²⁷⁷ Arthur McGiffert, “Notes to Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History”; online at www.ccel.org. It should be noted that Dr. McGiffert himself would probably object to us using his commentary on Montanism as evidence of pagan feminism. As for himself, he was positive about the rise of female prominence which he describes in Montanism.

²⁷⁸ Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 233.

In the same vein, it was precisely because of the Bible's teaching regarding the roles of women in the home and Church, and the widespread disrespect for it in early *prophetism* that Dr. Jenkins relates, "The presence of 'excitable females' among the Pentecostal leadership was . . . horrifying" to the majority of Evangelicals at the time.²⁷⁹ Part of the reason for this was:

As we have seen, women either founded or played a key role in many of the new [pagan] American religions of the last century or so, and anticult critic Walter Martin saw "the female teaching ministry" as a cult characteristic that had led to "confusion, division and strife." Female leadership violated St. Paul's explicit order that women were to "learn in silence with all subjection."²⁸⁰

Unfortunately, this "horrifying" and unbiblical characteristic of American pagan cults in the early 20th century, has rather perfectly coincided with the same thing in *prophetism*. Harvard Professor Harvey Cox, in his extensive study of this movement, explains why, from his thoroughly scholarly, rather secular, and even sympathetic view point:

It has also become evident to me that women, far more than men, have been the principal bearers of the Pentecostal gospel to the four corners of the earth. As I thought about this, two questions kept coming to mind. *How* do women justify the leadership roles they play in a church which seems to be controlled by men at the top and in which the "official" theology (at least where a literalist interpretation of the Bible obtains) seems to forbid them? Why are women drawn to Pentecostalism in such disproportionate numbers? . . .

I have often thought of Betty Lou's [public, exhortative, "prophetic"] testimony. It went a long way in answering my question about how so many women win the right to preach in a church which, at least technically, forbids it. It clearly demonstrated why Pentecostals, who take the authority of the Bible very seriously but also believe in direct revelation through visions, have opened a wider space for women than most other Christian denominations have. What the Bible says is one thing, but when God speaks to you directly, that supersedes everything else. . . .

For women ["prophets"] in particular, these [visions] . . . give them access to a leadership role that is normally reserved

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 66.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 231.

for men . . . There can be no doubt that, for whatever reason, women have become the principal carriers of the fastest growing religious movement in the world . . . Without them, Pentecostalism would have probably died out long ago. ²⁸¹

Along these lines Anthony Thiselton summarizes the thoughts of Antoinette C. Wire in her book, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction Through Paul's Rhetoric* (2003). We commend her for apparently being honest about the face value meaning of the Apostle's words, but are concerned that her feminism leads her to a disrespectful attitude toward the word of God. Dr. Thiselton writes:

Wire perceives the call to prophesy as a means by which Christian women at Corinth could achieve an otherwise unattainable freedom and leadership role. They could speak "divine mysteries in prophecy, prayer, wisdom, knowledge, revelation and tongues" and claim comprehensive "spiritual" status thereby. Wire draws attention to the opportunity which this afforded to escape the more subordinate and domestic roles imposed within the privacy of the home and family [cf. Tit 2:3-5; 1 Tim 5:14].

Paul, by contrast, is perceived by Wire as imposing a hierarchical level of a "higher" apostolic authority and a return to "order" which inhibited and compromised this new-found freedom, especially by narrowing the scope of prophecy and giving it privilege over tongues (ch. 14). ²⁸²

In other words, while the Apostle Paul thought curbing feminist tendencies in the female Prophets at Corinth was necessary and God-honoring, Ms. Wire apparently thinks it was an illegitimate imposition on the freedom of Prophetesses. ²⁸³ The modern Church

²⁸¹ Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Addison-Wesley, 1995), 125, 131, 133, 137, 138.

²⁸² Ref unavailable.

²⁸³ A sympathetic (4 stars) review of the book on Amazon gives additional insight into Ms. Wire's approach to Scripture:

If you have enough technical background into biblical criticism, this book is a treasure trove because Wire looks behind the text to see what the women in Corinth were up to--regardless of Paul's judgment of their activities. Unfortunately, the general reader will quickly become lost.

Unfortunately, by going "behind the text" to find what she is looking for, Ms. Wire becomes lost herself.

had better decide who is right, the Apostle Paul or Ms. Wire, and teach, act, and lead accordingly.

So it would seem that the same pagan feminism that was threatening the Corinthian congregation, and has been the reason for the popularity of pagan cults for centuries, has infiltrated the churches of *prophetism* as well, and is a major reason for its popularity. In light of the fact that the Apostle prohibited female Prophets from exercising their gift in the public church assembly, it is no wonder that this unbiblical situation has arisen when *prophetism* has essentially cut the Apostle's command out of its Bible. While such a practice may be deemed as politically correct in our own radically feministic culture, one would hope that those practicing, allowing, or listening to such God-offending behavior would consider it more important to be biblically correct and please the Lord instead of men.

What then is *prophetism's* response to our concerns? First of all, one of its foremost scholars, Gordon Fee, actually does cut the Apostle's command from his Bible. In essence, he conjectures that a copyist, with evidently sexist motives, added verses 14:34-45 to the Apostle's letter at a later time. Accordingly, after a lengthy discussion of the matter in his well regarded commentary he writes:

On the whole, therefore, the case against [the authenticity of] these verses is so strong, and finding a viable solution to their meaning so difficult, that it seems best to view them as an interpolation [human addition to the original text]. . . . Thus, in keeping with the textual questions, the exegesis of the text itself leads to the conclusion that it is not authentic. If so, then it is certainly not binding on Christians. If not, the considerable doubts as to its authenticity ought to serve as a caution against using it as an eternal prohibition.²⁸⁴

How convenient for "Christian feminism" and the Pentecostalism Dr. Fee has become a foremost leader of! And how convenient for the multitude of female "prophets" who likewise ignore the very words of God that they claim to uniquely possess.

As for Dr. Fee's arguments for putting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in the trash can of textual criticism, it probably will not surprise most that very, very few NT scholars agree with Dr. Fee that, "the case against [the authenticity of] these verses is so strong." On the

²⁸⁴ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT)* (Eerdmans, 1987), 708

contrary, and with all due respect, his arguments do not even deserve a refutation here.²⁸⁵

The most common evidence offered for allowing female Prophets to exercise their gift in the public church assembly is 1 Corinthians 11 where the Apostle writes:

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head . . . (vs. 3-5)

Many of those in and out of *prophetism* interpret this as the Apostle's definitive statement regarding female prophesying, claiming that he undoubtedly approves precisely what he condemned a few verses later in chapter 14 of the same letter. In other words, they see a contradiction between the Apostle's recognition of women exercising their gift of prophecy in this setting in chapter 11, but prohibiting it in the public assembly described in chapter 14.

If we are to honor God and His word we must accept both statements of the Apostle regarding female Prophets in the same letter as carrying divine authority, and reconcile them in some acceptable manner.²⁸⁶ What is *unacceptable* is favoring 1 Corinthians 11:5 and assuming that the Apostle intended it to be the definitive statement regarding female prophesying in a public church meeting.

This unfortunate bias, apparently toward either feminism or *prophetism*, leads some to outright reject 14:34-5 as Scripture at

²⁸⁵ Fee, *Corinthians*, 699-705. Drs. Carson, Moo, and Morris comment:

In I Corinthians, the view that 14:34-35 is a gloss [human addition to the divine text] was very much a minority position, until Fee defended it in his recent commentary. Fee's stature as a textual critic has served to make this view more acceptable. The fact remains that although some [manuscripts] place verses 34-35 after verse 40, not one [manuscript] omits it; and despite Fee, convincing reasons can be given not only as to why a minority of [manuscripts] transposed this passage to the end of verse 40, but also as to how it should be understood within the context [of I Cor 14]. (*Introduction to the New Testament* [Zondervan, 1992], 283).

²⁸⁶ Dr. Thiselton essentially bypasses the whole issue by asserting his second-rate view of prophecy as merely encouraging speech (826). Dr. Aune does not really reconcile these passages at all (258).

all (cf. Fee, Barrett ²⁸⁷), some to otherwise essentially ignore any modern authority for 14:34-5 (cf. Morris, Thiselton ²⁸⁸), some to simply ignore the wider context of the Apostle's clear prohibition of female authoritative speech in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (cf. Forbes ²⁸⁹), or make the rather ridiculous statement that in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, the Apostle "does nothing to discourage the woman Prophet from speaking in the assembly; rather the reverse" (cf. Green ²⁹⁰).

Let us compare the two statements at issue here. In 1 Corinthians 11:5 the Apostle writes: "**every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.**" Later in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34 we read:

²⁸⁷ Dr. Fee is so confident that there is a contradiction between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34-5 that he completely ignores other popular and historical possibilities altogether, and states this conviction as one of his reasons for denying that Paul could have written 14:34-5 (508-10, 702). Likewise, C. K. Barrett suggests that because of the supposed contradiction, this is "a strong argument in favor of" the view that 14:34-5 "were not a part of the original text" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians (BNTC)* [Hendrickson, 2000], 330), a view which he prefers (333).

Both men are paying a very high price for their unwarranted assumption that Paul must be speaking of a public worship service in 11:5. If they were only to concede the possibility (neither even discuss it) that a more informal setting is in Paul's mind, as we suggest, the statements are completely reconciled. Instead, two of the most respected NT scholars of our generation are more confident that Paul was speaking of a public worship service in 11:5 than they are that 14:34-5 is even Scripture.

²⁸⁸ Leon Morris also assumes that, "This verse plainly indicates that some Corinthian women prayed or prophesied in public worship." (*1 Corinthians* [Eerdmans, 1999], 150). It is not plain at all. While he does not deny that 14:34-5 are Scripture like Dr. Fee and Barrett, he essentially neuters the Apostle's command anyway by concluding, "We must exercise due caution in applying his principle to our own very different situation," (151) suggesting that "immodesty" in the Greek culture was Paul's only concern in 14:34-5. Apparently, therefore, if our culture does not deem it immodest for women to speak in a public assembly, we too can ignore Paul's command.

²⁸⁹ In spite of the fact that Christopher Forbes correctly believes that NT prophecy was, "verbal revelation, conceived of as revealed truth and offered to the community on the authority of God/Christ/the Holy Spirit" (236), he seems to ignore Paul's prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 when he accepts that such a thing was allowed by Paul in the public assembly.

²⁹⁰ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 2004), 209.

As in all the congregations of the saints,³⁴ women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

First of all, any Christian women should be very eager and very careful to accurately understand what the Apostle is prohibiting in the church for them. Otherwise they are in danger of doing something **"disgraceful . . . in the church."** This is not a minor matter. Accordingly, if we are going to accurately understand the Apostle's warning, we must seek to reconcile these statements, for only then can we confidently claim to have the truth.

Secondly, if the Apostle clearly says in 1 Corinthians 14 that, **"in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak"** why would we assume that he contradicts himself in chapter 11 by referring to women prophesying? The best way to reconcile these statements is to distinguish their context. In chapter 14 this is clearly the public gathering of a local congregation. In chapter 11, there is nothing said about the context of female prophesying, so we should not assume that it refers to the congregational public gathering, especially if such an assumption makes the Apostle contradict himself. Rather, there is good reason to believe that the female prophesying Paul spoke of was occurring in more intimate home settings. Notice that in the passages preceding and following 11:5, the Apostle is discussing proper behavior during the Lord's Supper (cf. 10:14-21 and 11:17-34). This is significant when we remember that the early Christians habitually, **"broke bread in their homes"** (Acts 2:46). Accordingly, there is no reason to assume, as many do, that the female prophesying was occurring in the larger, public assembly. Rather, it seems best to conclude that it was occurring in more intimate small groups, and if we interpret it this way, the Apostle does not contradict himself in any way.

Likewise, we should notice the topical context of 11:5. While there is much that is unclear about 11:5, what *is* clear is that the context of the Apostle's statement regarding women prophesying, *is not* prophesying at all. Rather, the context is among the strongest biblical statements on the submission of women to men (cf. v. 3). This fact makes it rather alarming that so many want to use v. 5 as a definitive statement about the freedom of women to prophesy anytime they choose.

Any kind of feminist agenda must be abandoned if we are to truly understand the Apostle in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere. There is no doubt that in 11:5 the Apostle has not abandoned God's desire for the "man" to be the authoritative "**head of the woman**" (1 Cor 11:3), who is to be in "**full submission**" (1 Tim 2:12) to the man, even though many today *would* abandon this divine desire. The Apostle repeats God's will at 14:34 that Christian women in a public assembly "**must be in submission as the Law says.**"

Notice that it is not *cultural* concerns that motivate the Apostle's thoughts in any of these biblical references to female submission, but *creational* concerns. Most are agreed that "**the Law**" which the Apostle refers to in 1 Corinthians 14:34 are passages in Genesis, particularly 3:16, which clearly teach God's desire for woman to be under the authority of man.²⁹¹ Likewise in 1 Timothy 2:11-13 the Apostle says women are to be in "**full submission . . . For [because] Adam was formed first, then Eve.**"

Along the same lines, the Apostle certainly doesn't care about any cultural issues when he says:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. (Eph 5:22-24)

Likewise, the Apostle's statement to the same effect in 1 Corinthians 11:3 has to do with the makeup of the Godhead, and is a theological statement with no cultural concerns at all. All of which, again, makes it absurd and alarming how casually and carelessly so many use v. 5 as a proof text for some kind of feminist liberation in the Church.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Cf. Morris, Thiselton, 1153, Barrett, 330. Fee's unhelpful bias seems to surface again when he claims that Genesis 3:16, "does not say what is here argued." On the contrary, when we read God say, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you," we readily see its connection to Paul's command for women to be in submission.

²⁹² Obviously, the biblical view of men and women is a much broader topic than can be addressed here, and we do not mean to be frivolous about the many legitimate concerns people have regarding it. Let us simply state here that we deplore the selfish and cowardly abuse that occurs in even some Christian homes with the misapplication of these biblical commands. They are meant to be followed in the context of men who are sacrificially loving women and being worthy of the respect women are commanded to give them.

So what is 1 Corinthians 11:5 saying about female prophesying? First, we are not surprised to see the mention of female Prophets in the early Church, as several of them are mentioned throughout the OT and NT as noted above. Women certainly possessed and exercised the gift of prophecy, but, not in violation of biblical limitations, as is to be the case with all spiritual gifts.

Secondly, we believe female prophesying was occurring in more intimate small groups rather than the public assembly of the congregation. Thirdly, John Calvin (1509-1564) and others have offered an additional way to reconcile the Apostle on this issue. He wrote in his commentary:

It may seem, however, to be superfluous for Paul to forbid the woman to prophesy with her head uncovered [11:5], while elsewhere he wholly prohibits women from speaking in the Church [14:34-5; 1 Tim 2:11-12]. It would not, therefore, be allowable for them to prophesy even with a covering upon their head, and hence it follows that it is to no purpose that he argues here as to a covering.

It may be replied, that the Apostle, by here condemning the one [female prophesying with uncovered head in 11:5], does not commend the other [female prophesying in formal church assembly]. For when he reproves them for prophesying with their head uncovered, he at the same time does not give them permission to prophesy in some other way, but rather delays his condemnation of that vice to another passage, namely in 1 Corinthians 14.

In this reply there is nothing amiss, though at the same time it might suit sufficiently well to say, that the Apostle requires women to show their modesty — not merely in a place in which the whole Church is assembled, but also in any more dignified assembly, either of matrons or of men, such as are sometimes convened in private houses.²⁹³

Accordingly, the Apostle simply didn't say everything he wanted or needed to say about female prophesying in chapter 11 and clarified his prohibitions in a much fuller, but harmonious statement in chapter 14. Paul certainly is not allowing a women to prophesy, even in a more private setting, if men in particular were present, therefore violating what he had instructed elsewhere (cf. 1 Tim 2:11-12).

Illustrating the rather widespread traditional acceptance of Calvin's first point, we can quote two of the most respected NT

²⁹³ John Calvin, *Commentaries, in loc.*; online at www.ccel.org.

scholars of past generations. Accordingly, Charles Hodge (1797-1878) wrote:

It was Paul's manner to attend to one thing at a time. He is here [11:5] speaking of the propriety of women speaking in public unveiled, and therefore he says nothing about the propriety of their speaking in public in itself. When that subject comes up, he expresses his judgment in the clearest terms, 14:34.²⁹⁴

Likewise, Albert Barnes (1798-1870) wrote:

[T]he fact that Paul here mentions the custom of women praying or speaking publicly in the church, does not prove that it was right or proper. His immediate object now was not to consider whether the practice was itself right, but to condemn the manner of its performance as a violation of all the proper rules of modesty and of subordination. On another occasion, in this very epistle, he fully condemns the practice in any form, and enjoins silence on the female members of the church in public; 1 Cor. 14:34.

This is a legitimate view, and *prophetists* have offered no better argument against it except the assumption that the Apostle would not approach topics "one thing at a time" as Hodge suggested.²⁹⁵

Finally, Dr. MacArthur would seem to reflect our own stance on female Prophets when he writes:

The New Testament has no restrictions on a woman . . . teaching children and other women (cf. Titus 2:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:16). Women may have the gift of prophecy, as did Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9), but they are normally not to prophesy in the meetings of the church where men are present.

In other words, it is only necessary to combine the relevant passages [11:5; 14:34-5] to get the composite truth. Women may pray and prophesy within the boundaries of God's revelation, and with a proper sense of submission. And it is critical that their deportment in so doing reflects God's order.

²⁹⁴ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *loc.*; online at www.ccel.org. Albert Barnes suggests the same (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*; online at www.ccel.org.)

²⁹⁵ In fact, most do not even mention the possibility that Paul might approach the topic of women prophesying in two steps. We have found no discussion of it in Barrett, Carson, Fee, Forbes, or Thiselton.

Certainly they must not appear rebellious against God's will.
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G) Peter's Prophets: 1 Pet 4:11

The Apostle Peter wrote:

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words [logia "oracles," "sayings,"] of God. (1 Pet 4:10-11)

Remembering that the Apostle wrote this at a time in the early Church that such gifts and ministries as Apostles and Prophets were present, we can understand how Peter could expect this. While many would like to apply this instruction to modern day Teachers, "**speaking the very words of God**" could only mean quoting Scripture for them, and not their teaching as a whole. The Apostle no doubt had the gift of prophecy in mind here and he expected a person with this gift to utter "**the oracles of God** [NASB]."

The word *logia* is only used three other times in the NT, and elsewhere clearly and always refers to the word of God in Scripture (cf. Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12). This meaning is reflected in the Greek OT (LXX) where *logia* is repeatedly used to refer to the words of God spoken by Prophets. Likewise, *logia* was habitually used in ancient Greek to refer to divine revelation directly from God in the form of oracles.²⁹⁷

Accordingly, NT scholar Paul J. Achtemeier comments here:

The phrase [*logia theon*: "words of God"] bears the meaning "oracles of God" in the overwhelming number of instances in the LXX (Greek OT) and that meaning of [*logia*] carries over to its use in the NT (Acts 7:38; Rom 3:2; Heb 5: 12). What is said by those with this charismatic gift must therefore resemble [ōs: "as"] God's own oracles.

On the one hand, [*logia theon*: "words of God"] can be construed as nominative, in which case the phrase would be the equivalent of "Scripture" and would mean the person speaking must speak as Scripture speaks.

On the other hand, it can be construed as accusative, in

²⁹⁶ MacArthur, *Commentary, in loc.*

²⁹⁷ *New Bible Commentary*, 1382.

which case it means that the content of one's speech must bear the character of God's words and thus the divine intention, not the speaker's own.

The latter is the more likely as its parallelism to the next phrase on service indicates: as that phrase implies an imperative "let him serve," so this phrase implies an imperative "let him speak," for which then "oracles of God" would have to serve as object.²⁹⁸

Likewise, Dr. Marshall concludes on 1 Peter 4:11 in his commentary:

What is implied for the way in which the speaker is to behave? The command may be a warning against the inclusion of the speaker's own ideas or merely human opinions as opposed to the divine words. Or it may be a reminder of the sacred character of the utterance [because it is the "**very word of God**"] and, therefore, of the need for a proper sense of reverence and responsibility. Or it may be more of a promise, that if God calls a person to speak, he will provide him with the right words to speak. The parallel with the next clause, which refers to the supply of divine strength for the task of ministry, strongly suggests that the thought of divine provision of what to say may well be basic here.²⁹⁹

There is no doubt then that Peter has in mind Christian Prophets, possessing the gift of prophecy. He expected them to speak "**the very words of God**" without any human additions, such that what was spoken was to be believed and obeyed as if it were Scripture.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Grudem in his commentary on 1 Peter writes:

Whoever speaks includes not just teaching or preaching, but many kinds of gifts involving speech-activity: evangelism, teaching, prophesying, and perhaps singing or sharing words of praise and testimony in the assembled congregation. In all these cases the Christian must do it as one who utters oracles of God. Oracles (logia) means 'sayings', but especially sayings spoken from God to man (used in Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2 of Old Testament Scripture).

Yet this cannot mean 'as claiming that the words he speaks are God's own words', because that would only be true of

²⁹⁸ Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Hermeneia) (Augsburg, 1996), 298-99.

²⁹⁹ I. H. Marshall, *1 Peter* (Intervarsity, 1991), 147

Scripture, not of every word spoken during a church meeting. It means rather 'with the seriousness of purpose which one would use if one were speaking God's words.'³⁰⁰

Again, Dr. Grudem's agenda to down grade Christian "prophesying" to something less than "**speaking the very words of God,**" unfortunately leads him to obscure the word of God here. Contrary to his view, he would have to at least admit that Peter could have been referring to first century Apostles who certainly spoke the very words of God in a church meeting. Therefore, the only reason he shares for believing Peter was merely talking about being serious when one speaks through biblical gifts, is non-existent.³⁰¹

H) The Prophet John: *Revelation*

Anyone denying that biblical Apostles and Prophets were equally authoritative and possessed new, Scripture-quality revelation, has the burden of proving that John did not write the Revelation under the influence of the gift of prophecy. Here is a mammoth store of evidence of how the real gift of prophecy works, and *prophetism* would have us ignore or deny it.

In fact, as Dr. Aune notes, the claim that John the author of Revelation did not possess the biblical gift of prophecy "forms the major thesis" of Dr. Grudem's book, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1*

³⁰⁰ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter (TNTC)* (Eerdmans, 1999), 175-6.

³⁰¹ Dr. Grudem's claim that the Greek text of 1 Peter 4:11 could merely be referring to the character of the speaker's words, finds little support from other scholars. As noted above, Dr. Achtemeier notes that while [*ōs*: "as"] can mean "resemble," the two likely options is that Peter is referring to Scripture or an oracle of God as OT Prophets spoke. "As" certainly doesn't carry the meaning that speaking the "**very words of God**" could actually not be the word of God so much so that it would misrepresent God as Dr. Grudem claims Christian prophecy may do. Therefore, any intention to water down the divine authority with which Peter expected someone to speak with who possessed supernatural speaking gifts is unwarranted.

While John Calvin, supported the sense of divine authority in 1 Peter 4:11, he confined it to the gift of teaching. Nonetheless, he wrote that Peter was expecting the speaker to "faithfully deliver to others, as from hand to hand, the doctrine received from God; for he forbids any one to go forth, except he who is instructed in God's word, and who proclaims infallible oracles as it were from his mouth." Comm.

Corinthians.³⁰² The obvious intent, of course, is to avoid NT evidence that NT Prophets produced Scripture-quality revelation and predicted the future. Dr. Aune responds with what should be obvious to all: "The contrast between John and early Christian Prophets . . . cannot be substantiated."³⁰³ Accordingly, when we compare the prophetic writings of ones like Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, it is impossible to deny that John was used as a Prophet in the way that those men were. And we have argued above that the gift of prophecy is synonymous with the ministry of Christian Prophets, who had the same attributes as their OT counterparts.

One major but weak argument presented by *prophetists* to support the idea that Revelation is not a product of the biblical gift of prophecy is the claim that this document is not prophecy, but in the genre of epistle and apocalypse. Even if this were true, it would be no proof that it was not produced through the gift of prophecy, as the early church believed that Christian Prophets had produced epistles such as Jude, 2 Peter, and Hebrews. The difference between apocalyptic literature and prophetic literature is practically non-existent.

Nevertheless, both John and Jesus clearly claim the Revelation is Christian prophecy. John introduces the epistle by stating, "**Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy**" (Rev 1:3; cf. 22:6, 10, 18-19). Jesus Himself is quoted as saying, "**Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book**" (Rev 22:7). The book of Revelation is NT prophecy written by someone possessing the gift of prophecy, namely the Apostle John.

Accordingly, modern scholarship concedes it is Christian prophecy. Drs. Morris, Moo, and Carson write: "John certainly suggests that he stands in a prophetic role, and there is a tendency in current scholarship to view Revelation as a prophecy."³⁰⁴ Likewise, Donald Guthrie writes in his well-regarded *New Testament Introduction*, "[T]he author is presenting what he claims to be a direct revelation from God in the prophetic manner."³⁰⁵ More

³⁰² Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000). For a "defense of the representative status of John as an early Christian Prophet" as opposed to the suggestion by some that he was "a completely unique type of early Christian Prophet" see Aune, 206-08.

³⁰³ Aune, 206-8.

³⁰⁴ Morris, Moo, Carson, 479.

³⁰⁵ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Intervarsity, 1990), 968

recently, Gregory Beale in his massive commentary has written: "Revelation is best seen as fitting into the genre of OT prophetic-apocalyptic works, especially that of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah."³⁰⁶ Clearly then, the Revelation is NT prophecy produced through someone possessing the gift of prophecy. Another commentator writes: "Plainly, it is a New Testament prophecy. Its prophetic status . . . assures its infallibility as written and brings down upon its violators the divine curse (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)."

This introduces the second thing we can learn from Revelation regarding the nature of the gift of prophecy: It was sin against Almighty God to disbelieve or disobey what was spoken through it. Modern *prophetism* claims that the gift of prophecy being illustrated in Revelation is intentionally different in God's mind from the second-rate version He has supposedly restored to them today. That is an unbiblical, unsubstantiated, and dangerous presumption. *Prophetism* cannot have it both ways, claiming to possess God-gifted Prophets, but claiming they do not speak with the authority of the prophecy of Revelation.

On the contrary, if they really are God-sent Prophets, then the following warnings equally apply to modern prophecy:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
(Rev 22:18)

Thank God that *prophetism* really has no God-sent Prophets, or we would all be in grave sin. *Prophetists* would be sinning because they believe their "prophets'" words are merely human suggestions of divine revelation. We would be sinning because we believe their "prophets" to be self-deceived and deceiving frauds. But if what we have written above is true, it is the modern "prophets" who are sinning because they are "**lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds**" (Jer 23:26). And the Teachers who obscure Scripture to protect and promote all of these false "prophets" sin as well. God, forgive them, because perhaps they do not know what they do.

³⁰⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Eerdmans, 2000), 37.

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) We claim that none of the examples of NT Prophets in Scripture reflect any is hint of the second-rate prophecy of modern *prophetism*. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 2) Why do *prophetists* consistently warn Christians *never* to heed their “prophets” in a biblical manner? What does this say about their “prophets”?
- 3) Why do *prophetists* disparage Agabus’ ministry? In what ways do they do so? What is our defense of Agabus?
- 4) In what ways does the instruction regarding the gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14 substantiate the claim that it was considered Scripture-quality revelation?
- 5) We claim that the Apostle Paul prohibited women prophesying in the public assembly. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 6) What are we to understand about prophecy because of Paul’s prohibition of women doing it in a public assembly?
- 7) What does Paul’s prohibition of women prophesying in public mean for those who consistently practice this very thing?
- 8) What is NT scholar Gordon Fee’s response to Paul’s prohibition of women prophesying in public in 1 Cor 14:33-35?
- 9) How do we reconcile Paul’s mention of women prophesying in 1 Cor 11:5 with his prohibition of women prophesying in public in 1 Cor 14:33-35? Do you agree or disagree with this interpretation and why?
- 10) What should we learn about the gift of prophecy from how it is demonstrated by John in the Revelation?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.8

The Record of Biblical Prophets

Proof Positive that We Must Heed Them

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Malachi 3:1
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- C.2) Jerusalem's Destruction: *Luke 19:43-44*
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- D.1) The Rise & Fall of Ancient World Powers: *Daniel 2, 7-8*
 - D.1.a) Babylonia
 - D.1.b) Persia
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- D.2) King Cyrus of Persia: *Isaiah 44:28*
- D.3) Destruction of Ancient Cities

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- The miraculous fulfillment of the recorded prophecies in Scripture is the most remarkable events in all of human history and proof positive that the Bible is divine revelation.
- "There is only one chance in 10 billion times a billion that these eleven [messianic] prophecies could have been accurately predicted by chance."

A) The Miracle of Biblical Prophecy

The miraculous fulfillment of the recorded prophecies in Scripture is the most remarkable events in all of human history and proof positive that the Bible is divine revelation. We don't even see such predictions being attempted by the "prophets" of other religions, nor recorded in their sacred texts. This is because only the one true God can predict and control the future. Through the Prophet Isaiah, He says:

Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." (Isa 46:8-10)

All of this because only He is God.

Dr. Grant R. Jeffrey, a recognized expert regarding biblical prophecy, writes concerning both the importance and miraculous nature of the historical fulfillment of the predictions recorded in Scripture:

One of the strongest evidences of the divine inspiration of Scripture is the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy. The Bible is unique among the religious books of mankind that it dares to predict future events in great detail. Other religious writings, such as the [Muslim] Koran or the [Buddhist] Veda, do not contain detailed, specific prophecies.

The reason for this is that it is impossible to consistently prophesy specific future events with real accuracy unless you are God. It is only when we come to examine the Bible that we find hundreds of detailed prophecies concerning various nations, events and individuals covering thousands of years. .

. .

God hurled forth His challenge to false prophets and false religions that has remained unanswered for over twenty-five hundred years:

"'Present your case', says the Lord. 'Set forth your arguments,' says Jacob's King. 'Bring in your idols, to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former days were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods" (Isa 41:22-23)

The Lord' declares that accurate prophecy belongs to God alone and that He alone can prophesy accurately the future, of mankind. The precision of fulfilled prophecy thus becomes not only an irrefutable proof of God's foreknowledge and sovereignty, but it also proves conclusively that the Bible is the revelation of God's truth regarding man's sinfulness and need for salvation. We are confronted with the claims of Christ regarding our sinful rebellion and His pardon which He purchased for us by His death and resurrection.³⁰⁷

Dr. Grant goes on to "illustrate the precision of biblical prophecy" by examining "three specific predictions made by three different prophets and their detailed fulfillment in the life of Jesus Christ hundreds of years later."³⁰⁸ These events are, first, that Christ would come from one of twelve tribes, Judah (cf. Gen 49:10; Luke 3:23-24). Dr. Grant puts the probability of this occurring by chance alone at 1 in 12. The second prophecy considered is that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (cf. Mic 5:2; Matt 2:1) which is given one chance in 200. Finally, the prediction that Jesus would be betrayed by thirty pieces of silver (cf. Zech 11:12; Matt 26:15) is given a chance of random probability of 1 in 50.

Dr. Grant explains that in "statistical theory . . . the probability of [two] events being fulfilled in sequence" is found by multiplying their probabilities. Thus, the estimated probability of all three of the above events randomly coming true in Christ's life hundreds of years after they were predicted is $12 \times 200 \times 50$ which equals 1 chance in 120,000.³⁰⁹ This illustrates the almost impossibility of just three messianic prophecies coming true. As noted above, some scholars have documented almost 200 of them.

Accordingly, Dr. Jeffrey calculates the random probability of just an additional eight of these predictions concerning Christ coming true (e.g. entering Jerusalem on a colt, crucifixion, have his betrayal money thrown in the temple and given for a potter's field). The chances of these eleven events occurring randomly is estimated to be 1 chance in 10.¹⁹ Dr. Grant writes:

In other words, there is only one chance in 10 billion times a billion that the prophets could have accurately predicted these

³⁰⁷ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (Bantam, 1990), 13, 16.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

eleven specific prophecies by chance alone, or that any one man's life could fulfill these detailed prophecies by chance alone; in fact, it is obviously impossible!³¹⁰

Unless the God of the Universe is the mind behind the predictions and the power behind their fulfillments.

B) Ten OT Prophecies that Christ Fulfilled

Much of what Christ did and experienced while living on Earth was in fulfillment of prophecies made 500 to 2000 years before He came. J. Barton Payne, in his exhaustive study, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, lists 191 separate prophecies that were literally fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.³¹¹ Most of them, He obviously could not have manipulated in any way, including the place of his birth, the details of His betrayal, and the means of His crucifixion.³¹²

³¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

³¹¹ J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Baker, 1980), 665-70.

³¹² The influential Baptist preacher, W. A. Criswell (1909-2002) wrote:

Since these prophecies were written hundreds of years before Christ was born, the prophets could not have been reading the trends of the times or making intelligent guesses. Many predictions were beyond human ability to fake a fulfillment. If he were a mere human being, Christ would have had no control over when (Dan. 9:24-27), where (Micah 5:2), or how he would be born (Isa. 7:14), how he would die (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53), do miracles (Isa. 35:5-6), or rise from the dead (Psalms 2, 16).

An unbeliever will voice three objections to that avowal that the prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus:

(1) The disciples, reading those prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures, made the life of Jesus conform to those prophecies. Yet most of those prophecies were fulfilled by His enemies who hated Him and crucified Him, not by His disciples and friends!

(2) All of these things that Christ fulfilled were written into the documents by His friends. When Jesus lived, that Bible was as finished and complete in those Old Testament Scriptures as they are today. After the days of Ezra, hundreds of years before Christ, the Bible was a sealed and finished Book and any intrusion or spurious document changing would have been seen immediately by thousands of scholarly rabbis. They could not change the documents. (*Why I Preach That the Bible is True* [Broadman, 1969], 91)

Jesus was very aware of the importance of His fulfilling prophecy and the Gospel writers reflect this constantly. As Matthew records events in Christ's life, about a dozen times he adds that it is occurring in order to fulfill prophecy. John does the same over a half dozen times. And Luke *begins* his Gospel by describing it as: **"an account of the things that have been fulfilled [peplērophorēmenōn] among us"** (Luke 1:1).³¹³

As noted, Jesus Himself commented on this frequently. Shortly before His death, the Lord said: **"We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the Prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled"** (Luke 18:31). Accordingly, at His arrest He said:

Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of Angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matt 26:53-54)

After His resurrection, He told some disciples who apparently did not understand the meaning of His death:

How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. . . . He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:25-27, 44)

And indeed it was.

³¹³ Darrell Bock comments:

The meaning of fulfilled is disputed. Does it mean *completed*, *assured*, or *fulfilled* events? The third meaning, "fulfilled," is best since Luke's emphasis in his volume is the fulfillment of God's plan (1:20, 57; 2:6, 21-22; 4:21; 9:31; 21:22, 24; 24:44-47). (Luke [Baker, 1994], 57). Dr. Bock notes that most commentators take this view including Fitzmyer and Marshall.

B.1) Christ's Virgin Birth: Isaiah 7:14

One of the most remarkable prophecies in Scripture predicts one of the most remarkable events of human history: the birth of Christ. Approximately 735 years before Christ was born,³¹⁴ God promised King Ahaz a miraculous sign to confirm His promise that an invading army would not harm his people (cf. Isa 7:5-7). Through Isaiah the Prophet, God said:

The Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. (7:14-16)

Of course, in order for the promise to be meaningful for King Ahaz, it was literally fulfilled in his day. However, there are many OT prophecies with a near/far and partial/full fulfillment nature to them and this is one of them.

Accordingly, the Apostle Matthew leaves no question that this was a prediction of the Christ child well over 700 years later, when he writes:

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

³¹⁴ Concerning the estimated date of 735 B.C. for this prophecy, John Oswalt writes concerning the impending attack for which the prophecy was originally given: "The exact date of the attack is uncertain, but it must have taken place between Ahaz's accession in 736 [B.C.] and the beginning of the siege of Damascus [by Tiglath-pileser III] in 734." (*The Book of Isaiah (NICOT)* 2 vols. [Eerdmans, 1991, 1998], 198).

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." (Matt 1:18-23)

That a virgin in Isaiah's day also had a child in order to authenticate the immediate prediction of deliverance does not negate a future and more significant fulfillment of the prophecy. The Prophet Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of Christ about 730 years before it occurred.

B.2) Christ's Place of Birth: *Micah 5:2*

At about the same time as Isaiah predicted Christ's virgin birth, the Prophet Micah predicted where that birth would occur. ³¹⁵ The Prophet said:

"You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Mic 5:2)

Accordingly, the Apostle Matthew writes:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: " 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.'" (Matt 2:1-6) ³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Bruce Waltke puts the ministry of Micah "from the time of Jotham (742-735 B.C.) to Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.) (see Micah 1:1). (*The Minor Prophets*, Thomas McComisky ed., [Baker, 1992, 1993, 1998], II:591.)

³¹⁶ For a discussion of why Matthew's wording of the prophecy is different than the original of Micah, see D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *The Expositor's*

The Prophet Micah predicted over 700 years in advance that Christ would be born in a nondescript village of Israel. Considering the fact that Jesus' earthly parents lived in Nazareth, we see the extent of God's power to make the predictions of His Prophets come true. As Luke records, God inspired a Roman Emperor to have a census:

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. (Luke 2:1-6)

³¹⁷

B.3) Christ's Ancestry through Abraham: *Genesis 12:1-3*

About the year 2200 B. C., ³¹⁸ God gave Abraham the following promise:

**I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses**

Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin ed. CD-ROM [Zondervan, n.d.], Matt 2:6.

³¹⁷ Dr. Bock explains:

Luke portrays Augustus as the unknowing agent of God, whose decree leads to the fulfillment of the promised rise of a special ruler from Bethlehem (Mic. 5:1-2). . . . [T]he mention of the census explains how a couple from Nazareth gave birth to a child in Bethlehem. The accidental events of history have become acts of destiny. Little actions have great significance, for the ruler was to come out of Bethlehem and only a governmental decree puts the parents in the right place. (203)

³¹⁸ See discussion by John Oswalt under "Chronology of the OT," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), I:676-8. Dr. Oswalt puts the birth of Abraham at c. 2167 B.C.

you I will curse; and all peoples on Earth will be blessed through you. ³¹⁹ (Gen. 12:2-3; cf. 22:18).

More specifically, God promised Abraham, **"through your offspring all nations on Earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed Me"** (Gen 22:18).

Such an amazing promise, of one man's offspring being a blessing to every race of people on Earth, could only be fulfilled in the fact that Christ was an earthly descendent of Abraham. Accordingly, the Gospel of the Apostle Matthew begins: **"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham"** (Matt 1:1).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul points to the promises of Abraham as being fulfilled in Christ when he writes:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. ¹⁷ What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Gal 3:16-18) ³²⁰

³¹⁹ Against the translation: "all nations will bless themselves" see Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17* (Eerdmans, 1990), 373-5; and C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.com, 2000), *in loc.*

³²⁰ Dr. Carson writes:

Jesus is also "son of Abraham." . . . Abraham is mentioned for several important reasons. "Son of Abraham" may have been a recognized messianic title in some branches of Judaism (cf. T Levi 8:15). The covenant with the Jewish people had first been made with Abraham (Gen 12:1-3; 17:7; 22:18), a connection Paul sees as basic to Christianity (Gal 3:16). More important, Genesis 22:18 had promised that through Abraham's offspring "all nations" (*panta ta ethne*, LXX) would be blessed; so with this allusion to Abraham, Matthew is preparing his readers for the final words of this offspring from Abraham--the commission to make disciples of "all nations" (28:19, *panta ta ethne*). Jesus the Messiah came in fulfillment of the . . . Gentile-blessings promises to Abraham (cf. also Matt 3:9; 8:11). (*in loc.*)

B.4) Christ's Ancestry through King David: 2 Samuel 7:14

About the year 1000 B. C., ³²¹ God said to King David through the Prophet Nathan (cf. 2 Sam 7:4):

The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for My Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . . Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me; your throne will be established forever. (2 Sam 7:11-16)

Obviously, as with many OT prophecies, this prediction had a short term fulfillment in Solomon. But because the promise involved a "**kingdom [that] will endure forever,**" we recognize a clear reference to the future reign of Christ. Accordingly, Jesus is recorded as a direct descendant of David (cf. Matt 1:1), is repeatedly given the title of "son of David" (cf. Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15), and Jesus refers to Himself in the same way (cf. Matt 22:42, 45)

B.5) Christ Heralded by John the Baptist: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1

Around 735 B. C. ³²² the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed:

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. . . . And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (Isa 40:3, 5)

Likewise, around 430 B.C., ³²³ the Prophet Malachi quotes God as saying:

See, I will send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant,

³²¹ Cf. Oswalt, 681.

³²² Cf. Oswalt, 198.

³²³ See G. V. Smith, "Malachi," ISBE, III:227.

whom you desire, will come, says the LORD Almighty.
(Mal 3:1)

Accordingly the Apostles believed John the Baptist to be a fulfillment of these prophecies. Matthew records:

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the Prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him'" (Matt 3:1-3).

B.6) Christ Betrayed for Thirty Pieces of Silver:

Zechariah 11:12-13

About 520 B.C.,³²⁴ the Prophet Zechariah related concerning his enemies:

I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they priced Me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter. (Zech 11:12-13)

God speaks here of being "priced" at "**thirty pieces of silver**" which were eventually thrown "**into the house of the Lord.**"

Over 500 years later, the Apostle Matthew records:

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him [God the Son] over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. . .

When Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. (Matt 26:14-16; 27:3)

³²⁴ For the dating of Zechariah see F. C. Fensham, "Zechariah, Book of" in ISBE, IV:1183-4.

Accordingly, Matthew adds later:

Then what was spoken by . . . the Prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." (Matt 27:9-10)

Despite some difficulties in Matthew's wording, this is an amazingly specific prophecy that Christ would be "purchased" for thirty pieces of silver.

B.7) Christ the Suffering Servant: *Isaiah 50, 52-53*

Again, around 730 B.C. the Prophet Isaiah made a remarkably detailed prediction concerning the crucifixion of Christ. Quoting the future "suffering Servant," Isaiah writes: **"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting"** (Isa 50:6). Accordingly, we read in Matthew:

Then he [Pilate] had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified. Then the governor's soldiers . . . mocked Him. . . . They spit on Him, and took the staff and struck Him on the head again and again. (Matt 27:26-27, 30)

Then in chapters 52-53 the Prophet describes the future Servant of God as suffering greatly to pay for the sins of many, but also being highly exalted. OT scholars C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch comment on this passage:

It looks as if it had been written beneath the cross upon Golgotha . . . It is the unraveling of Ps 22 and Ps 110. . . . and is the most central, the deepest, and the loftiest thing that the Old Testament prophecy has ever achieved.³²⁵

Following is the description of what we believe Isaiah saw in a vision of the ministry and suffering of Christ:

³²⁵ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *in loc.*

See, My servant will act wisely; he will be raised [resurrected cf. Matt 28:6) **and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness** [from the beatings; cf. Matt 27:30 “**they beat Him on the head again and again**”]— **so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him** [cf. Rev 6:15-16]

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities [i.e. healed people; cf. Matt 8:16-17] **and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions,** [i.e. crucifixion; cf. Matt 27:35; John 18:31-32] **he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed** [cf. Matt 20:28]. **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.**

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth [i.e. was silent before Pilate; cf. Matt 27:13-14]. **By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death** [i.e. buried in Joseph Arimathea’s tomb; cf. Matt 27:57-60], **though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth** [i.e. Pilate found no charge against Him; cf. John 18:38; 19:6- “.

Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors [i.e. crucified with robbers; cf. Matt 27:38]. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa 52:13-15; 53:2-12)

Jesus Himself said this prophecy was about Him. At His "Last Supper" with His disciples, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus said:

"It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' [Isa 53:12] and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in Me. Yes, what is written about Me [including Isa 53] is reaching its fulfillment." (Luke 22:37)

Earlier, He had given them a description of His passion that exactly matches the predictions in Isa 50:6 and 52:13-53:12:

We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the Prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. On the third day He will rise again." (Luke 18:31-33)

Later, in the early Church, the Evangelist Philip would relate the prophecy of Isaiah 52-53 to Christ as well. Luke records that a Jewish Ethiopian was reading Isaiah 53:7-8 and asked "**who is the Prophet talking about, himself or someone else?**" (Acts 8:34). And we read: "**Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus**" (v. 35).

The accuracy of this prophecy concerning the ministry and suffering of Christ some 700 years later is astonishing. Norman Geisler sees twelve specific fulfilled predictions of Christ's passion all recorded in the Gospels.³²⁶ He adds:

³²⁶ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (BECA) (Baker, 1999), 611.

Further confirmation of the predictive nature of Isaiah 53 is that it was common for Jewish interpreters before the time of Christ to teach that Isaiah here spoke of the Jewish Messiah. Only after early Christians began using the text apologetically with great force did it become in rabbinical teaching an expression of the suffering Jewish nation.³²⁷

B.8) The Torture of Christ's Crucifixion: *Psalm 22*

About 1000 years prior to Christ's crucifixion,³²⁸ King David prophetically described it in Psalm 22. We read:

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? [quoted by Christ; cf. Matt 27:45]. . . **But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."** [cf. Luke 23:35]

Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast upon you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. [possibly referring to being conceived by the Holy Spirit; cf. Matt 1:18]

Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Oswalt puts the beginning of David's reign in Judah at c. 1010 B.C. (*ISBE*, I:681).

Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet
³²⁹ [i.e. crucifixion; cf. Matt 27:35; John 18:31-32]. **I can**

³²⁹ Some have questioned the traditional translation of Ps 22:16. Nonetheless, after some consideration, Drs. Keil and Delitzsch write concerning verse 16c:

[A]ppplied to David, perhaps under the influence of the figure of the attacking dogs (Böhl), [it] says that the wicked bored into his hands and feet, and thus have made him fast, so that he is inevitably abandoned to their inhuman desires. The fulfillment in the nailing of the hands and (at least, the binding fast) of the feet of the Crucified One to the cross is clear. This is not the only passage in which it is predicated that the future Christ shall be murderously pierced; but it is the same in Isa 53:5 where He is said to be pierced (לְחָלַל) on account of our sins, and in Zech 12:10, where Jahve describes Himself as ["pierced"]. *In loc.*

Barnes' detailed commentary is provided here:

This passage is attended with more difficulty than perhaps any other part of the psalm. It is remarkable that it is nowhere quoted or referred to in the New Testament as applicable to the Saviour; and it is no less remarkable that there is no express statement in the actual history of the crucifixion that either the hands or the feet of the Saviour were pierced, or that he was nailed to the cross at all.

This was not necessarily implied in the idea of crucifixion, for the hands and the feet were sometimes merely bound to the cross by cords, and the sufferer was allowed to linger on the cross thus suspended until he died from mere exhaustion. There can be no doubt, however, that the common mode of crucifixion was to nail the hands to the transverse beam of the cross, and the feet to the upright part of it. . . . Thus, Tertullian, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, and applying this passage to his death, says that "this was the special or proper—*propria*"—severity of the cross." Adv. Marcionem, iii. 19,

The great difficulty in this passage is in the word rendered in our version, "they pierced"—כָּאָרַי *ka'ariy*. It occurs only in one other place, Isa. 38:13, where it means as a lion. This would undoubtedly be the most natural interpretation of the word here, unless there were good reasons for setting it aside; and not a few have endeavored to show that this is the true rendering.

According to this interpretation, the passage would mean, "As lions, they (that is, my enemies) surround (gape upon) my hands and my feet; that is, they threaten to tear my limbs to pieces." Gesenius, Lexicon. This interpretation is also that of Aben Ezra, Ewald, Paulus, and others.

But, whatever may be the true explanation, there are very serious objections to this one.

(a) It is difficult to make sense of the passage if this is adopted. The preceding word, rendered in our version "enclosed," can mean

only “surrounded” or “encompassed,” and it is difficult to see how it could be said that a lion could “surround” or “encompass” “the hands and the feet.” At all events, such an interpretation would be harsh and unusual.

(b) According to this interpretation the word “me”—“enclosed me”—would be superfluous; since the idea would be, “they enclose or surround my hands and my feet.”

(c) All the ancient interpreters have taken the word here to be a verb, and in all the ancient versions it is rendered as if it were a verb.

Even in the Masorah Parva it is said that the word here is to be taken in a different sense from what it has in Isa. 38:13, where it plainly means a lion. Gesenius admits that all the ancient interpreters have taken this as a verb, and says that it is “certainly possible” that it may be so. He says that it may be regarded as a participle formed in the Aramaic manner (from כור *kuṛ*), and in the plural number for כָּאֲרִיִּים *ka’āriyyim*, and says that in this way it would be properly rendered, “piercing, my hands and my feet;” that is, as he says, “my enemies, who are understood in the dogs.”

From such high authority, and from the uniform mode of interpreting the word among the ancients, it may be regarded as morally certain that the word is a verb, and that it is not to be rendered, as in Isa. 38:13, “as a lion.”

The material question is, What does the verb mean? The verb—כור *kuṛ*—properly means “to dig, to bore through, to pierce.” . . . [Dewette] . . . remarks, however, in a note, that according to the ancient versions, and the codices of Kennicott and DeRossi, it means *durchbohren*—bore through. Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome in five codices, says he, render it bind. The Septuagint renders it ὤρουξαν *ōrouxan*—“they pierced.” The Latin Vulgate the same, “*foderunt*.” See the Syriac. For these reasons it seems to me that the common rendering is the true one, and that the meaning is, that, in some proper sense, the enemies here referred to “pierced or bored through” the hands and the feet of the sufferer.

Evidently this could not be literally applied to David, for there is not the least authority for supposing that this ever happened to him; nor, as has been shown, was such a thing probable. . . . I conclude, therefore, that this must have had original reference to the Messiah. It is no objection to the interpretation that this passage is not expressly referred to as having been fulfilled in the Redeemer, for there are undoubtedly many passages in the prophets which refer to the Messiah, which are not formally applied to him in the New Testament. To make it certain that the prophecy referred to him, and was fulfilled in him, it is not necessary that we should find on record an actual application of the passage to him. All that is necessary in the case is, that it should be a prophecy; that it should have been spoken before the event; and that to him it should be fairly applicable. (*Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.Com, 1999).

count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing [cf. John 19:23-24]. (Ps 22:1, 6-10, 12-18)

Only the hardest sinner will refuse to see how remarkable these words of David are in light of Christ's passion. It includes at least four clear predictions fulfilled in Christ's crucifixion.

First, it is not coincidence that Jesus Himself cried out on the cross, exactly quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me.**" These are the only words of Christ quoted by Matthew and Mark, demonstrating their significance. That significance, especially in Matthew, is found in the fact that this was another fulfillment of OT prophecy, and an indication by Christ Himself that the rest of Psalm 22 was relevant to His crucifixion as well.

Secondly, the mocking of people as Jesus hung on the cross is almost quoted exactly a thousand years later. David predicts concerning these mockers:

All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." (v. 8)

Matthew records:

Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked Him. ⁴² "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ **He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'** " ⁴⁴ In the same way the robbers who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him. (Matt 27:41-44; cf. Luke 23:35-37)

Thirdly, the prediction that Christ's "**hands and feet**" would be "**pierced** (v. 16) is one of the most extraordinary prophecies in all of Scripture. This was also predicted by Zechariah (c. 520 B.C.) when he prophesied of the Jewish remnant at Christ's Second Coming, "**They will look on Me, the One they have pierced**"

(Zech 12:10; cf. John 19:37). This is especially remarkable in light of the fact that crucifixion was probably not in use until several hundred years after the time of David.³³⁰

Fourth, David prophetically uttered: **"They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing"** (v. 18).

A thousand years later the Apostle John records:

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. (John 19:23-24; cf. Matt 27:35).

Amazing. And sobering when we stop to think of what Christ endured for our sins.

B.9) The Timing of Christ's Crucifixion: Daniel 9:24-26

³³⁰ It is probably a misnomer that the Romans invented crucifixion. D. G. Burke in the *ISBE* notes that:

From the numerous references to crucifixion in Herodotus, handbooks tend to credit the Persians with the first use of crucifixion (e.g. *TDNT*, VII, 573). . . . Crucifixion was later adopted by the Greeks . . . [and] was used frequently by Alexander the Great (e.g. after the siege of Tyre was broken, "two thousand . . . hung fixed on crosses over a huge stretch of shore" [Curtis Rufus *Historia Alexandri*, vi.4.17]). ("Cross," I:828).

If the Persians were the first people to use crucifixion, then it appeared approximately 300 years after the time of David, as R. E. Hayden writes of them, "Their dynasty was founded by Achaemenes or Hakhamanish ca. 700 B.C." ("Persia," *ISBE*, III:778)

Well over 500 years prior to the crucifixion of Christ,³³¹ the Prophet Daniel related:

While I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me . . .

"Seventy 'sevens' [of years] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens' [69x7 years = 483]. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.²⁶ After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. (Dan 9:21-22, 24-26)

This is undoubtedly, one of the most important and far-reaching prophecies in Scripture. Not surprisingly, there have been many interpretations of it.³³² Here we take a rather literal approach to the text, and agree with the most traditional interpretation, and that which most commentators adopt today. As Drs. Keil and Delitzsch describe it, "Most of the church fathers and the older orthodox interpreters find prophesied here the appearance of Christ in the flesh, His death, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans."³³³

³³¹ On the date of Daniel, John F. Walvoord writes:

The Book of Daniel according to its own testimony, is the record of the life and prophetic revelations given to Daniel, a captive Jew carried off to Babylon after the first conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. The record of events extends to the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C., and, accordingly, covers a span of about seventy years. Daniel himself may well have lived on to about 530 B.C., and the book of Daniel was probably completed in the last decade of his life. (*Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* [Moody, 1971], 11

³³² On Daniel 9 Dr. Barnes writes: "Here commences the celebrated prophecy of the SEVENTY WEEKS—a portion of Scripture which has excited as much attention, and led to as great a variety of interpretation, as perhaps any other

³³³ Keil and Delitzsch, *in loc*

More than that, Bible scholars throughout Church history have understood this as a very precise prediction of the crucifixion of Christ. Perhaps the first to publish a detailed explanation of this prophecy was Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918), who was not only the Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard, but a noted Bible scholar, particularly in the area of prophecy.³³⁴ More recently, the renowned Christian apologist Norman Geisler has provided the calculations for the accurate fulfillment of this prophecy in his *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*.³³⁵

While many outside and inside the Church have debated this, it is obvious that the Angel Gabriel intended this very thing. He says that after a specified period of time, **"the Anointed One will be cut off"** (v. 26). The **"Anointed One"** is no doubt the Messiah,³³⁶ and several translations render it this way (cf. NASB, KJV). And to **"be cut off"** (*karath*), "denotes generally a violent kind of death . . .

³³⁴ See Sir Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, 14th ed. (Kregel, 1954), 128ff. Walvoord comments on Anderson's exegesis:

While the details of Anderson's arguments may be debated, the plausibility of a literal interpretation, which begins the period in 445 B.C. and culminates just before the death of Christ, makes this view very attractive.

The principal difficulty is Anderson's conclusion that the death of Christ occurred A.D. 32. Generally speaking, while there has been uncertainty as to the precise year of the death of Christ based upon present evidence, most New Testament chronologers move it one or two years earlier, and plausible attempts have been made to adjust Anderson's chronology to A.D. 30. There has been a tendency, however, in recent New Testament chronology to consider the possibility of a later date for the death of Christ, and no one today is able dogmatically to declare that Sir Robert Anderson's computations are impossible.

Accordingly, the best explanation of the time when the sixty-nine sevens ended is that it occurred shortly before the death of Christ anticipated in Daniel 9:26 as following the sixty-ninth seven. Practically all expositors agree that the death of Christ occurred after the sixty-ninth seven (228)

³³⁵ Geisler, 612. For similar calculations see Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecies of the Seventy Weeks* (Zondervan, 1940), 20

³³⁶ As E. J. Young commented on Dan 9:26, even though he did not interpret Daniel literally: "The old evangelical interpretation is that which alone satisfies the requirements of the case. The 'anointed one' is Jesus Christ, who was cut off by death upon the Cross of Calvary." (*Daniel* [The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988], 207)

. and is therefore the usual expression for the destruction of the ungodly—e.g., Ps 37:9; Prov 2:22.”³³⁷

Accordingly, this is intended to be a very precise prediction of the timing of Christ’s crucifixion, and if a reasonable demonstration of its historical fulfillment cannot be worked out, then the divine authority of the Book of Daniel would have to be questioned. Which is precisely why liberal scholars have proposed several irrational theories to deny the miraculous nature of Daniel’s prophecies. Not surprisingly, however, an astounding demonstration can be made that reveals the Angel Gabriel told Daniel at least the exact year that the Messiah would be crucified, well over 500 years before it occurred. Some have argued that the prediction was fulfilled to the exact day.³³⁸

Several scholars have demonstrated the fulfillment of this prophecy. For our purposes we will use Dr. Geisler’s demonstration. It has several parts and must be followed closely.

First, the text claims that the timeline to Christ’s crucifixion begins “**From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**” (v. 25). This would seem to clearly be referring to the decree of Artaxerxes given in Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city (cf. Neh 2:1-8), which occurred about 100 years after Daniel received this prophecy in 445 B.C.³³⁹

³³⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *in loc*

³³⁸ See Jeffrey, 26-31. The problem with Jeffrey’s precise calculations is that he must substantiate an exact date of Christ’s crucifixion on April 6, A.D. 32. While this is probable, argued extensively by Jeffrey (cf. Appendix B), and supported by other scholars, there is simply too much debate about this date, as noted by Dr. Walvoord above, to be dogmatic about this.

Again, all that is needed for the prophecy to be accurate is that sometime after the 483rd year from Cyrus’ decrees, the Messiah would be killed.

³³⁹ Dr. Walvoord writes regarding the proper identification of the date for “**the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**” (Dan 9:25):

If the decree refers to a political decree, four different decrees have been suggested: (1) the decree of Cyrus that the temple be rebuilt in 538 [or more probably 536] B.C. (2 Chron. 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-5); (2) the decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (Ezr-a 6:6-12); (3) the decree of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:11-26); and (4) the decree of Artaxerxes given in Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city (Neh. 2:1-8).

Though it is clear that the decree of Cyrus authorized the rebuilding of the temple, there is question whether he authorized the rebuilding

The second element of the prophecy is that **"From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem"** in 444/445 B.C., **"there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'"** "The overwhelming consensus of scholarship"³⁴⁰ understands the prophesied "sevens" to be years. Thus, **"seven 'sevens,'"** would equal 7x7 years or 49 years.³⁴¹ Likewise, **"sixty-two 'sevens'"** would equal 62x7 years or 434 years. Added together this would be 69 "sevens" of years or 483 years. Accordingly, the Angel Gabriel told Daniel that between the time of **"the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem"** in 444/445 B.C., there would be 483 years until **"the Anointed One will be cut off."**

The third element is determining the year in which Christ was crucified. A very well established date held by most Christians throughout the history of the Church is 33 A. D.³⁴²

of the city. The later decrees in Ezra apparently deal only with the temple. In any case, the city wall and the city were not rebuilt until the time of Nehemiah (445-444 B.C.).

Scholars differ as to whether the exact date is the last month of 445 B.C. or the first month, 4 B.C. Though scholars continue to differ on the subject, the most plausible explanation is the 444 B.C. date because this works out precisely to the fulfillment of the prophecy and also coincides with the actual rebuilding of the city. This interpretation provides the most literal explanation without disregarding some of the specifics of the prophecy. (*Every Prophecy of the Bible* [David C. Cook, 1999], 253)

For more detailed discussion, see Walvoord, *Daniel*, 224-8.

³⁴⁰ Walvoord, *Daniel*, 218

³⁴¹ An obvious question is why does Gabriel specify a period of 49 years plus 434 years to describe the timeline to Christ's crucifixion? Why not simply say "sixty-two sevens" of years instead of adding the additional detail that even this period of time is to be divided? Dr. Walvoord seems to give the best answer by suggesting the first 49 years was required to *fulfill* the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, **"with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble"** (Dan 9:25). He writes:

The best explanation seems to be that beginning with Nehemiah's decree and the building of the wall, it took a whole generation to clear out all the debris in Jerusalem and restore it as a thriving city. This might well be the fulfillment of the forty-nine years. The specific reference to streets again addresses our attention to Nehemiah's situation where the streets were covered with debris and needed to be rebuilt. That this was accomplished in troublesome times is fully documented by the book of Nehemiah itself. (*Daniel*, 227)

³⁴² For discussions of the timing of Christ's crucifixion see Harold Hoehner, "Chronology of the NT," *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd edition, J. I. Packer ed. et al. (Intervarsity, 1996), 195-6.

Now we can calculate the accuracy of the prophecy. 444 B.C. (when the decree was issued) to 33 A.D. is 477 years. This is 6 years short of the prophesied 483 years. The reason for this is that the Jewish year was based on lunar cycles of 360 days, while the Roman year used by the rest of the world, and on which the dates above are based, is based on solar cycles of 365 days.

Accordingly, we must add 5 days to each Jewish year over the course of the 477 Jewish years. $477 \times 5 = 2385$ days / 365 = 6.5 years. The 477 Jewish years adjusted 6 years for the Roman year = 483 years. This is exactly the prophesied 69 "sevens" of years predicted between the issuing of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, and the "cutting off" of the Messiah.³⁴³

B.10) Christ's Resurrection: Psalm 16:10

As noted above in the obvious messianic passage of Isaiah 52-53, the Prophet predicted: **"My servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted"** (Isa 52:13). This prediction would seem to at least include Christ's resurrection.³⁴⁴

In addition, the King/Prophet David exclaimed in Psalm 16: **"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay"** (v. 10; cf. Isa 53:2). While we ourselves might not have the authority or divine knowledge to recognize this as predicting the resurrection of Christ, the Apostles did.

Accordingly, the Apostle Peter preached:

"Seeing what was ahead, he [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see decay. God has raised

³⁴³ While it has been demonstrated that the prediction falls on the exact year of Christ's death, this would not be necessary. The prophecy merely stated that sometime **"After the sixty-two 'sevens,'** [which follow the 7 "sevens" for a total of 69 "sevens"] **the Anointed One will be cut off"** (Dan 9:25). Therefore, an exact ending point is not needed for the prophecy to be true.

However, some have attempted to demonstrate that this prophecy was fulfilled to the exact day. For a valuable discussion of this see Jeffrey, 26-31.

³⁴⁴ J. Alec Motyer comments on Isa 52:13, "It is impossible not to be reminded of the resurrection, ascension, and heavenly exaltedness of the Lord Jesus." (*The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Intervarsity, 1993], 424).

this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”
(Acts 2:31-32)

Likewise, the Apostle Paul preached:

“We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers He has fulfilled for us . . . by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’ [Ps 2:7]

The fact that God raised Him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’ [Ps 55:3] So it is stated elsewhere: ‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’ [Ps 16:10]

For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the One whom God raised from the dead did not see decay. (Acts 13:32-37)

C) Prophecies about Israel

C.1) **Israel’s Exodus:** *Genesis 15:13-14*

Over 500 years beforehand, ³⁴⁵ God told Abraham that the Jews would be enslaved in Egypt. We read:

Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. . . . ¹⁶ In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.” (Gen 15:13-14, 16; Cf. Acts 7:6; Gal 3:17)

Accordingly, Moses records:

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’S divisions left Egypt. (Exod 12:40-41)

³⁴⁵ See Oswalt, who puts the time of Abraham c. 2167 B.C. and the beginning of Israel’s slavery at 1575 B.C. (*ISBE*), I:678

The fact that the exact length of time the Jews were in Egypt was 430 years, does not contradict God's earlier prediction that they would be there for at least 400 years. Keil and Delitzsch remark:

That these words [Gen 15:13] had reference to the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, is placed beyond all doubt by the fulfillment. The 400 years were, according to prophetic language, a round number for the 430 years that Israel spent in Egypt (Ex 12:40).³⁴⁶

Some see a difficulty in God describing 400 years as 4 generations. However, these generations could begin with the youngest child when the Jews entered Egypt and end with the oldest person of the fourth generation from that time. In addition, people were evidently still living for long periods of time, evidenced by Moses dying at 120.³⁴⁷

At face value, this is a remarkable prediction of Israel's first captivity and Exodus.

³⁴⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, Gen 15:13. Likewise, D. Hamilton concludes:

We take it that the *four hundred years* refers to both the period of sojourning and the eventual enslavement. The best way to reconcile these different numbers is to see that "the 400 years is a round figure in prospect, while the 430 years is more precise in retrospect." (435)

In our opinion, the above sufficiently explains the prophecy. However, others suggest what seem to be unnecessary and unacceptable interpretations. This is apparently because they do not see how the Jews could be in Egypt for 430 years, sometimes based on the genealogies given for Jacob's descendants. Accordingly, Calvin, Barnes, and Jeffrey (35-36) all suggest the 430 years began at the time that Abraham received the promise, or that Isaac was born. But there are at least two significant problems with this. First, Oswalt gives a date for this promise as occurring sometime around 2100 B.C. and an early date for the Exodus at 1447 B.C. ("OT Chron" *ISBE*, I:678), which is a lot longer than 430 years. But the biggest problem is that Exodus 12:40-41 records the fact:

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD'S divisions left Egypt

³⁴⁷ Disappointingly, Gleason Archer (*The Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties* [Zondervan, 1982]) has no comment on the difficulties surrounding the prediction of the Exodus in Gen 15:13-14. Several scholars conclude that "the 400 years is a round figure in prospect, while the 430 years is more precise in retrospect." (Hamilton, 435; cf. K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*; and Keil and Delitzsch)

C.2) Jerusalem's Destruction: *Luke 19:43-44*

The Church historian Luke records a prophecy of the Lord Jesus c. 30 A.D. concerning the city of Jerusalem:

The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you. 19:43-44; cf. 21:20-24)

Echoing the consent of Bible scholars, Darrell Bock comments:

The event in view is clearly the attack of Rome that led to the collapse of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. . . . There are some points of contact between the prediction and the events of A.D. 70 (e.g. Titus built a barricade around the city; Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 5.11.4) ³⁴⁸

Indeed, we have a very detailed description of the Roman siege of Jerusalem from the eminent Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Accordingly, Barnes remarks on Christ's prediction:

At the time this was spoken, no event was more improbable than this. The temple was vast, rich, splendid. It was the pride of the nation, and the nation was at peace. Yet in the short space of 40 years all this was accomplished exactly. Jerusalem was taken by the Roman armies, under the command of Titus, A.D. 70.

The account of the siege and destruction of the city is left us by Josephus, a historian of undoubted veracity and singular fidelity. He was a Jewish priest. In the wars of which he gives an account, he fell into the hands of the Romans, and remained with them during the siege and destruction of the city. Being a Jew, he would of course say nothing designed to confirm the prophecies of Jesus Christ; yet his whole history appears almost like a running commentary on these predictions respecting the destruction of the temple. The following particulars are given on his authority:

After the city was taken, Josephus says that Titus "gave orders that they should now "demolish the whole city and temple," except three towers, which he reserved standing.

³⁴⁸ Bock, 1562

But for the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground by those who “dug it up from the foundation,” that there was nothing left to make those believe who came hither that it had ever been inhabited.” Maimonides, a Jewish writer, has also recorded that “Terentius Rufus, an officer in the army of Titus, with a plowshare tore up the foundations of the temple, that the prophecy might be fulfilled [as Jesus said, **“They will not leave one stone on another”** (Luke 19:44)].

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Likewise, Josephus records the building of **“an embankment”** (Luke 19:43) or siege works against the city, and their methodical destruction of the city walls by which they were **“encircle[d] . . . and hem[med] . . . in on every side”** (Ibid.). Finally, Josephus describes in great detail the slaughter of thousands of men, women, and children in the taking of Jerusalem such that Christ’s prediction was fulfilled: **“They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls”** (19:44).

³⁴⁹ Barnes, Luke 19:43.

C.3) Israel's Return: Jer 25:11; Ezek 4:4-6; Lev 26:18

About the year 627 B.C. the Prophet Jeremiah began his ministry.³⁵⁰ As the power of the Babylonian Empire was increasing, Jeremiah gave this prophecy:

Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to My words, ⁹ I will summon all the peoples of the north and My servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. . . .

¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD. (Jer 25:8-12)

This prophecy was fulfilled with remarkable precision. Jeremiah's prophecy was given "**in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon**" (Jer 25:1). Accordingly, it would seem that the date when "**these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years**" (Jer 25:11) begins in "**the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,**" which is the same as "**the fourth year of Jehoiakim**" (Jer 25:1). There is rather universal agreement among scholars that this was 606 B.C.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Prince Press, 1999), 802. Uses 538 date and say Cyrus' decree happened afterwards.

³⁵¹ See Keil and Delitzsch (at Jer 25:11; Ezra 1:1); Jeffrey (38), Harrison (192), Schulz (I:976), Kitchen (193). The dates of Harrison, Schultz, and Kitchen are based on their putting the first year of Jehoiakim's reign in 609 B.C., making the fourth year 606 B.C. Barnes puts it at 605 B.C. with no support (2 Chron 36:21).

In addition, S. J. Schulz notes some important occurrences during this year that especially applied to Jeremiah and the timing of his prophecy: The fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign was crucial in many respects. During this year Jeremiah's scroll was read in the presence of Jehoiakim, who defiantly cut it up and threw the pieces into the fire (Jer 36). It was during this year that Jeremiah boldly declared that Nebuchadnezzar would subdue Judah and many surrounding nations [for seventy years] (Jer 25). ("Jehoiakim," *ISBE*, II:976-77).

When then did this 70 years of punishment end? While various events in history have been suggested, the Bible gives its answer in the Jewish history recorded in Ezra 1:1-3 where we read:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: “ ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Anyone of his people among you—may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-3; cf. 2 Chron 36:20-23)

Both Jeremiah (25:11) and the historian of 2 Chronicles (36:21) mention this prophesied period of 70 years as a time of desolation for the land, in which it would be virtually uninhabited. And the Bible, not surprisingly, dates the end of that desolation with the decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Calculating the predicted 70 years between **“the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,”** in 606 B.C. (Jer 25:1) and his subjection of the **“nations”** (Jer 25:11), to the defeat of Babylon and decree to rebuild Israel’s temple **“in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia”** (Ezra 1:12; cf. Chron 36:22), we arrive at the year 536 B.C. for the time of fulfillment. This accords with the time of Cyrus’ reign.

Accordingly, Keil and Delitzsch note concerning “The statement of the prophet Jeremiah concerning the desolation and servitude of Judah”:

These seventy years commenced with the first taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when Daniel and other youths of the seed-royal were carried to Babylon (Dan 1:1-2) in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim; (see the explanation of Dan 1:1). This year was the year 606 B.C.; hence the seventy years terminate in 536 B.C., the first year of the sole rule of Cyrus over the Babylonian empire.³⁵²

³⁵² Keil and Delitzsch, Ezra 1:1. Because Keil and Delitzsch make this statement in reference to Cyrus’ decree in Ezra 1:1-3, it is apparent that they view time of the issuing of the decree and “the first year of the sole rule of Cyrus over the Babylonian empire” as the same. They add concerning Jeremiah 25:11:

Thus, this predicted period of subjection to the Babylonian Empire for seventy years was fulfilled exactly.

However, during the Babylonian captivity, the Prophet Ezekiel was given another prophecy concerning Israel's punishment. God said:

This will be a sign to the house of Israel. Lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel. After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year. (Ezek 4:3-6)

Here is a prediction of continued punishment even after the 70 year Babylonian captivity.³⁵³ Why would God predict additional

The term of seventy years mentioned is not a so-called round number, but a chronologically exact prediction of the duration of Chaldean supremacy over Judah. So the number is understood in 2 Chron 36:21-22; so too by the prophet Daniel, when, Dan 9:2, in the first year of the Median king Darius, he took note of the seventy years which God, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, would accomplish for the desolation of Jerusalem.

The seventy years may be reckoned chronologically. From the 4th year of Jehoiakim, i.e., 606 B.C., till the 1st year of the sole supremacy of Cyrus over Babylon, i.e., 536 B.C., gives a period of 70 years. This number is arrived at by means of the dates given by profane authors as well as those of the historians of Scripture.

The fact that 606 B.C. is the widely agreed upon beginning for Jeremiah's 70 years (see above), and the Bible describes its end point as Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, should give some certainty that Cyrus' decree did indeed occur in 536 B.C.

Nevertheless, while Keil and Delitzsch and Jeffrey agree on this date, other dates such as 538 and 539 B.C. are suggested, although without supporting arguments (cf. Barnes at 2 Chron 36:21; Harrison, 192). Dr. Oswalt gives the date of Cyrus' decree "before 535 [B.C.] and perhaps as early as 538 [B.C.]" (I:685), which would include 536 B.C. Accordingly, in the absence of any conclusive secular evidence for the dating of Cyrus' decree, we prefer to use the biblical data which suggests a date of 536 B.C.

³⁵³ The question is whether the prophesied 430 years concerning the nations' sin referred to the past duration of their sin, or a future time of punishment for their sin. Perhaps the primary reason some have argued

punishment for the Jews at the end of their exile to Babylon? The answer has been best explained by Dr. Grant R. Jeffrey. While the fulfillment of this prophecy has been a puzzle for many until recently, Dr. Jeffrey points out the interpretive key:

The solution to the mystery of the duration of Israel's worldwide dispersion and return is found in a divine principle revealed to Israel in Leviticus 26. In this chapter the Lord established promises and punishments for Israel based on her obedience and her disobedience. On four different occasions in this passage, God told Israel that if, after being punished for her sins, she still did not repent, the punishments previously specified would be multiplied by seven (the number of completion). **"If after all this [punishment] you will not listen to Me, I will punish you for your sins seven times**

for the former is that they could not see how the prediction was fulfilled in the future of the nation, as we demonstrate it can here. Nonetheless, Keil and Delitzsch effectively argue that the 430 years apply to a future punishment of the nation:

[T]he days in which Ezekiel is to bear the guilt of Israel, might be proportioned to the [preceding] number of the years of their guilt, as many Rabbins, Vatablus, Calvin, Lightfoot, Vitringa, J. D. Michaelis, and others suppose, while in so doing the years are calculated very differently; cf. des Vignoles, *Chronol.* I. p. 479ff., and Rosenmüller, *Scholia, Excurs.* to ch. iv.

All these hypotheses, however, are shattered by the impossibility of pointing out the specified periods of time, so as to harmonize with the chronology. If the days, reckoned as years, correspond to the [past] duration of their sinning, then, in the case of the house of Israel, only the duration of this kingdom could come into consideration, as the period of punishment began with the captivity of the ten tribes. But this kingdom lasted only 253 years. The remaining 137 years the Rabbins have attempted to supply from the period of the Judges; others, from the time of the destruction of the ten tribes down to that of Ezekiel, or even to that of the destruction of Jerusalem. Both are altogether arbitrary.

Still less can the 40 years of Judah be calculated, as all the determinations of the beginning and the end are mere phantoms of the air. The fortieth year before our prophecy would nearly coincide with the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, and therefore with the year in which this pious king effected the reformation of religion. Ezekiel, however, could not represent this year as marking the commencement of Judah's sin. We must therefore, as the literal meaning of the words primarily indicates, regard the specified periods of time as periods of [future] punishment for Israel and Judah. (Ezek 4:4-8).

Dr. Barnes agrees, Ezek 4:5.

over" (Lev 26:18; cf. 26:21, 23-24, 27-28). In other words, if Israel did not repent; the punishments already promised would be prolonged seven times: $360 \text{ years} \times 7 = 2,520$ biblical years.³⁵⁴

In other words, we see a compounding of the duration of the Jews' exile and punishment. The cause of this was the fact that after the Babylonian captivity, only a relatively small remnant of Jews returned to the Promised Land with Ezra. The vast majority of Jews did not return either to the Lord, nor to their land, but stayed where they had settled during the Babylonian captivity, worshipping false gods.³⁵⁵

God knew this would be the case and so during the Babylonian captivity he prophesied through Ezekiel 430 years of continued exile. However, as Dr. Jeffrey and others point out, "[A] close scrutiny of Israel's history fails to yield any significant period that corresponds to this period of . . . additional punishment."³⁵⁶ This is where God's promise of a seven-fold multiplication of a period of punishment, if there was not repentance, comes in.

During the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel promised a total of 430 years of punishment/exile from the Promised Land. Subtracting the 70 years that would be served under Babylon, there would be an additional 360 years of punishment/exile remaining. Because there is no concurring historical event in 176 B.C. (360 years after the end of the Babylonian captivity), nor in 106 B.C.,³⁵⁷ we must find a

³⁵⁴ Jeffrey, 40.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39. Accordingly, Keil and Delitzsch suggest the years specified are symbolic:

Regarded . . . as periods of punishment, both the numbers [390 and 40] cannot be explained consistently with the [historical] chronology, but must be understood as having a symbolical signification. The space of 430 years, which is announced to both kingdoms together as the duration of this chastisement, recalls the 430 years which in the far past Israel had spent in Egypt in bondage (Ex 12:40). (Ezek 4:4-8)

However, the 430 years of bondage in Egypt was literally fulfilled, so we would expect this period of 430 years to be fulfilled in history as well.

³⁵⁷ On the contrary, the great persecutor of the Jews, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, came to power in 175 B.C. (Bruce K. Waltke, "Antiochus," *ISBE*, I:144). Likewise, the Maccabean revolt essentially freed the Jews from foreign rule c. 163 B.C. (H. W. Hoehner, "Maccabees," *ISBE*, II:198.). No one that we are aware of has been able to suggest any

way of legitimately extending the period of Ezekiel's prophecy. We agree with Dr. Jeffrey that the Leviticus warning of a seven-fold multiplication of a period punishment is a very reasonable answer.

More than that, Dr. Jeffrey has concluded that the addition of the Leviticus warning results in Ezekiel's prophecy being fulfilled *almost to the exact day*.³⁵⁸ While the exact day is not necessary for the prophecy to be fulfilled (it could allow for a short time after the specified period), the following calculations produce some rather astounding results.

As noted above, the remaining 360 years of punishment/exile multiplied seven times equals 2,520 Jewish years. We will note here that the Jews based their annual calendar on a lunar cycle of 360 days, while our modern Roman calendar is based on a solar cycle of 365.25 days. With this in mind, Dr. Jeffrey writes:

Therefore, the end of the punishment and restoration to the land would be accomplished in 2,520 biblical [Jewish] years of 360 days each. The end of the captivity in Babylon, according to the Bible and other historical sources—including Flavius Josephus, is recorded as having occurred in the spring of 536 B. C. This date is the starting point for our calculations: **2,520 biblical [Jewish/lunar] years x 360 = 907,200 days.**

Converting this figure into our [Roman/solar] calendar year of 365.25 days and dividing 365.25 into 907,200 days we reach a total of **2,483.8 calendar years.** (In these calculations we must keep in mind that there is only one year between 1 B.C. and A.D. 1). Therefore, the end of Israel's worldwide captivity would occur after a total of 2,483.8 years had elapsed from the Spring of 536 B.C.³⁵⁹

viable fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy in the first or second centuries B.C.

³⁵⁸ For Dr. Jeffrey's complete argument that Ezekiel's prophecy of the establishment of the Jewish nation was fulfilled to the day see pp. 38-41. Dr. Jeffrey claims that this interpretation of Ezekiel's prophecy "has never before been published." 41.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Accordingly, 536 B.C. plus 2489 years = 1948.³⁶⁰ And everyone knows that one of the most amazing occurrences in modern history occurred in the Spring of 1948: The nation of Israel, after living in exile, scattered throughout the world, and being non-existent as a nation, all for over 2000 years,³⁶¹ became a nation *in the Promised Land*, by United Nations declaration, on May 14, 1948. The prophecy that had been spoken and recorded over 2500 years beforehand by the Prophet Ezekiel was literally and supernaturally fulfilled in the twentieth century.

Dr. Geisler comments:

No other nation in history has managed so successfully to keep a culture, identity, and language intact over hundreds of years, let alone against the genocidal hatred repeatedly encountered by the Jews. This Bible prediction is incredible evidence of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures.³⁶²

D) Prophecies Concerning Nations

D.1) The Rise & Fall of Ancient World Powers: *Daniel 2, 7-8*

It is not only matters concerning God's kingdom that He decides, controls and therefore predicts. But God exercises this same sovereignty over the pagan nations as well. This particularly includes those nations which have a relationship to His chosen nation Israel. In the course of human history there were four great kingdoms in the area of the world in which God's people lived which included Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. While the Babylonian

³⁶⁰ Those who do not like Dr. Jeffrey's calculations and interpretations of the Scripture need to produce an alternative. Otherwise, Ezekiel's prophecy is a farce. As noted above, it seems impossible to be referring to a 430 year period *before* the Babylonian captivity. Also as noted above, there is no known event 430 years after that would fulfill the prophecy either. If the nation's actions were in general unrepentant during and after the Babylonian captivity, why wouldn't we expect God to institute His promise given *four times* in Leviticus 26? In our opinion, both his interpretations and calculations are the best answer to the accurate prediction of Ezekiel's prophecy.

³⁶¹ We mark the period that Israel was not a nation as beginning with the defeat of the Maccabeans c. 67 B.C. and extending to their statehood in 1948, which is over 2000 years.

³⁶² Geisler, 613.

Empire was at its height, the Prophet Daniel provided several prophecies concerning these, **“four kingdoms that will rise from the Earth”** (Dan 7:17).

The Prophet Daniel told the Babylonian monarch that the **“God in Heaven Who reveals mysteries has shown you King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come”** (Dan 2:28). Daniel then supernaturally described the King’s dream as follows:

You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. ³² The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, ³³ its legs of iron. (Dan 2:31-33) ³⁶³

Daniel then went on to supernaturally interpret the dream:

This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of Heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ³⁸ in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. . . . The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy. (Dan 2:36-40, 45)

³⁶³ We are, of course, leaving out the parts of the prophecy which speak of two other future kingdoms because we believe these are yet to be fulfilled in the End Times. The one kingdom symbolized by **“feet and toes [that] were partly of baked clay and partly of iron”** (2:41), would appear to be the last pagan world empire of the anti-Christ. The successive kingdom, symbolized by **“a rock . . . cut out, but not by human hands,”** which strikes **“the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashes them”** (2:34), is the kingdom which, **“the God of Heaven will set up [and] . . . it will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever”** (2:44). This is the eternal Kingdom of God on Earth.

D.1.a) **Babylonia**

Of the **"head of the statue [which] was made of pure gold"** (2:32), Daniel tells the Babylonian king, **"You are that head of gold"** (2:38). In a subsequent vision that Daniel receives, **"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon"** (7:1), he describes the Babylonian Empire as, **"a lion [with] the wings of an eagle."** All of these elements, gold among metals, the head among parts of the body, the lion among beasts and the eagle among birds all depict the superiority of the Babylonian kingdom.³⁶⁴ Indeed we have ancient engravings depicting a pair of winged and human-headed lions standing at the entrance to the principal hall at Nimrod.³⁶⁵

D.1.b) **Persia**

After describing the then current Babylonian Empire, Daniel predicted that it would be taken over by **"another kingdom . . . inferior to"** (2:39) the Babylonian and symbolized by **"chest and arms of silver"** (2:32). In subsequent visions, this second kingdom is described as **"a bear . . . raised up on one of its sides [with] three ribs in its mouth"** (7:5). In another vision of this second kingdom, Daniel describes it as, **"a ram with two horns"** (8:3) and **"No animal [nation] could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great"** (8:4).

We do not need to guess at what nation Daniel was predicting. The angel Gabriel tells him, **"The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia"** (8:20).³⁶⁶ Daniel's prediction came at the height of Babylonian power, considerably before anyone would have thought the Persian empire would overtake it. Accordingly, Dr. Barnes wrote:

The Medo-Persian empire did not come into the ascendancy until many years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. This occurred during the reign of Belshazzar, a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, between whose reign and that of his

³⁶⁴ For fuller discussion of the magnificence of the Babylonian kingdom see Barnes at Dan 2:38.

³⁶⁵ Barnes, Dan 7:4.

³⁶⁶ For various suggestions as to how the **"silver"** and **"bear"** represented Persia in relation to Babylonia see Keil and Delitzsch at Dan 8 and Barnes at Dan 2:39.

grandfather there had intervened the reigns of Evil-merodach and Neriglissar.³⁶⁷

D.1.c) Greece

After describing the future rise of the Persian empire, Daniel predicted something that would be about two hundred years into the future: the rise and dominance of Greek empire. He describes it as, **"a third kingdom, one of bronze, [that] will rule over the whole earth"** (Dan 2:39), and as a **"leopard" with "four wings"** and **"four heads,"** (Dan 7:6), and finally as a **"goat with a prominent horn between his eyes"** which demolishes the two-horned ram representing Persia, **"but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up"** (Dan 8:5-8).

Again, we do not need to guess at which kingdom the vision is referring to as the angel Gabriel explains:

The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. (Dan 8:21-22).³⁶⁸

The **"large horn"** undoubtedly refers to Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) who would not even be born for about two hundred years after this prophecy was recorded. More specifically, the prophecy predicts, **"four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power"** (Dan 8:22). Likewise, elsewhere we read:

After he [Alexander the Great] has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others. (Dan 11:4)

Accordingly, Dr. Barnes records:

It is well known that when Alexander died, his empire was left to four of his generals, and that they came to be at the head of as many distinct dominions, yet all springing from the same

³⁶⁷ Barnes, Dan 2:39

³⁶⁸ For further reasons why these symbols accurately depict the kingdom of ancient Greece see Barnes, Dan 2:39 and 7:6.

source, and all, in fact, out of the Macedonian empire. . . . After the battle of Ipsus, 301 B.C., in which Antigonus was defeated, the empire was divided into four kingdoms—Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus; Syria and the East under Seleucus; Egypt, under Ptolemy Soter; and Macedonia under Cassander.³⁶⁹

D.1.d) Rome

Finally, Daniel prophesies of **“a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others”** (Dan 2:40). This is easily recognized as the Roman Empire which would not even come into existence until several hundred years after Daniel’s lifetime, and would not conquer Greece until 146 B.C. And “iron” would prove to be a very applicable symbol of this kingdom. Dr. Barnes notes:

It is scarcely necessary to observe that this description is applicable to the Roman power. . . . Everything was crushed before it. The nations which they conquered ceased to be kingdoms, and were reduced to provinces, and as kingdoms they were blotted out from the list of nations.

This has been well described by Mr. Irving: “The Roman empire did beat down the constitution and establishment of all other kingdoms; abolishing their independence, and bringing them into the most entire subjection; humbling the pride, subjecting the will, using the property, and trampling upon the power and dignity of all other states. For by this was the Roman dominion distinguished from all the rest, that it was the work of almost as many centuries as those were of years; the fruit of a thousand battles in which millions of men were slain. It made room for itself, as does a battering-ram, by continual successive blows; and it ceased not to beat and bruise all nations, so long as they continued to offer any resistance.”³⁷⁰

To accurately predict and even describe the rise and fall of pagan empires on the Earth, even several hundred years before they would appear, is not only a testament to the supernatural

³⁶⁹ Barnes, Dan 7:6.

³⁷⁰ Barnes, Dan 2:40.

nature of God's Prophets, but to the sovereign power of the Prophet's God.

D.2) King Cyrus of Persia: *Isaiah 44:28*

One of the most amazing miraculous predictions in the OT was made by Isaiah concerning the far future king of Persia, Cyrus. Isaiah even predicted his name, and a proclamation he would make, 150-200 years before he was born. Isaiah had prophesied (c. 740-690 B.C.):

This is what the Lord says . . . of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." ' "This is what the LORD says to His anointed, to Cyrus . . . I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge Me. (Isa 44:24, 28; 45:1, 4)

And indeed, Cyrus was to be a powerful conqueror, and in Ezra 1 (c. 536 B. C.) we read:

In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah (cf. 29:10: prediction of 70 years of exile, and the prediction of Isaiah above), the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: " 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build a temple for Him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Anyone of His people among you—may His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD (1:1-3)

No wonder liberal scholars vehemently, but illegitimately claim that these prophesies of Isaiah were written *after* their fulfillment! The Jews never believed that, secular historical records deny it, ³⁷¹ and such scholars are only trying to deny their guilt of treating a sacred text with such disrespect. ³⁷²

³⁷¹ For further discussion of the textual integrity of Isaiah see 3.?

³⁷² We read in the *ISBE*:

D.3) The Destruction of Cities

Bible scholar Rene Pache writes:

[I]t is specifically through "secular" research that we have confirmation of the fulfillments of Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Ninevah in 612 B.C. (cf. Isa 10:5-34; 14:24-27), Babylon in 539 B.C. (Isa 21:1-10; 47:1-15; Dan 2-5); Edom in 550 B.C. (cf. Isa 21:11-12; Jer 49:7-22), and Tyre in 332 B.C. (cf. Isa 23:1-18; Ezek 26 & 27).³⁷³

Concerning the city of Tyre, God declared through the Prophet Ezekiel:

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishing nets. . . .

They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. ... I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishing

Whether Cyrus was aware in any way of the prophecies of Isa. 40-55 remains uncertain. Josephus indeed says that Cyrus came to know of his destiny with respect to the Jewish people "by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies; for this Prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: -'My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.' Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written" (Ant. xi.1.2). It is not implausible that a highly placed Jewish official, such as the book of Daniel represents Daniel to have been, could have drawn the emperor's attention to these prophecies, but without further supporting evidence this cannot be certain. (D. J. A. Clines, "Cyrus," I:848-9)

In the end, Cyrus' awareness of the prophecy certainly would not change the supernatural nature of Isaiah's prophecy in naming him and predicting his success.

³⁷³ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Moody, 1969), 282.

nets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. (Ezek 26:3-14)

Dr. Geisler writes:

Tyre, an important sea port in the Eastern Mediterranean, was one of the great cities of the ancient world. It was a heavily fortified and flourishing city. Yet Ezekiel 26:3-14 predicted her doom and entire demolition hundreds of years in advance . . .

This prediction was partially fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and left it in ruins. However, the stones, dust and timber were not thrown into the sea. Then Alexander the Great attacked the seemingly impregnable Island of Tyre by taking the stones, dust, and timber from the ruined mainland city and building a causeway to the Island. Not only has the city never been rebuilt; today it literally is used as a place "to spread fishing nets."³⁷⁴

Likewise, regarding Edom, God said through the Prophet Jeremiah:

'The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who occupy the heights of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle's, from there I will bring you down,' declares the Lord. 'Edom will become an object of horror; all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff because of all its wounds.' (Jer 49:16-17)

Again, Dr. Geisler comments:

Given the virtually impregnable nature of the ancient city carved out of rock and protected by a narrow passage way, this was an incredible prediction. Yet, in A.D. 636 it was conquered by Muslims and stands deserted but for tourist and passers by.³⁷⁵

Now that is a whirlwind tour of the almighty power of God! **"To Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen"** (Eph 3:21).

³⁷⁴ Geisler, 614.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

Our Father in Heaven we are in awe of Your might and power. You not only know what will happen in the future, but when You choose to, You make it happen. We are humbled to know and serve and be loved by the God Who can do absolutely anything. Help us worship You accordingly with our lives.

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Chapter 9.9
The Need to Test Modern Prophets

Protection from False Prophets & for Presumptuous Ones

Table of Topics

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Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- A multitude of people today stand up in an assembly, or speak out in a small group, and claim to have a special revelation from God. This is *prophetism* and we believe it is an abomination to God. Which makes the need for authentication all the more vital.
- God required miraculous proof for anyone claiming to be His Prophet because He wanted the people to be accountable for their response.
- A claim to be receiving revelation from God needs to be authenticated. However, modern *prophetists* refuse to do so, mainly because they cannot produce the necessary authentication of their claims.
- An inadequate test of *prophetism's* so called "prophets" is the requirement that they cannot say something contrary to Scripture.
- Modern "prophets" can tell a person about their past, which any demon can know, and which is why God demands prediction for authentication.
- If claiming the gift of prophecy is a minor thing in the mind of many today, it is a serious thing to God. So serious that in the OT lying prophets were to be exterminated. Modern *prophetists* don't even excommunicate them.
- The requirement for divine authentication was to protect the people from being deceived or sinning against God by listening to a false prophet.

A) The Need for Testing Modern Prophets

There are a multitude of people in churches today who stand up in the assembly, or speak out in a small group, and claim to have a special revelation from God and the gift of prophecy. In reality, God knows He did not give them any revelation, and they are speaking something they thought of themselves. Nonetheless, they are given a rather honored status in the church as someone who is especially in tune with God, and can help others know what God is thinking as well. This is what we call *prophetism* and we believe it is an abomination to God. Which makes the need for authentication all the more vital.

Such false prophecy has been occurring among humanity for a long time. For instance, the early Church Father Origen quotes the pagan Celsus for the following description of false prophets who operated among the pagans in Palestine (c. 190 A.D.):

There are many, he says, who are nameless, who prophesy at the slightest excuse for some trivial cause both inside and outside temples . . . and they pretend to be moved as if giving some oracular utterance. It is an ordinary and common custom for each one to say [they are speaking directly for God].³⁷⁶

Sound familiar?

Accordingly, God required miraculous proof for anyone claiming to be His Prophet because He wanted the people to be completely accountable for their response to His Prophet. Accordingly, God told Ezekiel, **“Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’ And whether they listen or fail to listen . . . they will know that a Prophet has been among them”** (Ezek 2:4-5). How would they know, and be held accountable for knowing, if God Himself did not ensure that His Prophets would be undeniably authenticated? Rest assured that when God really does send a Prophet, the people will be without excuse for not believing and obeying them as God Himself. In contrast, we have plenty of legitimate excuses for rejecting the “prophets” of *prophetism*, including the fact that they do not miraculously authenticate themselves.

In section 9.3.C we will demonstrate God’s great anger when people are claiming to speak for Him, but they do not. And we will demonstrate why we can be so dogmatic about the fact that none of the people today who claim the gift of prophecy actually have it.

³⁷⁶ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, ed. H. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1965), 402-3.

God's great grace and mercy today are especially demonstrated by the fact that there are a hoard of lying "prophets" among His people today.

B) The Nature of Biblical Authentication

We have repeatedly demonstrated God's desire and design for authenticating His messengers by enabling them to perform the miraculous. Elsewhere we have written:

The writer to the Hebrews summarizes our view when we read:

This [authoritative revelation of the New Covenant] salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will. (Heb 2:3-4).

It is the God-like authentication of the Prophets and Apostles that grants their writings in the Scriptures God-like authority. We are not expected to give such authority to documents written merely by good men.

In fact, *no one in Scripture had miracle working abilities apart from the need to be authenticated as a source of new extra-biblical divine revelation for all to believe and obey.* The biblical record is clear: God does not grant a person a divine *healing* ministry unless they also have a divine "*revealing*" ministry. We have dealt with objections to this view elsewhere.

Accordingly, Christian philosopher J. P. Moreland writes: In Scripture, God does not call people to trust in him or some truth he reveals without first revealing himself to those people or providing tests for the truth he reveals (e.g., fulfilled prophecy, a public manifestation of his power, or a manifestation of his presence in New Testament times and subsequently up to the present). In this way, God provides knowledge of himself and attesting credentials for revealed truth.³⁷⁷

Accordingly, the *Scripture gifts* of divine knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy were authenticated in the early Church by the *sign*

³⁷⁷ Excerpt from section 3.1.D. For further discussion of the divine authentication of divine revelation see sections 7.1.B.5 and refs. there.

gifts of miracle working, tongues, and prediction. As we will see, the latter was obviously especially related to the gift of prophecy.

C) *Prophetism's Failure to Prove Their Prophets*

The claim of modern *prophetism* is that their "prophets" are receiving new, extra-biblical revelation from God. Wayne Grudem, former Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and perhaps the foremost promoter of *prophetism*, defines the gift of prophecy as "*telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind.*"³⁷⁸ Likewise, C. Samuel Storms, former Professor of Theology at Wheaton writes:

Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation. It is this that distinguishes prophecy from teaching. Teaching is always based on an inscripturated text, prophecy is always based on a spontaneous revelation. . . . [The "prophet's" revelation] is altogether free from error. It is as infallible as [God] is. It contains no falsehoods, it is wholly true in all its parts. Indeed, the revelation, which is the root of every genuine prophetic utterance, is as inerrant and infallible as the written Word of God itself, the Bible. In terms of the revelation alone, the New Testament prophetic gift does not differ from the Old Testament prophetic gift.³⁷⁹

Biblically speaking, such a claim to be receiving new revelation from God needs to be divinely authenticated. However, modern *prophetists* refuse to do so. They do not require divine authentication of the divine revelation they are claiming, because evidently they do not think they need to. The real reason, however, is that they cannot produce the necessary authentication of their claims.

For example, the Evangelical Free turned *prophetist* Pastor Doug Bannister writes the following in order to suggest how we are to recognize and handle this second rate gift of prophecy today. Do you see anyone in Scripture responding to a biblical Prophet in the following manner without sinning greatly against God?

Do others agree that the prophecy is of God? Sometimes at the end of a fellowship worship service, someone will sense that he or she has been given a prophetic word. We ask the person to share the word with an elder, who prays about it and then chooses whether or not the prophecy would be appropriate to share with the entire group. . . . When people share a word in the small group, they typically will ask, "Does

³⁷⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1049.

³⁷⁹ C. Samuel Storms in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, Wayne Grudem, ed. (Zondervan, 1996), 207.

this seem like something the Lord would say?" Words that don't find favor with the group are gently set aside.³⁸⁰

It is interesting to observe that many Pentecostal and charismatic churches have backed away from practicing the charismatic gifts in the corporate worship service and have moved this ministry into their small groups instead. This makes good sense. A small group is a safe place to make mistakes. If someone errs in mishandling a prophetic word, for example, a few are impacted, not an entire congregation.³⁸¹

What a sad commentary on the desperation for people to claim gifts they do not have. And what a rebuke to the Church "leaders" who allow such unauthenticated "prophets" to speak at all. Ironically, while 1 Corinthians 14 is the passage of Scripture that *prophetism* uses to promote its practices, here Mr. Bannister is denying that the gift of prophecy should be used in the larger congregation, which is a clear violation of how the Prophets were operating in the Corinthian church. As is often the case, modern *prophetists* choose which parts of Scripture they will apply.

Accordingly, one commentator has written:

Any [pastor] who allows ["prophetic"] people of this type of questionable ability to "go for it" in their church needs to question whether they are pleasing man or God. As a shepherd do they really care for the sheep or care for promoting their own ministry. We don't read of any second chances for false predictions or an attitude of let bygones be bygones. The scripture does not allow to let Prophets practice because practice makes perfect.³⁸²

Accordingly, not only do modern *prophetists* dilute the result of the gift of prophecy to be divine revelation from God that essentially always gets messed up because humans cannot communicate it accurately, but they dilute as well the authentication of the gift which, in the Bible, at least included the ability to supernaturally predict the future.

Essentially, in *prophetism*, if a "prophet" merely utters something that others find encouraging and biblical, they are accepted as a Prophet of God. The unbiblical error of defining the gift of prophecy as merely encouraging speech has been dealt with

³⁸⁰ Doug Bannister, *The Word and Power Church* (Zondervan, 1999), 107.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁸² Ref. unknown.

elsewhere.³⁸³ In addition, we elsewhere pointed out the great deal of fraud in *charismaticism*³⁸⁴ in general,³⁸⁵ and this certainly applies to their claims to the gift of prophecy and to special extra-biblical revelations from God. This is precisely because they refuse to require biblical means of authenticating such claims.

A second inadequate test of *prophetism's* so called "prophets" is the requirement that they cannot say something contrary to Scripture. Accordingly, Dr. Grudem writes:

Prophecies in the church are always subject to the authoritative teaching of Scripture. . . . Prophecies should certainly be evaluated according to the teachings of Scripture."³⁸⁶

While sound doctrine is the primary approach of testing in *prophetism*, it is unfortunately, perhaps the weakest of all tests for exposing false prophets. We have discussed this at length elsewhere in *Knowing Our God*.³⁸⁷

For example, many of the "revelations" that come through supposed "prophecies," cannot be evaluated with Scripture. Richard Gaffin, Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster accordingly writes:

Virtually all continuationists [e.g. *prophetists*] insist that prophecy is always subordinate to Scripture and must be tested by it, so that its [the Scripture's] sufficiency and authority is maintained. But how will such testing take place? Prophecy in the New Testament (e.g., Agabus), and as it allegedly takes place today, sometimes has a specificity that simply cannot be evaluated by existing Scripture.

For instance, a particular course of action urged upon an individual or group on the basis of a dream cannot be judged by the Bible other than whether the proposed action might involve violating a biblical commandment. For the rest, it is a matter of trying to judge "apples" with "oranges." Scripture by its very nature is silent precisely on those details that give the

³⁸³ For further discussion on the claim that the gift of prophecy merely produced encouraging speech see section 9.2.B.

³⁸⁴ For a definition of *charismaticism* see endnote in chapter 8.2.

³⁸⁵ For further discussion on the fraud we perceive in *charismaticism* see sections 10.15.A and chapter 11.8.

³⁸⁶ Grudem, 1058.

³⁸⁷ See below at "doctrine" and at miracle workers.

dream [or "prophecy"] its specific and distinct (and sought-after) "revelatory" significance and appeal.³⁸⁸

And again, if modern prophecy is not extra-biblical but merely repetitions of Scripture, then why is anyone calling it the biblical gift of prophecy?

Thirdly, Dr. Grudem suggests that a false prophet, "is always known through their denial of the gospel," and those who make "a genuine profession of faith in Jesus as Lord do in fact have the Holy Spirit in them."³⁸⁹ Essentially, this test relies merely on what someone is willing to "profess." Apparently, if they don't deny the Gospel and certain truths about Christ, they are to be accepted as God-sent.

Unfortunately, modern *prophetism* seems to completely ignore what "**false prophets**" who are "**inwardly ferocious wolves**," but outwardly are in "**sheep's clothing**" (Matt 7:15) are willing to do and say in order to deceive God's people. Jesus said Himself that false prophets will "**prophesy**" in His "**name**" and yet be "**evildoers**" (Matt 7:22-23). To "**prophesy**" in the "**name**" of Christ is simply to prophesy as if representing Christ. Accordingly, and contrary to Dr. Grudem, we have demonstrated elsewhere that false prophets would certainly be willing to preach the Gospel in order to "**prophesy**" in the "**name**" of Christ.³⁹⁰

For all the claims in modern *prophetism* that its "prophets" must adhere to Scripture, they themselves are the worst violators of their own rule. All kinds of "prophets" in the Church today promote the heretical doctrine of the "baptism of the Spirit" as a conditional experience of Christians, and many claim that speaking in tongues is the evidence of this (cf. 1 Cor 12:13, 30). Much of the "prophecy" that has occurred in *prophetism* is more spooky, than scriptural.

Long ago, when God introduced the ministry of biblical Prophets, He clearly ordained a means of authentication that modern *prophetists* completely ignore, therefore sinning against God. God said:

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone

³⁸⁸ Richard Gaffin, *Miraculous Gifts*, 52. (Underlining added for emphasis).

³⁸⁹ Grudem, 369.

³⁹⁰ For further discussion of the biblical fact that false apostles will preach the Gospel see section 11.13.E.

does not listen to My words that the Prophet speaks in My name, I myself will call him to account.

But a Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a Prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death.

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a Prophet proclaims [i.e. predicts] in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That Prophet has spoken presumptuously [and should be executed] (Deut 18:18-22)

If claiming the gift of prophecy is a minor thing in the mind of many today, it is a monumental thing in the mind of God. So serious that if someone under the Old Covenant claimed they had a prophetic utterance from God and they were mistaken, they were to be exterminated. Modern *prophetists* don't even excommunicate them.

D) Protection from Evil Prophets: *Matt 7:15, 21-23*

The requirement for divine authentication was certainly to protect the people from being deceived or sinning against God by listening to or following a self-deceived, or intentionally false prophet. In stark contrast to today, God's people have traditionally taken a claim to the gift of prophecy very seriously. First, they repeatedly warned of false prophets (cf. Jer 23:11-40; 28:8-9; 24:11, 24; 1 Thess 5:20; 2 Thess 2:22; Pet 2:1). Accordingly, Jesus warned:

"Watch out for false prophets. . . . Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven. Many [not just a few] will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name . . . Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!'" (Matt 7:15, 21-23)

When the Lord predicts that "**many**" who claim to "**prophesy**" even in His "**name**," will actually be condemned as evil-doing frauds who *will not* "**enter the kingdom of Heaven**" because they *do not* do "**the will of**" God and disobey Him even in their prophesying, we shudder to think how many of these damned false prophets are operating in the Church today. Christ's words tell us both how

amazing and horrible the deception surrounding the gift of prophecy can be. It is amazing in the amount and kind of works and words such deception can produce. It is horrible because of how widespread and deep such self-deception can be.

First, we notice the word **"many"** suggesting that deception regarding the gift of prophecy will be relatively common. However, this does not refer to **"many"** out of the whole mass of humanity or even Christianity. Rather, Christ has drastically narrowed His focus to a very unique and specific group of people. Here He says there will be **"many"** self-deceived and deceiving fakes specifically among those people who claim to **"prophecy"** all while using the name of Jesus. It is **"many"** of this kind of people whom Christ will expose as being tragically deceived, and **"will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!'"**

Does a focus on this ministry of prophecy sound familiar? Christ's words would seem to be a real prophecy of where deception regarding the gift of prophecy would be the most abundant in our own day. For at least 1600 years of post-apostolic Christian history there were only very few within the Church who would even claim to have the gift of prophecy, and all who did were considered heretics.³⁹¹ However, in the last one tenth of one percent of Church history, one of the fastest growing segments of the Church has virtually defined itself with its promotion and prioritization of this very thing.

It is the very ministry that Christ warns us of here, that is the basis for *prophetism's* claim to be unique and even superior to the rest of Christianity. And this is so even though Jesus points out that such things as prophesying *are not synonymous* with doing, **"the will of My Father Who is in Heaven."** Jesus specifically distinguished prophesying from doing God's will, and contrary to the false assumptions of *prophetism* you can do all the will of the Father and *not* do what is vital to *prophetism*.

The very kind of people that *prophetism* applauds, are the very kind of people Jesus specifically picked out as very likely to be fakes. While *prophetism* celebrates Prophets, Jesus indicates that **"many"** of them should be excommunicated counterfeits. While *prophetism* would claim that modern day Prophets are doing the most important spiritual work in the world today, Jesus says **"many"** of this particular kind of person is not even doing **"the will of [the] Father,"** at all and are actually **"evil doers."** *Prophetism* would claim that modern day Prophets have an especially intimate

³⁹¹ It is a historical fact that anyone after Montanism (c. 200 A. D.) who claimed to possess the gift of prophecy, was considered a heretic, which we demonstrate in chapter 9.13.

relationship with Jesus. However, we believe Jesus will tell **"many"** of them **"I never knew you . . . [get] away from Me,"** and will send them to Hell.

As we said, such deception regarding the gift of prophecy is so horrible because of its depth. The Scriptures clearly indicate that false prophets themselves can be deceived into thinking they are speaking for God as an act of God's judgment on them and those they "prophecy" to (cf. 1 Kgs 22:17-23). Accordingly, Christ says there will be a multitude of so-called Prophets who will actually believe with all their heart that they were serving and glorifying Christ with their ministries, and it will not be until they meet Him that they will discover their deception and resulting condemnation. Contrary to much popular thinking, even their great sincerity will not be enough to escape the divine charge of **"evil doer."**

Of course, modern *prophetists* would want us to quickly point out that certainly this is not a condemnation of all *their* "prophets." However, as we demonstrate throughout Book 8, the ministries of their modern "prophets" do not meet the biblical qualifications for claiming such a gift from God.³⁹² Real Prophets from God can and will supernaturally foretell specific future events with perfect accuracy (cf. Deut 18:18-22; Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11, 27-32). Modern so-called "prophets" don't, and don't even claim to try.

That word **"many"** should make all of our hearts skip a beat or two. Jesus Christ the Lord, the One Who truly knows the hearts of people, warns us that **"many"** of those who **"prophecy,"** in His Name are fakes being deceived and deceiving others. Which makes the authentication of such claims so vital.

Accordingly, the Apostle John wrote: **"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"** (1 John 4:1). Because the diligent testing of Prophets was a command of God, Christ commended the Ephesian church when He said of them, **"I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false"** (Rev 2:2).

Notice, however, an ancient story about a false prophet that was apparently never carefully evaluated, from the Greek historian Diodorus **Siculus** (c. 60 B.C.):

There was a certain Syrian slave, belonging to Antigenes of Enna, he was an Apamean by birth and had an aptitude for magic and the working of wonders. He claimed to foretell the

³⁹² For an introduction on the biblical qualifications for Prophets see section 9.1.B.

future by divine command through dreams, and because of his talent along these lines deceived many.

Going on from there he not only gave oracles by means of dreams, but even made a pretence of having waking visions of the gods and of hearing the future from their own lips. Of his many improvisations some by chance turned out true, and since those which failed to do so were left unchallenged, while those that were fulfilled attracted attention, his reputation advanced apace.³⁹³

These pagans paid the price for not diligently and carefully evaluating the claims of this false prophet. While this same mistake is made repeatedly in modern Christianity, the early Church was much more faithful in this.

The post-apostolic Church showed the same diligence as the Ephesians when the "prophets" of Montanism surfaced in the second century. The leaders of the Church in that day did not tolerate unauthenticated claims to the gift of prophecy. Accordingly, we read the following account from the early Church historian Eusebius (c. 269-339):

Against the so-called Phrygian [Montanist] heresy, the [good] power which always contends for the truth raised up a strong and invincible weapon, Apolinarius of Hierapolis [c. 177], whom we have mentioned before, and with him many other men of ability, by whom abundant material for our history has been left. A certain one of these [works by Apolinarius], in the beginning of his work against them, first intimates that he had contended with them in oral controversies. He commences his work in this manner:

[B]eing recently in Ancyra in Galatia, I found the church there greatly agitated by this novelty, not prophecy, as they call it, but rather false prophecy, as will be shown. Therefore, to the best of our ability, with the Lord's help, we disputed in the church many days concerning these and other matters separately brought forward by them, so that the church rejoiced and was strengthened in the truth, and those of the opposite side were for the time confounded, and the adversaries were grieved.

Having said this with other things, in the beginning of his work, he proceeds to state the cause of the above-mentioned heresy as follows:

³⁹³ Related by Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment* (J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 142.

Their opposition and their recent heresy which has separated them from the Church arose on the following account. . . [A] recent convert, Montanus by name, through his unquenchable desire for leadership, gave the adversary opportunity against him. And he became beside himself, and being suddenly in a sort of frenzy and ecstasy, he raved, and began to babble and utter strange things [tongues?], prophesying in a manner contrary to the constant custom of the Church handed down by tradition from the beginning.

Some of those who heard his spurious utterances at that time were indignant, and they rebuked him as one that was possessed, and that was under the control of a demon, and was led by a deceitful spirit, and was distracting the multitude; and they forbade him to talk, remembering the distinction drawn by the Lord and his warning to guard watchfully against the coming of false prophets.

But others imagining themselves possessed of the Holy Spirit and of a prophetic gift, were elated and not a little puffed up; and forgetting the distinction of the Lord, they challenged the mad and insidious and seducing spirit, and were cheated and deceived by him. In consequence of this, he could no longer be held in check, so as to keep silence.

Thus by artifice, or rather by such a system of wicked craft, the devil, devising destruction for the disobedient, and being unworthily honored by them, secretly excited and inflamed their understandings which had already become estranged from the true faith. And he stirred up besides two women, and filled them with the false spirit, so that they talked wildly and unreasonably and strangely, like the person already mentioned.

And the [demonic] spirit pronounced them blessed as they rejoiced and gloried in him, and puffed them up by the magnitude of his promises. But sometimes he [the demonic spirit] rebuked them openly in a wise and faithful manner, that he might seem to be a reprover.

Apolinarius goes on to distinguish between those who were tricked by the false claims to the gift of prophecy and those who were not. Concerning the latter he writes: "those of the Phrygians that were deceived were few in number." Concerning the former he says: "the arrogant spirit taught them to revile the entire universal

Church under heaven." Why were those who followed Montanism so upset with the Church?:

[B]ecause the spirit of false prophecy received neither honor from it [the Church] nor entrance into it. For the faithful in Asia met often in many places throughout Asia to consider this matter, and examined the novel utterances and pronounced them profane, and rejected the heresy, and thus these persons were expelled from the Church and debarred from communion. . . . Since, therefore, they called us slayers of the prophets because we did not receive their loquacious prophets, who, they say, are those that the Lord promised to send to the people.

Eusebius adds:

[Apolinarius] says again in the same book that the holy bishops of that time attempted to refute the spirit in [the prophetess] Maximilla, but were prevented by others who plainly co-operated with the spirit. He writes as follows:

And let not the spirit say through Maximilla, 'I am driven away from the sheep like a wolf. I am not a wolf. I am word and spirit and power.' But let [her] show clearly and prove the power in the spirit.

Apolinarius goes on to speak of the opposition that some Church leaders received from the followers of Maximilla. These leaders came "for the purpose of proving and reasoning with" her to test her claim to the gift of prophecy. However, followers of the New Prophecy as it was called "muzzled" the "mouths" of the Church leaders, "refusing to permit the false and seductive spirit to be refuted by them."

Then Eusebius relates at least one of the tests these leaders gave to the Montanist "prophets":

Again in the same work, after saying other things in refutation of the false prophecies of Maximilla, he indicates the time when he wrote these accounts, and mentions her predictions in which she prophesied wars and anarchy. Their falsehood he censures in the following manner:

And has not this been shown clearly to be false? For it is to-day more than thirteen years since the woman died, and there has been neither a partial nor general war in the world; but rather, through the mercy of God, continued peace even to the Christians."

Eusebius ends his account of Apolinarius by reminding us how seriously the second century Christians approached claims to the

gift of prophecy, and how they responded if those claims turned out to be false:

When those called to martyrdom from the Church for the truth of the faith have met with any of the so-called martyrs of the Phrygian heresy, they have separated from them, and died without any fellowship with them, because they did not wish to give their assent to the spirit of Montanus and the women.³⁹⁴

The modern Church should be embarrassed by how they differ from their second century brethren in the matter of confronting claims to the gift of prophecy. First, while our brothers thought it commendable to test Prophets, today it is considered mean or intolerant.

Then, our brothers were willing to invest the hard work of “many days” for this important work, while today we seem too lazy or indifferent about the welfare of the saints for such an endeavor.

Then, “the church rejoiced and was strengthened in the truth” by our brothers’ efforts to expose the false claims to the gift of prophecy in their day, while today the Church remains distracted, deceived, and infiltrated by such claims.

Then, our brothers called an unbiblical view of NT prophecy “heresy,” “the faithful” meeting to carefully “consider this matter” and courageously excommunicating those who promoted false ideas about this gift. Today the issue is apparently not even important enough for us to debate about, and it would not be politically correct to do so, let alone excommunicate false prophets and those who encourage them.

Then, our brothers courageously confronted the selfish “desire for leadership” among the Montanist prophets and prophetesses, but today we allow a multitude of such people to intimidate us, speak publicly to the saints, and exercise an influence they do not deserve.

Then, our brothers denounced “ecstasy” and “babbling” as counterfeit spirituality, but today many laud it as a sign of great spirituality.³⁹⁵ Our brothers then showed a great deal of discernment, understanding how the devil can deceive people, while today, “**we are . . . unaware of his schemes**” and therefore “**satan**” is very easily able to “**outwit us**” (2 Cor 2:11).

³⁹⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, V.16; online at www.ccel.org.

³⁹⁵ For a history of the Church’s attitude toward what we call *emotionalism* in public worship see 4.10-11.

Then, “those of the [Christian] Phrygians that were deceived were few in number.” Today, hundreds of millions of people have been duped by modern Montanism.

Then, our brothers demanded that someone claiming the gift of prophecy accurately predict the future. Today we seem embarrassed to even ask for such a thing.

Then, our brothers separated themselves from those who claimed, practiced, and allowed false claims to the gift of prophecy. Today, we celebrate modern Montanism because of its popularity.

Indeed, today, as never before, there is a need for the discernment and biblical knowledge to test and expose false prophets and prophetesses who are the very **“impostors [who] will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived”** whom Paul warned us of (2 Tim 3:13).

While we can provide the biblical tests necessary in this study, what is needed more than such knowledge, is the courage, and love for God and His people, to diligently carry out such tests, and then no longer allow those who fail such tests to have the privilege of speaking to the precious sheep of God whom we are *supposed* to be protecting.

E) Protection for Presumptuous Prophets:

Rom 12:6

Christ’s warning that there will be **“many”** self-deceived and deceiving people who claim to **“prophecy”** in Christ’s name suggests that biblical and diligent authentication of would-be prophets is for their own protection as well. For example, if such people knew they needed to be able to accurately predict the future in order to prove their gift, far fewer would risk the embarrassment today, and death in the OT, for wrongly perceiving themselves as possessing the gift of prophecy.

Modern would-be prophets dangerously assume that God’s attitude has changed from when He said: **“A Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say . . . must be put to death”** (Deut 18:20). Obviously, God has now set aside the death penalty for such people. But the OT command illustrates God’s attitude toward those who take a claim to the gift of prophecy so lightly. Can the multitude of “prophets” in the Church today confidently claim that God **“commanded”** them **“to say”** what they said? They had better be, because to **“presume to speak”** in God’s name

something He has *not* specifically and personally commanded the person to say, is to commit a great sin against God and His people.

Accordingly, biblical and diligent authentication would protect many would-be “prophets” from this sin. If the modern “prophets” in *prophetism* would require of *themselves* the miraculous authentication God requires, they could avoid their own grievous deception. And if Church leaders required biblical authentication of self-proclaimed “prophets” they too would keep many more of them from deceiving themselves.

It is this very kind of honest self-evaluation of our spiritual gifts that the Apostle spoke of in Romans 12 when he wrote:

For by the grace [gift of Apostle] given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure [*metron* ³⁹⁶] of faith [and corresponding spiritual gift] God has given you. . . . We have different gifts, according to the grace [and corresponding faith] given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to [*analogian*: “equal amount” ³⁹⁷] his faith [as a Prophet]. (vs. 3, 6)

³⁹⁶ In classical Greek, *metron* meant “that with which one measures” as a ruler or measuring cup (Colin Brown, “Rule, Standard, Measure” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, Colin Brown ed., 4 vols. [Zondervan, 1986], III:402). Accordingly it was used in the Greek OT to refer to measuring the temple (cf. Rev 11:1-3). Its use in the NT is illustrated in Matthew 7:2 where Jesus says, “**For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard [*metrō*] of measure [*metreite*], it will be measured [*metrēthēsetai*] to you.**”

While the result of measuring, as in “amount” can be implied (cf. Luke 6:38), its primary meaning is the instrument used to measure. Nonetheless, NT scholars have debated as to whether Paul meant a “standard” or an “amount” here, but in the end it does not matter, as both ideas are in the passage. Paul is simply wanting Christians to use the type/amount of faith they have, which will correspond to a spiritual gift they have, as a “ruler” to evaluate themselves and how they should be serving God.

³⁹⁷ *BADG* gives the meaning of *analogian* as “a state of right relationship involving proportion.” At Romans 12:6 it suggests the meaning is “each gift is accompanied by a distribution of commitment or fidelity adequate for implementing the gift.” (Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Danker, F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago University Press, 2000), *in loc.*)

This is one of the more difficult passages of Scripture to interpret, and has garnered several different views.³⁹⁸ Nonetheless, several things are clear. First, the Apostle is using “**grace**” and “**faith**” somewhat interchangeably as gifts from God, just as he has throughout Romans.³⁹⁹ Both grace and a corresponding faith are needed for spiritual gifts to operate, and God gives them both. The Apostle is saying little more throughout the passage than what he told the Ephesians: “[**T**]o each one of us **grace** [in the form of a spiritual gift, cf. v. 11] **has been given as Christ apportioned it**” (4:7).

Secondly, the faith that the Apostle speaks of here is especially attached to the use of our spiritual gifts. This becomes particularly clear in v. 6 where Paul says the grace “**gift**” of “**prophesying**” is to be used with the corresponding “**faith**” that comes with such a gift. This is precisely what the Apostle is alluding to when he introduces this passage by saying, “**For by the grace** [gift of Apostleship and its corresponding faith] **given me I say** [with certainty and divine authority] **to every one of you . . .**” (v. 3). It not only required the gift [“**grace**”] of Apostleship to command “**every one**” in the Roman church with God-like authority, but it required a certain kind of faith that accompanied the Apostle’s gift, enabling him to recognize and exercise his gift.

Accordingly, it would seem that along with the grace that God gives to exercise such gifts, God also grants the necessary faith for the operation and self-recognition of these gifts. This is something we describe as *gift faith* elsewhere in *Knowing Our God*.⁴⁰⁰ For example, it is doubtful that a person who had been given the gift of Apostle, Prophet, Pastor/leader, or Teacher is going to use their gift very confidently or consistently if they do not have much faith that they possess the gift.

Along these lines, NT scholar F. F. Bruce (1910-1990) commented: “Faith here denotes the spiritual power given to each

³⁹⁸ Dr. Stott remarks on the perceived complexity of Romans 12:3-6:

The clause “in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you (3c) is a well-known crux. C. E. B. Cranfield, with his customary thoroughness, says that ‘measure’ has seven possible meanings, ‘faith’ five, and ‘of’ two, making seventy possible combinations altogether! (*The Message of Romans* [Intervarsity, 1994], 324). Unfortunately, this would seem to be an over-complication that is not helpful.

³⁹⁹ Douglas Moo refers to this as, “the intimate relation in Paul’s thought between faith and grace” throughout Romans (*The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT) [Eerdmans, 1996], 278).

⁴⁰⁰ For further discussion of *gift faith* see chapter 6.9.

Christian for the discharge of his or her special responsibility [i.e. spiritual gift].”⁴⁰¹ Likewise, Dr. John MacArthur shares regarding

⁴⁰¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans TNTC* [Eerdmans, 1985, repr. 1999], 215.

Other commentators that agree with Bruce and MacArthur and our view include C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC) rev. ed. (Hendrickson, 1991), 217; Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Hendrickson, 1994), 610; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans (BECNT)* (Baker, 1998), 652-53; see esp. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. [Eerdmans, 1959, 1965; reprint 1997], 118-19.

Jonathan Edwards also shared our view of *gift faith* and wrote:

Self-understanding must be based on the measure of faith God has given you (also Eph. 4:7). The outward proclamation of the gospel in preaching and Scripture and the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit (8:16) remain the two standards, or the measure of faith, by which believers must judge themselves and their gifts. (ref. unavailable)

Likewise, Albert Barnes had written regarding Romans 12:6:

The word “faith” here means evidently, not the truths of the Bible revealed elsewhere; nor their confidence in God; nor their personal piety; but the extraordinary endowment bestowed on them by the gifts of prophecy. (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM [Findex.Com, 1999])

More recently, C. K. Barrett writes concerning Roman 12:3:

'Faith' is used here in a sense somewhat different from that which it has in the rest of the epistle [i.e. *saving faith*], and more akin to that of I Cor. xiii, where faith is a power given by God to do certain things (for example, to remove mountains [i.e. *miracle faith*]).

Men's opinions of themselves should be in proportion not to their natural capacities but to God's gifts; if this is so they will never (even though God calls them to be apostles) be boastful, for they will remember that they have nothing they have not received (I Cor. iv. 7). The man who is humble before God is unlikely to be arrogant before his fellow-creatures. (217)

The fact that the “**faith**” (v. 3, 6) being spoken of here is uniquely related to the recognition and exercise of spiritual gifts is demanded from the context. However, there are other views that have been adopted by the best of scholars.

The most common alternative concerning v. 6 is that Paul is actually speaking of *doctrinal faith*, in the sense that a Prophet must prophesy in accordance with the doctrines of the Christian faith. No less exegetes than Calvin, Beza, Hodge, Cranfield, Stott, and Moo have taken this view, of which Dr. Moo says, “the majority of interpreters” have as well. Accordingly, the NCV translators have v. 6 reading: “**The person who has the gift of prophecy should use that gift in agreement with the faith**” (NCV). In fact, the Reformers took their rule of interpretation, “the analogy of faith” from this verse.

Nonetheless, none of the above scholars interpret the use of “**faith**” in v. 3 as *doctrinal faith*, and it seems best to conclude that the Apostle has

Romans 12:3: "Paul is not here referring to *saving* faith, which believers already have exercised. He is speaking of . . . the kind and quantity of faith required to exercise our own particular gift."⁴⁰²

Thirdly, the Apostle recognized that different spiritual gifts require a different "**measure of faith**" (v. 3). This does not mean a different level of certainty, as if the Prophet is more certain about his gift than the Teacher or Pastor/leader is of his. As is discussed further elsewhere, an attribute of biblical "**faith is being sure . . . and certain**" (Heb 11:1).⁴⁰³ The difference of faith required for different gifts has to do with the authority and subsequent accountability of the various gifts.

For example, imagine the kind of faith that would accompany speaking extra-biblical revelation or a confident prediction of the future like the Christian Prophet Agabus did with his gift of prophecy (cf. Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-11). Remember likewise that in the OT God said, "**a Prophet who presumes to speak in My name anything I have not commanded him to say . . . must be put to death**" (Deut 18:20). Compare this with the kind of faith that would accompany the gifts of "**servicing**" or "**encouraging**" (Rom 12:7, 8). Obviously, "**prophesying**" requires a different kind of faith than simply "**encouraging**" someone.

Perhaps gifts such as "**teaching**" and "**leadership**" require a kind of faith that is something more than "**servicing**" because of their greater influence and responsibility, but not as much as "**prophesying**," as even "**teaching**" and "**leadership**" need only

not changed the theme of the passage in verse 6. Also, biblical Prophets were not restricted to revelation in accordance with established Scripture but possessed new extra-biblical revelation (cf. Eph 2:20; 3:4-5; Acts 21:10-11).

Dr. Moo seems to reject our view essentially because using "faith" as a synonym for "gifts" is not normal Pauline language, even though he recognizes that the Apostle uses "faith" and "grace" in this way. Nonetheless, he ends up concluding that "**faith**" in this passage is essentially "basic Christian faith as given equally by God to all," which in the context, makes little practical sense to us.

No one we know of before Wayne Grudem had interpreted these verses as claiming that the gift of prophecy, for example, could produce error in revelation and predictions because their faith may not be as great as a better Prophet.

⁴⁰² John MacArthur, *MacArthur's New Testament Commentary*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Parsons Technology, 1997), *in loc.*

⁴⁰³ For further discussion on the certainty of *biblical faith* see chapter 6.16.

follow the established text of Scripture, not communicate extra-biblical divinely authoritative revelations and predictions.⁴⁰⁴

Therefore, when we read, **“If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to [analogian: “in accordance with”] his faith** [as a Prophet] (v. 6), it is simply a reflection of the fact that a person with the gift of prophecy will also be given the kind of faith it requires to speak for God and confidently announce accurate predictions.

Accordingly, Charles Hodge (1797–1878) related in his day that, “perhaps the most generally received interpretation” of Romans 12:3-6 was:

Let him prophesy according to his internal convictions; that is, he must not exceed in his communication what he honestly believes to have been divinely communicated, or allow himself to be carried away by enthusiasm, to deliver, as from God, what is really nothing but his own thoughts.⁴⁰⁵

Fourthly, the Apostle is encouraging humility based on the spiritual gift a person has. The Apostle’s concern is reminiscent of the church in Corinth where it seems some were pursuing and claiming gifts they didn’t have in order to appear more spiritual.⁴⁰⁶ Paul had probably written the Corinthians on this issue just two years prior to writing this same warning in Romans,⁴⁰⁷ and it was no doubt fresh on his mind and perhaps something he feared or observed in several churches.

The Apostle’s main point in discussing *gift faith* then is a warning for people **“not [to] think of yourself more highly than you ought”** by claiming a spiritual gift you have no evidence of having. He says, **“but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith** [which accompanies the gift] **God has given you”** (v. 3). The Apostle issues a similar

⁴⁰⁴ Our view that the NT gift of prophecy was communicating divine revelation with divine authority and being authenticated by accurately predicting the future is introduced in chapter 9.1.

⁴⁰⁵ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Electronic Edition STEP Files (Findex.com, 2003), 12:3, 6. However, as noted above, this was not Hodge’s own view. Yet he expressed it better than any other commentator we have found.

⁴⁰⁶ For further discussion on the self-centered perspective on spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church see section 12.6.C.

⁴⁰⁷ Drs. Morris, Moo, and Carson put the date of 1 Corinthians at 55 and Romans at 57 (*Introduction to the New Testament* [Zondervan, 1992], 242, 283).

warning to the Galatians: **"If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself"** (Gal 6:3; cf. 2 Cor 10:12-18). He simply did not want Christians deceived about their spiritual gifts, and then presuming to have gifts such as prophesying, teaching, and leadership, and judging themselves to be something greater than they were. And they were to make this judgment based on the faith God had given them with their gift.

Accordingly, Charles Hodge had also commented in his day that "perhaps the most generally received interpretation" of the **"measure of faith"** in v. 3 was that **"faith"** was "equivalent to *gift*." The sense then is, "Let every one think of himself according to the nature or character of the gifts which he has received."⁴⁰⁸

We have demonstrated elsewhere that biblical faith is always based on sufficient evidence.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, Paul is commanding Christians to use **"sober judgment"** in evaluating what kind of *gift faith* God had given them, and what they were basing such faith on. For example, it would be arrogant and unbiblical for someone to claim they have the necessary faith to exercise the gift of **"prophesying," "teaching"** or **"leadership"** (cf. Rom 12:6-8) if they have no experiential evidence to authenticate such a claim to themselves or others. Merely assuming such abilities, based on an unreasonable faith, is the very kind of presumption and potential arrogance that Paul was warning against.

Along these lines, M. Blaine Smith writes:

In the context of the passage [Rom 12:3], "the measure of faith" refers to the manifestation of the spiritual gifts which one has experienced, that is, the evidence of spiritual gifts. Paul then proceeds in the next several verses to exhort his readers to use their particular gifts.

It is interesting that in verse 3 Paul precedes the exhortation not by telling the readers to take bold ventures of faith into areas where they are not certain of their capacities, but to think soberly about how they will serve one another in light of the gifts they already have. . . . [H]is statement indicates that there is a point at which sober thinking must take over and one must avoid venturing into areas where aptitude has not already been evidenced.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Hodge, *in loc.*

⁴⁰⁹ For further discussion of the relationship between *biblical faith* and reasonable evidence see section chapters 6.12-14.

⁴¹⁰ M. Blaine Smith, *Knowing God's Will: Finding Guidance for Personal Decisions* [InterVarsity, 1979, 1991], 191.

The “prophets” of modern *prophetism* would benefit greatly from the “**sober judgment**” Paul commands in this passage, and taking an honest look at the evidence they are basing their faith on concerning their claim to the gift of prophecy. What kind of evidence then is needed for a person to be certain they have the gift of prophecy? The evidence needed is the biblical attributes of a Christian Prophet as described throughout Book 8, including accurately predicting the future and miracle working. Let us remember that biblical “**faith is being sure**” (Heb 11:1), and as we have thoroughly demonstrated elsewhere, it is a certainty based on rational evidence, not wishful thinking.⁴¹¹

How many “prophets” today have violated the Apostle’s command and have not used “**sober judgement**” in evaluating the reasons for the faith they have to claim the gift of prophecy? How many modern “prophets” are basing such faith merely on the fact that they have a really strong emotional desire to “prophesy,” or that they have something merely encouraging to say? And because they are not basing their faith on their claim to be a Prophet on the biblical qualifications, how many then are thinking “**of [themselves] more highly than [they] ought**”?

Especially if you claim the gift of prophecy, you had better be absolutely certain you have it or you will be sinning against God and His people. Even in the *prophetists* definition of the gift as “reporting something God has spontaneously brought to mind”⁴¹² you are claiming to speak for God and you had better be right. And “**If a man’s gift is prophesying**” he will be certain, because of the nature of the gift. And that certainly will rest on the same evidence God gave other biblical Prophets, not a flutter in the gut.

While the Apostle intended the above as a warning to would-be Prophets that they need to have the necessary certainty that goes with speaking for God, so that they do not deceive themselves and others, *prophetists* have unfortunately turned it into an encouragement to prophesy even if you’re not certain about it. Accordingly, Dr. Grudem writes:

Paul says that if we have the gift of prophecy, we should use it “in proportion to our faith” (Rom. 12:6), indicating that the gift can be more or less strongly developed in different individuals, or in the same individual over a period of time. This is why Paul can remind Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift you have” (I Tim. 4:14), and can say, “I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you” (2 Tim. 1:6). It was

⁴¹¹ See endnote above.

⁴¹² Grudem, 1049.

possible for Timothy to allow his gift to weaken, apparently through infrequent use, and Paul reminds him to stir it up by using it and thereby strengthening it.

This should not be surprising, for we realize that many gifts increase in strength and effectiveness as they are used, whether evangelism, teaching, encouraging, administration, or faith [but apostleship and prophecy?]. Apollos had a strong gift of preaching and teaching, for we read that he was "mighty (or "powerful," Gk. *dynatos*) in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24 NASB). And Paul apparently had a frequently used and very effective gift of speaking in tongues because he says, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all" (I Cor. 14:18)."

All of these texts indicate that spiritual gifts may vary in strength [but apostleship and prophecy?]. If we think of any gift, whether teaching or evangelism on the one hand, or prophecy or healing on the other, we should realize that within any congregation there will be people who are very effective in the use of that gift (perhaps through long use and experience), others who are moderately strong in that gift, and others who probably have the gift but are just beginning to use it. . . .

But this leads to an interesting question: how strong does an ability have to be before it can be called a spiritual gift? How much teaching ability does someone need before he or she could be said to have a gift of teaching, for example? Or how effective in evangelism would someone need to be before we would recognize a gift of evangelism? Or how frequently would someone have to see prayers for healing answered before he or she could be said to have a gift of healing? [or how accurately would someone need to speak God's revelation or predict the future to claim the gift of prophecy?]

Scripture does not directly answer this question, but the fact that Paul speaks of these gifts as useful for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:12), and the fact that Peter likewise says that each person who has received a gift should remember to employ it "for one another" (I Peter 4: 10), suggest that both Paul and Peter thought of gifts as abilities that were strong enough to function for the benefit of the church, whether for the assembled congregation (as in prophecy or teaching), or for individuals at various times in the congregation (as helps or encouragement). Probably no definite line can be drawn in this matter . . . ⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Ibid., 1022-3.

We would humbly suggest that Dr Grudem's application of Paul's warning in Romans 12 is not only novel, but irresponsible and dangerous, for both would-be "prophets" and those who would be subjected to them.

First, let us notice how in one fell swoop, Dr. Grudem again waters down the biblical qualifications for claiming spiritual gifts such as healing and prophecy. As we have demonstrated elsewhere, those with the gift of healing in Scripture healed commandingly, consistently, and convincingly in a way that modern "faith healers" cannot even come close to.⁴¹⁴ But this is not a problem for Dr. Grudem because the requirements for claiming the gift of healing have been significantly lowered to match current phenomena, even if they don't match biblical evidence. Accordingly, Dr. Grudem can even ask the question above, "how frequently would someone have to see prayers for healing answered before he or she could be said to have a gift of healing?" That is a rather silly question if one is honest about how those with the gift of healing in Scripture healed people.

Secondly, Dr. Grudem has given would-be "prophets" permission to prophesy differently than any Prophets described in Scripture. He in fact encourages them to preface their "prophesying" with something like, "I *think* the Lord is putting on my mind that . . ." or "It *seems to me that* the Lord is showing us . . ." or some similar expression."⁴¹⁵ Such an approach, of course, reflects the fact that the modern "prophets" of *prophetism* can only communicate human suggestions, rather than divine revelations like their biblical counterparts.

Thirdly, while we might recognize the freedom for growth, experimentation, and error in the use of many spiritual gifts, such is not the case with Apostleship or prophecy. Would Dr. Grudem suggest that Paul's gift of Apostleship might waver or "vary in strength" such that what he wrote in Scripture might be prone to error? We don't think so. Accordingly, we can say that at least for one ministry gift, Paul did not mean that such *gift faith* may falter, and the result might be deception.

However, this is precisely what Dr. Grudem is claiming concerning modern "prophets." Let us be clear on one thing. The idea that biblical Prophets are prone to error in both their revelations and predictions is nothing more than a modern invention in order to support popular desires regarding the gift of prophecy.

⁴¹⁴ For biblical attributes of the gift of healing see chapter 11.1.

⁴¹⁵ Grudem, 1056.

For someone to speak “prophecy” without certainty that what they are saying is God’s very word to be believed and obeyed is the very kind of presumption that got would-be “prophets” in the OT killed. You did not have the opportunity to screw up because if God really had given you the gift of prophecy, you would not screw up. And if you were not confident of having a revelation from God, then He wanted you to be quiet.

Likewise, it is embarrassing how *prophetists* use this modern invention of “varying strengths” of the gift of prophecy in order to explain why all their “prophets” get their predictions wrong. *Prophetists* protect and encourage such false “prophets” by claiming that, although they truly have the biblical gift of prophecy, it failed in some way. Accordingly, *prophetism* has given the Church an excuse to allow false “prophets” to operate in it, and it has encouraged a multitude of people who do not have the gift, to presume they do, bringing on them the displeasure of God.⁴¹⁶

May God then give us the biblical knowledge and spiritual humility and courage to make self-proclaimed “prophets” in the Church authenticate themselves as all biblical Prophets did, in order to rid the Church of the great deal of deception occurring today.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

Father in Heaven, thank you for biblical guidelines for testing claims to speaking for You. Help us diligently watch over Your flock, protecting it from false prophets and teachers. Give us the courage and love we need to confront wolves in our midst. Amen.

Gauging Your Grasp

⁴¹⁶ For more on the anger of God toward the kind of false and presumptuous “prophesying” occurring in modern *prophetism*, see section 9.3.C.

- 1) How prevalent would you say claims to the gift of prophecy are in the Church today? Why does this highlight the need for authentication of these claims?
- 2) What is the authentication that God requires and provides for anyone claiming to be His Prophet?
- 3) Why was authentication of a Prophet important to God?
- 4) Why do we claim modern *prophetists* refuse to authenticate their gift of prophecy? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 5) What are some inadequate tests for so called "prophets"?
- 6) What are several ramifications of the fact that Jesus said Himself that "**many**" false prophets will "**prophesy**" in His "**name**" and yet be "**evildoers**" (Matt 7:22-23)?
- 7) Why does God specifically demand prediction of the future for the authentication of one of His Prophets?
- 8) Why is claiming the gift of prophecy such a monumental thing in the mind of God? What is biblical evidence for His view of false claims to this gift?
- 9) What are at least two reasons God wants claims to the gift of prophecy to be authenticated?
- 10) What do we claim is the Apostle's main point in discussing *gift faith* in Romans 12:6? Do you agree or disagree with our interpretation and why?
- 11) We claim that the idea in *prophetism* that biblical Prophets are prone to error in both their revelations and predictions is nothing more than a modern invention in order to support popular desires regarding the gift of prophecy. Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 12) What is lacking in the Church today that allows so many fake and false "prophets" to operate among God's people?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.10

The Nature of Testing Modern Prophets

Testing Prophets Not Prophecies

Table of Topics

A) Judging Prophets, Not Prophecies: *1 Cor 14:29*

B) All Tests Need to be Applied: *Deut 13:1-5*

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- In 1 Corinthians 14:29 Paul suggests that other Prophets could supernaturally authenticate other Prophets as well.
- *Prophetists* are willing to deny everything else the Bible teaches regarding biblical Prophets on two rather weak and dangerous assumptions. First, is the unlikely idea that "**the others**" who are to "**pass judgment**" on a prophetic utterance in the Corinthian church, are all of those in the congregation, not other Prophets. Dr. Grudem himself points out the absurdity of a congregation critiquing the words of a biblical Prophet such as Isaiah. So why would we interpret Paul's writing to contradict Isaiah's example instead of concur with it? If we interpret Paul's instruction to agree with the rest of the Bible, we will conclude that real God-sent Prophets did speak extra-biblical divine revelation authoritatively and accurately, and only could be critiqued on the spot by another real Prophet
- *Prophetists* would have us completely redefine biblical prophecy such that the Apostle Paul actually expected the average believer to sift through a prophetic utterance and pick out what phrases were divine commands and what was merely human suggestions or even error. This is such an absurd attitude toward the biblical teaching regarding God's Prophets that its popular acceptance seems to be yet one more piece of evidence for the lack of discernment and common sense in the Church today. Perhaps more so, such a huge presumption based on a contorted application of one statement is an illustration of how far modern *prophetism* is willing to go in order to protect its false claims to the biblical gift of prophecy.
- *Prophetists* have done to biblical prophecy what liberal "Bible scholars" have done to Scripture, giving permission to God's people to pick and choose what statements of His word they will randomly accept or reject.
- There is no such thing as an authentic Prophet of God whose

A) Judging Prophets, Not Prophecies: 1 Cor 14:29

We have already noted the early Church's concern regarding false claims to the gift of prophecy. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians:

Let two or three Prophets speak, and let the others [other Prophets] pass judgment [diakrinetōsan: "distinguish," "judge"]. But if a revelation is made to another [Prophet] who is seated, the first one [a Prophet] must keep silent. For you [Prophets] 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 . . . (1 Cor 14:29-32 NASB)

We have discussed elsewhere the fact that the Apostle Paul was concerned that some in the Corinthian church were pretending to have certain revelatory gifts they did not have.⁴¹⁷ The Corinthians themselves had asked how to distinguish legitimate spiritual gifts from those faking them. Accordingly, the Apostle had begun this section by reminding them that:

[W]hen you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:2-3).

Distinguishing who really was "**speaking by the Spirit of God**" was especially a concern in such a context when apostolic NT Scripture was not available in order to communicate and authenticate the NT revelation. At this point in Church history, that new revelation was coming exclusively from Apostles and Christian Prophets, both of whom were the revelatory "**foundation**" of the Church (Eph 2:20) because, "**the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations [had] now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [Christian] Prophets**" (Eph 3:4-5). Therefore, because Christian Prophets spoke divinely authoritative extra-biblical revelation that God expected to be believed or obeyed, it was important to know who these Prophets were.

Accordingly, we have demonstrated in chapter 9.4 that the gift of prophecy in both the OT and NT was synonymous with the

⁴¹⁷ We have discussed elsewhere the fact that the Apostle Paul was concerned that some in the Corinthian church were pretending to have certain revelatory gifts they did not have. See section 12.5.B-C.

ministry of Prophet, such that they were recognized by God's people and called such just like Apostles. In other words, the early Church knew whom "**in the church God [had] appointed first of all Apostles, second Prophets, third Teachers**" (1 Cor 12:28). As we also demonstrated in chapter 8.6, these ministries did not flit around like a virus as *prophetism* claims, such that no one really knew at any one moment who was going to be an apostle, Prophet, or teacher.

How was one recognized as having the gift, ministry, appointment, and authority of a NT Prophet? Essentially by recognizing the biblical attributes discussed in the next two chapters (9.11-12). However, in the passage above from 1 Corinthians 14, Paul suggests that other Prophets could supernaturally authenticate other Prophets as well. Evidently, Paul expected God to confirm a message through another Prophet because it would probably be other authentic Prophets that would have the ability to immediately know if what the professed "Prophet" said was the word of God. This is precisely why Paul had even appealed to other Prophets to confirm *his* authenticity (cf. 1 Cor 14:37).

Because Paul expected other Prophets to be authenticating fellow Prophets, he expected them to minister in groups. That is clearly the case in the passage above where Paul expects "**two or three Prophets [to] speak, and . . . the others [Prophets to] pass judgment,**" authenticating whether or not the person claiming to be a Prophet really was one. This reflects the fact that in the NT Prophets are often mentioned in the plural (cf. Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9). The reason that NT Prophets ministered in plurality was to authenticate one another and hold one another accountable. Accordingly, David Aune, a recognized foremost expert on the ministry of Prophets in the early Church, writes:

It is noteworthy that the occurrences of the noun *prophētēs* are almost always in the plural in the NT. . . . In Acts prophets ordinarily prophesy within the setting of a prophetic group (11:27-28; 13:1-3; cf. 15:32). . . . This suggests that prophets were primarily active in groups in the NT era. . . . This passage [1 Cor 14:29] seems to imply that when they [the Prophets] are not prophesying they are expected to participate in the evaluation of the prophetic utterances of others.⁴¹⁸

Likewise, we read in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "The prophets were exhorted to examine one

⁴¹⁸ David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (Eerdmans, 1983), 196-97.

another's works to make sure that no false teaching would arise (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-22; 1 Jn. 4: 1)."⁴¹⁹

Paul's expectation of authenticated Prophets having a responsibility to authenticate others who claimed prophecy is illustrated in the OT. In Jeremiah 28 a false prophet named Hananiah prophesied:

This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the King of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the LORD'S house that Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. (vs. 2-3)

However, the true Prophet Jeremiah responded in light of a foundational biblical test for true prophecy: "**[T]he Prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true**" (v. 9). Because Hananiah's prediction was to occur sometime within two years, it would have taken that long for the people to know who was the true Prophet of God, Hananiah or Jeremiah. However, because God wanted them to know sooner, He sent another message by Jeremiah with a more immediate authenticating sign:

Then the Prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the Prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the Earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.' " In the seventh month of that same year [2 months after giving the false prophecy], Hananiah the Prophet died. (vs. 15-17)

First, we see again God's attitude toward those who falsely presume to speak for Him. Secondly, we see God's desire to expose the false prophet. Thirdly, we see how another true Prophet can expose a false prophet. Fourthly, it is obvious that the people themselves could not have immediately distinguished Hananiah as a false prophet apart from seeing whether or not his prediction came true within two years.

Likewise, in 1 Kings 22 Micaiah the true Prophet was able to confront the false prophets and make a prediction of Ahab's soon death that would expose the latter. Once again, it required a real

⁴¹⁹ G. V. Smith, "Prophets" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), III: 987-88.

Prophet to expose a false one in the more immediate future, and God showed His desire to indeed expose false prophecy.

Unfortunately, modern *prophetism* has attempted to completely alter the biblical method of authenticating Prophets by reading modern *prophetism* into 1 Corinthians 14:29. For example, Dr. Grudem writes:

When Paul says, "Let two or three prophets speak, and *let the others weigh what is said*," he suggests that they [the congregation] should listen carefully and sift the good [statements] from the bad [statements], accepting some and rejecting the rest (for this is the implication of the Greek word *diakrinō*, here translated "weigh what is said").

We cannot imagine that an Old Testament prophet like Isaiah would have said, "Listen to what I say and weigh what is said—sort the good from the bad, what you accept from what you should not accept"! If [NT] prophecy had absolute divine authority, it would be sin to do this. But here Paul commands that it be done [by the congregation], suggesting that New Testament prophecy did not have the authority of God's very words.⁴²⁰

Dr. Grudem is willing to deny everything else the Bible teaches regarding biblical Prophets on two rather weak and dangerous assumptions. First, is the unlikely idea that "**the others**" who are to "**pass judgment**" on a prophetic utterance in the Corinthian church, are all of those in the congregation, not other Prophets. Dr. Grudem himself points out the absurdity of a congregation critiquing the words of a biblical Prophet such as Isaiah. So why would we interpret Paul's writing to contradict Isaiah's example instead of concur with it? If we interpret Paul's instruction to agree with the rest of the Bible, we will conclude that real God-sent Prophets did speak extra-biblical divine revelation authoritatively and accurately, and only could be critiqued on the spot by another real Prophet. Accordingly, the simple statement "**the others**" in the context of how "**two or three Prophets**" are to minister, most clearly refers to other Prophets. If Paul had meant otherwise, it would seem he would have said, "the church," or "everybody else" was to pass judgment on the divinity of a prophetic utterance.

There would be nothing unbiblical about claiming that God's people are to discern true from false Prophets. They are, in fact, commanded to (cf. Deut 18:17-22; Matt 7:15-23). However, the reason that it is an issue here is that the assumption that Paul *does not* mean other Prophets were to judge other Prophets, is

⁴²⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1054.

foundational to Dr. Grudem's second assumption regarding 1 Corinthians 14:29.

Dr. Grudem would have us completely redefine biblical prophecy such that the Apostle Paul actually expected the average believer to sift through a prophetic utterance and pick out what phrases were divine commands and what was merely human suggestions or even error. There is no biblical precedent for such a thing. Read God's instruction on testing a prophet in the OT and ask if He expected His people to reject an individual prophecy, but still accept the Prophet:

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims [foretells ⁴²¹] in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deut 18:18-22)

We will discuss further the importance of prediction in the authentication of a Prophet in the next chapter. Here we simply want to notice that in this biblical instruction regarding the testing of Prophets, it was the prophet themselves who were to be tested, not the prophecies.

Dr. Grudem's position on testing prophets is such an absurd attitude toward the biblical teaching regarding God's Prophets, that its popular acceptance seems to be yet one more piece of evidence for the lack of discernment and common sense in the Church today.

⁴²¹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch confirm that the "proclamation" being described here refers to prediction:

The false prophet was to be discovered by the fact, that the word proclaimed by him did not follow or come to pass, i.e., that his prophecy was not fulfilled. Of him they were not to be afraid. By this injunction the occurrence of what had been predicted is made the criterion of true prophecy, and not signs and wonders, which false prophets could also perform (cf. Deut 13:2ff.). (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.com, 2000), Deut 18:18)

⁴²² Perhaps more so, such a huge presumption based on a contorted application of one statement is an illustration of how far modern *prophetism* is willing to go in order to protect its false claims to the biblical gift of prophecy.

Once again, leaders of *charismaticism* ⁴²³ do not seem to think through the logical consequences of their false teachings. What *prophetists* are admitting is a person with the real biblical gift of prophecy could speak a few sentences and some of the statements would be false and misleading and some of them would be the authoritative word of God that must be believed and obeyed. And such a person is still to be considered as possessing the gift of prophecy? Once again, *charismaticism's* dilution and perversion of biblical gifts for the purpose of defending their false claims to them is inexcusable. They have done to biblical prophecy what liberal "Bible scholars" have done to Scripture, giving permission to God's people to pick and choose what statements of His word they will randomly accept or reject.

Before moving on, let us note how rather bizarre the actual implementation of *prophetism's* view on testing "prophets" is in real life. Accordingly, a foremost leader of *charismaticism*, Dr. Michael Green, writes:

Sometimes one part of the ["Prophet's"] message is seen at once to be appropriate, and the rest not so. I recall one such incident when the Archbishop of Canterbury was present and a prophetic word was brought forward. The two of us who were leading the service went over to the Archbishop, and all three of us were clear that the first half of the message was really a word from God and should be read to the people, while the other part, though worthy enough in itself, was not what was needed at that time.⁴²⁴

Is that how the Lord of these men intended them to understand the ministry of one of His Prophets? Are we so eager for

⁴²² The popularity of the view that the Apostle Paul intended the Corinthian congregation to sift through prophetic utterances, is evidenced by its acceptance in virtually all of the most respected modern commentaries on 1 Corinthians including: Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT)* (Eerdmans, 1987); C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (BNTC)* (Hendrickson, 2000); D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Baker, 1987); and Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Eerdmans, 2000).

⁴²³ For a definition of *charismaticism* see endnote in chapter 8.2.

⁴²⁴ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Eerdmans, 2004), 261.

extra-biblical revelation that we will accept “prophets” who in the same utterance speak something that is “really a word from God” and something which, “probably proceeded from the speaker and not from God”? And if the statement truly is extra-biblical, then how could anyone tell if it is from God without the miraculous authentications God Himself prescribed? Or if the “prophetic” statement is simply a biblical statement that can be accepted, then why call it “prophecy” at all? What if some of the statements the “prophet” said were “good” and some were “bad”? Was the person still to be considered a Prophet?

Dr. Gordon Fee, one of the most respected Pentecostal NT scholars in the world, suggests that “we cannot be certain as to how Paul would have understood the . . . source” of such a false utterance.⁴²⁵ Really? Even though Dr. Fee admits repeatedly that Paul’s view of Prophets stemmed from his OT background?⁴²⁶ It seems that *prophetism* hardly even attempts to answer the important questions its view produces.

What of Dr. Grudem’s suggestion that Paul’s mere use of *diakrinetōsan* [“distinguish,” “judge”] means that the Corinthian Christians in general were to “sift the good [statements of a Christian “prophet”] from the bad [statements], accepting some and rejecting the rest.” That is not at all a necessary interpretation of Paul’s words. First of all, there is no biblical precedent for such an idea, let alone a historical one in the Church. On the other hand, our interpretation that Prophets were to be protecting the church from false “prophets” has both. And there are no biblical or practical arguments against our interpretation except *prophetism’s* passion to find biblical support for their second-rate Prophets.

Secondly, the Bible is clear that the testing of Prophets was in order to distinguish between false “prophets” and real ones, which are the only two kinds of Prophets there are. There is no such thing as an authentic Prophet of God whose prophesying is at times authoritative and accurate and at other times is not, as *prophetism* suggests. *Inconsistency always reveals a false “prophet.”* And *prophetism’s* only evidence against this clear biblical teaching is to read into one Greek word the idea that the actual statements of the “prophets” are being sifted by the congregation, rather than people being distinguished as false or true Prophets by other authenticated Prophets.

⁴²⁵ Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Hendrickson, 1994), 62.

⁴²⁶ For Dr. Fee’s belief that Paul’s understanding of the gift of prophecy stemmed from OT Prophets see section 9.4.A.

This leads to our third point that *diakrinō* simply does not carry the rather complex meaning Dr. Grudem and other *prophetists* want to give it.⁴²⁷ Paul intended the prophetic utterance to be evaluated *as a whole* in order to expose a person as falsely claiming to speak for God in the congregation. Dr. Grudem reads his *propheticism* into the statement when he suggests Paul intended the prophetic utterance to be evaluated piecemeal, accepting parts and rejecting others, but still, in general, accepting the person as possessing the gift of prophecy.

Our claim that Paul intended prophetic utterances to be evaluated *as a whole* instead of piecemeal is supported by his use of the word group *krinō* earlier in the passage when he writes of the spiritual gift of **"distinguishing [*diakriseis*] of spirits"** [not individual and intermixed statements] (12:10). The purpose of this gift was obviously to distinguish between utterances made by the

⁴²⁷ In the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)*, Friedrich Büchsel in the entry for "*diakrinō*" states: "In the NT it does not occur in its original spatial sense, only in the fig. 'To make a distinction between persons'" (G. Kittel and G. Friedrich eds., 10 vols.; trans. G. W. Bromiley [Eerdmans, 1964-76], 3:946). In this category with the active voice, he includes Acts 11:12 (assuming the active voice is read); 15:9; 1 Cor 4:7; 11:29; and 14:29.

Likewise, Bruce Compton of Detroit Baptist Seminary comments on Dr. Grudem's interpretation of 1 Cor 14:29:

The verb Paul employs has a wide semantic range, as Grudem recognizes. While it can carry the sense that Grudem gives it in 1 Corinthians 14:29, that of examining something where there are several options, it can also have the sense of examining something where only two options are in view. Paul uses it in the latter sense in 1 Corinthians 4:7 of judging one person superior to another, and in 11:29 of a failure to distinguish the proper use or purpose of the Lord's Supper from an improper one.

Thus, the verb in 1 Corinthians 14:29 could easily refer to distinguishing a true prophet from a false prophet by weighing the accuracy of each prophecy. This is precisely how the cognate noun is used in 1 Corinthians 12:10, where the idea is that of discerning between true and false prophets based on the content of their prophecies. . .

Grudem points to 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21, "Do not despise prophetic utterances, but examine everything *carefully*," as the key parallel in support of his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:29. Yet the verb used in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 is the same verb used in 1 John 4:1 where John says, "Test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." And, Grudem places this latter passage in the category of testing the prophets to judge the true from the false. ("*1 Corinthians 13:8-13 And The Cessation Of Miraculous Gifts*" *DBSJ* 9 (2004), 114-15)

Holy Spirit and those that were made merely by the human's "spirit" or even a demonic one. There was no dangerous grey area for the Apostle as there is in *prophetism* for people to make error filled utterances in the name of "prophecy" but still be considered a Prophet.⁴²⁸

Accordingly, it was not merely individual prophecies that were to be evaluated for their own sake as if a true Prophet could at one time speak a true prophecy and at another speak a false one. It is even more absurd to believe as *prophetists* do that a true and false statement could be in the same prophetic utterance. On the contrary, Christian Prophets were thoroughly and miraculously authenticated in the midst of those they were to exercise authority over, just like their OT counterparts; and then their prophetic utterances were to be believed and obeyed as the word of God, just like their OT counterparts.

⁴²⁸ Along these lines, NT scholar Thomas Edgar writes:

Another argument, that the word "discern" (Gk. *diakrinō*) means that the hearers are to sift out the good from the bad in a prophecy, thus indicating that it may contain both good and bad, is based on an untenable meaning for the word. The word *diakrinō* does not imply that there is both good and bad to be sifted out. It is often used in a context such as this in reference to rendering judgment between two people, that is, determining which one is right and which one is wrong. In contrast to the assertions [of *prophetists*] that it [*diakrinō*] differs from *krinō*, "to judge," is the fact that it [*diakrinō*] is used thirteen times in this way [synonymous with *krinō*] in the Septuagint, and in nine of these passages it is explicitly equated with either *krinō* or *krīsis*. Thus, Carson's and Grudem's statements about the meaning of *diakrinō* here have little basis in fact.

In the New Testament it can also mean to judge or evaluate people. In fact, it is used earlier in this epistle (I Cor. 6:5) in the same way as in the Septuagint (see, e.g., Exod. 18:16; 1 Kings 3:9; Zech. 3:7 and many other passages in the Old Testament). If there is any sifting out, it is only in order to pass judgment regarding the persons being judged. Carson's statement that "discern" refers to judging the prophecy itself, if correct, would mean to judge whether the entire prophecy were true or false [in order to discern whether the "Prophet" were true or false]. It would not mean to sift out the good from the bad and consider the good parts as from God and the Prophet as a genuine Prophet. This is contrary to biblical practice.

The normal use of *diakrinō* in this kind of context would mean to render a judgment in regard to people. It would fit well with the admonitions to test the spirits and with Paul's statement at the beginning of this section that speakers can communicate from different sources of revelation. ("The Cessation of the Sign Gifts" *Bsac* 145 (1988), 80-81)

Accordingly, Dr. Aune points to the early Christian document the *Didache* (c. A. D. 70) for evidence that early Christian communities first certified Prophets but did not judge them while prophesying.⁴²⁹ In this first century Christian document containing apostolic instructions for church life, and which many in the ancient church considered to be Scripture, we read:

Also, do not test or evaluate any Prophet who speaks in the spirit, for every sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. However, not everyone who speaks in the spirit is a Prophet, but only if he exhibits the Lord's ways. By his conduct, therefore, will the false Prophet and the Prophet be recognized.

Furthermore, any Prophet who orders a meal in the spirit shall not partake of it; if he does, he is a false Prophet. If any Prophet teaches the truth, yet does not practice what he teaches, he is a false Prophet. But any Prophet proven to be genuine who does something with a view to portraying in a worldly manner the symbolic meaning of the church" (provided that he does not teach you to do all that he himself does) is not to be judged by you, for his judgment is with God. Besides, the ancient Prophets also acted in a similar manner.

But if anyone should say in the spirit, "Give me money," or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he tells you to give on behalf of others who are in need, let no one judge him. . . . But every genuine Prophet who wishes to settle among you "is worthy of his food."⁴³⁰

Dr. Grudem has admitted that the teaching of the *Didache* disagrees with his own interpretation of the NT regarding Christian Prophets, and has dismissed it as being in error. On the contrary, the *Didache*, which multitudes of first and second century Christian churches used as a manual for early Church life, is in perfect agreement with the NT.⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Aune, 226.

⁴³⁰ *The Teaching of the Twelve (Didache)*, 11.7-12, 13.1; online at www.ccel.org.

⁴³¹ Dr. David Farnell of Dallas Theological Seminary has written the following in the *BSac Journal*:

Dr. Grudem also acknowledges that the *Didache* contains statements contradictory to his hypothesis. *Didache* 11 is directly contrary to his view that the authority of New Testament "congregational" prophecy does not extend to the words spoken by the Prophets. Grudem admits that according to *Didache* 11.7, postapostolic church Prophets "were speaking with a divine authority

As we have noted above, the biblical view is that those with the NT gift of prophecy like Agabus, Judas, and Silas, were recognized as having the ongoing ministry of Prophet because they had been miraculously authenticated as such. After such authentication according to the biblical guidelines discussed in the next chapters, it was sin to sift through the Prophet's statements privately determining what one was going to believe and obey and what one was going to reject.

Accordingly, both the *Didache* and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 140 A. D.) speak extensively about testing those claiming the gift of prophecy, but never of sifting through prophecies to determine good and bad elements, but rather to use the biblical attributes of this

that extended to their actual words." [*The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, 107].

In 11.7, the *Didache* notes that "you must neither make trial of nor pass judgment on any Prophet who speaks forth in the spirit. For every (other) sin will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven" (cf. Matt 12:31). Here the thrust of the passage emphasizes that the authority of the New Testament Prophet extended to the words of the prophecy uttered.

Grudem tries to counter this manifest contradiction to his hypothesis by stating that *Didache* 11.7 "almost directly contradicts Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:29" regarding the evaluation of Prophets. Because of this, he hastily dismisses the data on New Testament Prophets and prophecy supplied by the *Didache* in this verse and throughout the entire work. . . . (*BSac* 150:597 [Jan 93], 67)

Because of the value of the *Didache* regarding the early Church's understanding of the NT gift of prophecy, and its disagreement with Dr. Grudem's view, he argues at length that many other sections of this early Christian document are at odds with the NT as well. However, Dr. Farnell writes a rather lengthy response to these attacks on the biblical nature of the *Didache* and concludes:

Grudem's unwarranted dismissal of the *Didache* cannot be overly stressed. He cites additional passages that he alleges are contradictory to New Testament teaching (*Didache* 1.6; 4.14; 6.3; 7.1-4; 8.1, 3; 9.1-5; 10.7; 11.5; 16.2). On this basis he refuses to accept the data on New Testament Prophets and prophecy supplied by the *Didache*. However, none of the examples he cites are actual contradictions to the New Testament. (*Ibid.*, 68)

gift to discern between real and false Prophets.⁴³² Accordingly, Dr. David Farnell of Dallas Theological Seminary concludes after a study of this evidence: "While Prophets were to be examined, that examination need not be continued after an individual had been approved by the community as a genuine Prophet."⁴³³

⁴³² Dr. Thiselton recognizes this in the *Didache* and comments: "It is essential to note how rapidly the early church [reflected in the *Didache*] came to hold a different view from that of Paul, at least in some circles" (1141). Why not rather see the early Church as in agreement with Paul that false Prophets were to be distinguished from true ones rather than false statements by true Prophets?

⁴³³ Farnell, 286. However, Dr. Farnell seems to contradict himself elsewhere when he writes:

1 Kings 13 also reveals an important phenomenon of prophetic conflict, namely, that testing must extend to prophetic words, even the words of Prophets who have already proven themselves as servants of Yahweh. . . . [A] lesson of the narrative is that all prophecies must be examined; and even if a word comes from an established Prophet, it must be rejected if it contradicts the commands of Yahweh. (253)

Dr. Farnell's error is his assumption that the man called a "Prophet" in 1 Kings 13 was a Prophet of God like the "man of God" he intentionally deceived. Jesus said we will know false prophets from their virtue, and this man was accordingly no Prophet of God. For further discussion of 1 Kings 13 see section 9.12.D.

Dr. Farnell goes on to write:

Even respected Prophets encouraged the ongoing examination of their words. For example, Isaiah offered both to Ahaz and to Hezekiah a confirmatory sign of specific oracles (Isa 7:11; 38:7, 22; 2 Kgs 20:8-11). It is understandable that Isaiah might validate his word in the presence of Ahaz, the unbeliever. However, in the service of Hezekiah, Isaiah was accepted as a true Prophet. Therefore, why did Hezekiah require of Isaiah an authenticating test, unless the testing of specific oracles (i.e., words) was as valid as testing the Prophet's personal status? In a similar way, Elisha offered an authenticating sign in spite of the fact that he had already been acknowledged by Jehoshaphat to be a true Prophet (2 Kgs 3:17-20).

Unfortunately, Dr. Farnell is making sweeping statements based on very little evidence. As for Isaiah 7:11, God Himself offered the sign, it was not asked for. The same is true of Elisha's "authenticating sign" in 2 Kings 3:17-20. In addition, Dr. Farnell's reference to this incident is misleading because the "authenticating sign" was providing the Israelites with water of which they were out of (cf. v. 9), not simply to authenticate Elisha. The only real example that Dr. Farnell has to support his claim that judging the prophecies of previously authenticated Prophets was the norm is the one time in which Hezekiah asked for an authenticating sign that Isaiah's prophecy of his healing would come to pass. On one hand, there was nothing wrong with Hezekiah's request. However, it is wrong

Likewise, Professors Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis from Denver Seminary write:

The crucial issue for the people was not deciding what to accept and reject from among the Prophets' teachings, but whether the alleged Prophets communicated truth from God or spoke presumptuously. . . . Once the credentials of Moses, for example, were verified, his teaching was to be received as true on his authority and obeyed as God's teaching. The Prophet's teaching was not merely a fallible witness to a noncognitive divine act, encounter, or relationship. What an accredited Prophet taught was the normative Word of God. It ought to be received as true and obeyed.⁴³⁴

Finally, Dr. Robert Thomas of the Master's Seminary concludes in his study of the subject:

Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 14:29 and 1 Thess 5:20-22 are manifestly consistent with the broader context of NT teaching on the subject of judging prophecies. According to that teaching, the churches judged prophecies in order to distinguish between true and false Prophets (1 John 4:1-6; cf. Matt 7:15-20 with Matt 12:32-37 and 24:23-26). . . .

In the light of these factors, I would contend that for Paul, as for the rest of the NT, the judging of prophecies was a process of evaluating the Prophets' words in order to pass judgment on the Prophets themselves. Significantly, when interpreted in this way, the judging of NT Prophets looks quite similar to the judging of OT Prophets [cf. Deut 18:17-22].

The "others" of 1 Corinthians 14:29 who were called on to discern the validity of prophecies were the other Prophets. "Others" does not refer to the entire congregation who were left to form subjective opinions about the prophecies. Nor does the evaluation of prophecies by others imply the presence of both true and false elements in the prophecy.⁴³⁵

to claim from this example, as Dr. Farnell does, that this was a common place occurrence and that God's Prophets were often prone to deception and error.

⁴³⁴ Bruce Demarest & Gordon R. Lewis, *Integrative Theology*, 3 Vols. (Zondervan, 1987, 1990, 1994), 113-14

⁴³⁵ Robert Thomas, "Prophecy Rediscovered?" *Bsac* 149 (Jan-Mar) 1992, 92. Elsewhere, Dr. Thomas notes that several highly respected sources agree with our view, and disagree with Dr. Grudem's *prophetism* view. These include: (G. Friedrich, "Prophetēs" (*TDNT*), 855; David Hill, *New Testament Prophecy* (John Knox Press), 133; and Aune, 196.

Dr. Thomas' mention of the "judging of OT Prophets" is worth noticing. Read how God wanted prophets tested and see

B) All Tests Need to be Applied: *Deut 13:1-5*

Deuteronomy 13 introduces us to the complexity of authenticating Prophets. God said:

If a Prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that Prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. . . . That Prophet or dreamer must be put to death . . . You must purge the evil from among you.
(vs. 1-3, 5)

Several points can be made. First, the reason that such miraculous and predictive powers would be so deceiving is that they were precisely what God Himself had prescribed as the authenticating signs of one of His Prophets (cf. Deut 18:21-22). Secondly, God is speaking of real miracles, not fake ones.⁴³⁶ Thirdly, we see that God suggests an additional test of authentication in such a circumstance. Miracle working or supernatural prediction is not enough, because as we have discussed at length elsewhere, the devil can do miracles in order to deceive God's people.⁴³⁷

It is because of this that all of the biblical authenticating criteria for divine Prophets must be applied in order to confidently accept someone as such a Prophet. If it is not enough that they even predict and perform a miracle, then it certainly isn't enough that they are just nice or seem conforming to Christian doctrine. Accordingly, while all of the criteria discussed in the next two chapters for authenticating someone claiming the gift of prophecy

⁴³⁶ Regarding demonic miracle working see section 10.6.A.

⁴³⁷ Regarding demonic miracle working see section 10.6.A and chapters 11.11-13.

are biblical and critical, each of them, in isolation, have their limitations, as will be discussed as we go along.⁴³⁸

Fourthly, we notice again the importance God places on diligently authenticating anyone claiming to be a Prophet. A failure to do so is to fail the divine test of whether **“you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”** Failing to discern, reject, and confront a false “prophet” does not only display spiritual laziness or selfish ambition, but a lack of love for the Lord.

Finally, we see the seriousness of falsely claiming to be a Prophet of the Lord or to give instruction in His name that is different than He would want. In OT times, such a, **“Prophet or dreamer must be put to death”** in order to **“purge the evil from among you”** (v. 5)

In terms of authenticating real Prophets and exposing false ones, there are two general levels of criteria. The first level is physical miracles such as miracle working or prediction. Applying this biblical criteria exposes virtually every single “prophet” in modern *prophetism* as a fraud. They do not work miracles and they do not accurately predict the future as biblical Prophets did.

However, Deuteronomy 13 warns us of a miracle working and accurately predicting false “prophet.” This is where supernatural virtue must be the final authentication, as we conclude in chapter 9.12.⁴³⁹

Accordingly, we see again how *prophetism* has perverted prophetic authentication such that false “prophets” are allowed to abound in their midst. While the first line of defense should be miracle-working and/or accurate prediction, modern *prophetism* does not even require this of their second-rate “prophets.” Nor do they often apply the second line of defense which is real, proven, Christ-likeness. Instead, just about any person with a “charismatic” personality in public that sounds Christian is allowed to speak in God’s name to God’s people. And it makes the devil laugh.

Extras & Endnotes

⁴³⁸ For further discussion of the complexity of authenticating Prophets see Aune, 87-88.

⁴³⁹ For a fuller discussion of the fact that supernatural virtue is the ultimate test for those claiming to speak for God, see section 9.12.D.

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) We claim that "**the others**" who were to evaluate a Prophet according to 1 Corinthians 14:29 were other Prophets. What biblical support do we give for this? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 2) We claim that the evaluation that Paul is calling for was to distinguish between false and true Prophets, not false and true individual and mixed statements that a Prophet could make. What biblical support do we give for our view? Do you agree or disagree and why? Paul suggests that other Prophets could supernaturally authenticate other Prophets as well.
- 3) What are the dangerous and silly ramifications of *prophetism's* method of testing its "prophets"?
- 4) What are the ramifications of Deuteronomy 13:1-5 on the testing of Prophets?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.11

The Test of Prediction for Modern Prophets

If Not Faultless Then Fraudulent

Primary Points

- We doubt God intended anyone to be called a Prophet at all, if they could not accurately foretell the future.
- Virtually every Prophet named in Scripture is described as making a prediction which history records having been fulfilled in OT or NT times.
- It is absurd the none of the “prophets” of modern *prophetism* have done the same, and yet people still accept them as Prophets.
- Revealed prophecy begins in Genesis and continues to Revelation.
- “The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies.”
- The historically fulfilled prophecies of the Bible are the most convincing evidence for the unique divinity of Scripture.
- “Christianity, the Judeo-Christian faith, is unique in that respect. There is no other religion that has prophecy in it.”
- The *foretelling*, not just the *forthtelling* of Prophets resulted in “**strengthening, encouragement and comfort**” (1 Cor 14:3).
- Virtually *all* of the pronouncements of Christian Prophets described in Scripture involved foretelling the future.
- The *prophetist’s* accusation against the accuracy of Agabus’ prophecies is a very one, and all to justify their second-rate unbiblical prophecy.
- Deut 13:1-5 warns us that supernatural prediction is not a self-sufficient authentication of a Prophet. Demons can provide counterfeits.
- Even though secular prophets (e.g. Nostradamus, Jeanne Dixon) claimed to be prophets from God, not one of their predictions have come true.
- Unfortunately, *prophetism* has its modern “prophets” as well,

A) The Test of Prediction for Biblical Prophets: *And the Authentication of Scripture*

In previous chapters we have noted God's foundational statement in Deuteronomy 18 regarding biblical Prophets. In light of the fact that Prophets speak His very word, God answered an obvious and important question:

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims [foretells ⁴⁴⁰] in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deut 18:18-22)

Likewise, the Prophet Jeremiah proclaimed: **"The Prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true"** (Jer 28:9). Accordingly, as we read in Isaiah, God worked to make the predictions of His Prophets come true, and to make those of false prophets fail:

I am the LORD, Who has made all things . . . Who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners . . . Who carries out the words of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers. (Isa 44:24-26; cf. Isa 41:22-23; 42:8-9; Jer 14:14-15; Ezek 13:6)

While there were other authenticating attributes of Prophets that will be discussed in the next chapter, prediction is the foundational one, and we doubt God intended anyone to be called a Prophet at all, if they could not accurately foretell the future. Accordingly, virtually every Prophet specifically named in Scripture is described as making a prediction which either secular or biblical history records as having been fulfilled in either OT or NT times.

⁴⁴⁰ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch confirm that the "proclamation" being described here refers to prediction:

The false prophet was to be discovered by the fact, that the word proclaimed by him did not follow or come to pass, i.e., that his prophecy was not fulfilled. Of him they were not to be afraid. By this injunction the occurrence of what had been predicted is made the criterion of true prophecy, and not signs and wonders, which false prophets could also perform (cf. Deut 13:2ff.). (*Commentary on the Old Testament*, Electronic Edition STEP Files CD-ROM (Findex.com, 2000), *Deut 18:18*)

The only true Prophets not described as making predictions are females (cf. Miriam, Exod 15:20; Philips four daughters, Acts 21:9). Nonetheless, we have no doubts these Prophetesses also made miraculous authenticating predictions, or they wouldn't have been called Prophetesses. All other Prophets named in Scripture are explicitly described as being authenticated by making predictions that were accurately fulfilled.⁴⁴¹ Which again, makes it rather absurd the none of the "Prophets" of modern *prophetism* have done the same, and yet people still accept them as Prophets.

It should not surprise us that God's messengers would be able to predict the future, as their Master is the One who knows and ultimately controls all of it. It is such a divine attribute, revealed through His Prophets, that sets Him above all the satanic and human invented gods throughout history. In the context of proclaiming His superiority over false gods, the real God spoke of His proven ability to predict the future through Isaiah:

I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things [I predicted] have come to pass, now I declare new things [predictions]; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you. . . .

I am the LORD . . . who foils the signs of false Prophets and makes fools of diviners, [but] who carries out the words of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers. (Isa 42:8-9; 44:24)

One of the many reasons there is no other god besides our God is that only our God knows and controls the future. Which is why fulfilled prophecy is especially His signature on His revelation and its messengers the Prophets. Accordingly, revealed prophecy begins in Genesis (cf. 3:15) and continues all through Scripture to Revelation. And a major part of those prophecies have already been fulfilled.

Obviously, the topic of prophecy is a very significant one. Accordingly, we devote a great deal of discussion to it in chapter 9.8, particularly describing several biblical prophecies that have already been specifically and miraculously fulfilled in history. Here we wish to briefly mention its significance as an authentication of Scripture, and then to demonstrate the need for this ability in anyone calling themselves a Prophet of God.

Speaking c. 200 A. D., the early Church leader Tertullian wrote in a defense for the divinity of Scripture: "I suggest that the

⁴⁴¹ Even though we believe the vast majority of John's Revelation is to be fulfilled in the future, he did make some predictions that no doubt came true in a relatively short period of time (cf. 2:10, 21-23).

fulfillment of prophecy is sufficient witness to the divine origin thereof.”⁴⁴² Some years later, the Christian apologist Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) said as well: “The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies.”⁴⁴³

Indeed, the historically fulfilled prophecies of the Bible are the most convincing evidence for the unique divinity of Scripture. And not one shred of historical or archeological evidence has proven a single historically fulfilled prophecy false. In fact, it is through “secular” research that we have confirmation of the fulfillments of Isaiah’s prophecies of the destruction of Ninevah in 612 B.C. (cf. Isa 10:5-34; 14:24-27), Babylon in 539 B.C. (Isa 21:1-10; 47:1-15; Dan 2-5); Edom in 550 B.C. (cf. Isa 21:11-12; Jer 49:7-22), and Tyre in 332 B.C. (cf. Isa 23:1-18; Ezek 26 & 27).

J. Barton Payne, in his classic *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies*, calculates that 27% of the Bible is made up of prophecy.⁴⁴⁴ The influential Baptist teacher W. A. Criswell has remarked:

Of the more than six thousand verses of prophecy in the Bible, about three thousand have already been fulfilled, [and] we may conclude that the other three thousand verses of prophecy are going to be fulfilled in the years to come.⁴⁴⁵

Perhaps the best known fulfilled prophecies concern the first coming of Christ. Their miraculous nature is described by the NT scholar Rene Pache:

Now, it is affirmed that 333 of the prophecies concerning Christ have been fulfilled! According to the law of probabilities, there would be one chance out of 83 billion that so many predictions would come true in the case of one single individual. Needless to say, such a “chance” does not exist, and no one but the omniscient God could predict and act like this.⁴⁴⁶

Dr. Criswell goes on to state:

⁴⁴² Tertullian, *Apology*, 20.1; online at www.ccel.org.

⁴⁴³ W. A. Criswell, *Bibliology*, vol. 1 in *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, 8 vols. (Zondervan, 1982), 89.

⁴⁴⁴ J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Baker, 1980), 675.

⁴⁴⁵ W.A. Criswell, *Why I Preach That the Bible is True* (Broadman, 1969), 33.

⁴⁴⁶ Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Moody, 1969), 282-4.

Christianity, the Judeo-Christian faith, is unique in that respect. There is no other religion that has prophecy in it. There is no other religious book that has prophecy in it. Gautama Buddha, Krishna the Hindu, or Muhammad the Prophet dare not predict the future. If they attempted to do so, it would have revealed that they were charlatans and deceivers. They could not do it. But these men of God in the Bible, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, described events thousands of years before they came to pass, and they did it in minute detail as intimately as if they were standing there face to face with the Lord or at the foot of the cross.⁴⁴⁷

Predictions have proven to be such a risky business for mere humans, they are wise to not even attempt it, which is generally the case for non-Christian religions. Norm Geisler responds to the claim that other religions do involve miraculously fulfilled prophecies:

First, it is not true that other religions have specific, repeated, and unfulfillment of predictions many years in advance of contingent events over which the predictor had no control. These kinds of predictions are unique to the Bible. . . . R. S. Foster says of other holy books and the writings of pagan religions:

No well-accredited prophecy is found in any other book or even oral tradition now extant, or that has ever been extant in the world. The oracles of heathenism are not to be classed as exceptions. There is not a single one of them that meets the tests required to prove supernatural agency, which every Scripture prophecy evinces.

M'Ilvaine adds:

[T]he history of pagan nations indeed abounds with stories of auguries and oracles and detached predictions. . . . But innumerable distance separates all the pretended oracles of paganism from the dignity of the prophecies of the Bible.

After making a careful examination of Hebrew and Pagan Prophets, Calvin Stow concluded that there were no credible prophecies in other writings, but that each "is just what we

⁴⁴⁷ Criswell, *Bibliology*, 89-90.

would expect from men of this world, who have no faith in another.”⁴⁴⁸

While Bible prophecy requires some careful study to appreciate, it is clear that God intended it to be accessible enough for all to readily see this miracle in Scripture. Accordingly, someone has written:

God did not hide His message to us, encoding it in the Bible to be ferreted out only by those with great theological knowhow or modern technology. No, He communicated His truth to us clearly, that we might understand and obey. "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (Deut. 30:14). You don't need a mathematical formula to search for prophecies in the Bible or to authenticate its message. All you must do is read the Bible-God's Word. It is complete and sufficient. Unlike the vague prophecies of Nostradamus, or the random ELS occurrences of the Bible Code, only the Bible is clear, authoritative, and accurate in all its prophecies.⁴⁴⁹

Again, we explain a number of these fulfilled prophecies in chapter 9.8. Here, our purpose is to demonstrate that anyone having the gift of NT prophecy was also given the ability to miraculously predict the future in order to authenticate themselves.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁸ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (BECA) (Baker, 1999), 615.

⁴⁴⁹ Reference unavailable.

⁴⁵⁰ Dr. Hilbur shares regarding the test of prediction for prophecy:

It might be asked that if prediction was to initially authenticate a prophet, then did the people have to wait for a prophet's prediction to come true? Yes, but the prediction could be something that could be observed rather immediately, like Elijah's promise it would not rain (1 Kgs 17) and his challenge to the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18). If, however, the prophecy did not concern the people being spoken to, and was to be fulfilled in the far future, then for that particular prophecy, the prophet did not need authentication.

The Scriptures give no indication that this test of accuracy is not valid today in evaluating a person's claim to be a prophet. Because of **the** immense authority that biblical prophets possessed, they were held to very strict standards. The requirement of predicting the future effectively guarded the gift of prophecy from demonic counterfeiting as only God knows the future perfectly. When this requirement is removed, the biblical and only sure safeguard is removed as well.

That God expected Israel to base decisions on faith is perhaps supported by Isa 8:19–20, where failure to recognize the prophecies of Isaiah indicated lack of spiritual illumination. However, it is important to observe the role of signs as a public test to prophetic authenticity. Isaiah offered an authenticating sign (at least to Ahaz) for his salvation message (Isa 7:14), perhaps because it did deviate from the general message of doom that characterized the prophetic era.

It might be argued that in the case of Micaiah, the authenticating test of fulfillment would have come too late (i.e., in the midst of battle) to be of help at the moment of decision between Micaiah and Zedekiah. But the fact that Micaiah was willing to submit himself to a decisive public test sets him apart from the prophets he opposed. Perhaps in this case the test of orthodoxy should have been sufficient, and so the kings deserved no verification that was more immediately helpful.

In the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah, the authenticating test of Jeremiah was satisfied a year before the test offered by Hananiah. Another example is the offer of a sign from Isaiah for his deliverance message to Hezekiah because that prophecy conflicted with what was already expected (Isaiah 38). These examples suggest that when prophets clash, or when a prophetic word does not accord with what God appears to be doing with his people, some secondary, objective criterion presents itself.

To summarize: in an uncertain religious climate where false prophets at times speak a true oracle from Yahweh (Balaam), where false prophets speak presumptuously in Yahweh's name (Hananiah, Zedekiah), where true prophets might lie (old prophet in 1 Kgs 13) or attempt to mislead people (Miriam, Saul, Gehazi), it was important to have tests for prophecy. Where the tests of fulfillment, orthodoxy, or character proved inapplicable or unsure, God sent another prophet to clarify the situation, if necessary, with an authenticating sign. God guarded the faithful community and his word in such a way that a combination of tests provided an adequate means of validation. (*WTJ* 56:2 (Fall 1994), 253-254)

B) The Test of Prediction for OT Prophets

Making predictions that were miraculously fulfilled was a vital part of the ministry of Prophets in the OT. So much so, that it wasn't just an aside in order to authenticate their message, but often *was* their message. As the Apostle Paul describes Christian Prophets, the *foretelling*, not just the *forthtelling* of OT Prophets often resulted in the, "**strengthening, encouragement and comfort,**" (1 Cor 14:3) of God's people.

To cut out prediction from the ministry of an OT Prophet would not only dismiss a foundational authentication of their ministry, but would leave them with relatively little to say. God intended His Prophets to be making a lot of predictions, and for such a thing to be vital to being a Prophet. Accordingly, God Himself said: "**Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the Prophets**" (Amos 3:7). Which, again, is a sad commentary on the "Prophets" of today, all of whom want the same label as their OT counterparts, but cannot and will not predict the future accurately.

On the contrary, the need for God's people to test Prophets was a serious concern and the primary test was fulfillment of their predictions. Accordingly, we read how the premier OT Prophet Moses confronted those who questioned whether he spoke for God:

Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men [critics] die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt. (Num 16:28-30)

And Moses' prediction came true because, "**As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them**" (vs. 31-32). Moses, as a man with the biblical gift of prophecy, accurately predicted several other events (cf. Exod 4:21-23; Num 17:5).

Likewise, we read of the Prophet Samuel:

The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and He [God] let none of his [Samuel's] words fall to the ground [i.e.

fail in coming true ⁴⁵¹]. **And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba recognized that Samuel was attested as a Prophet of the LORD.** (1 Sam 3:19-20)

What then did the people know about the Prophet Samuel? Even the servant of Saul knew, **"everything he says comes true"** (1 Sam 9:6).

After predicting Ahab's death in battle against the false prophecies of 400 other "prophets" who said he would be victorious, Micaiah admitted, **"If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me"** (1 Kgs 22:28). Wouldn't it be great if modern "prophets" whose "prophecies" all fail, would admit the same?

Jeremiah recognized the same and said that the Prophet prophesying peace in his day should **"be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true"** (Jer 28:9) We require no such authentication today and get duped and treated to nonsensical "prophetic" proclamations because of it. God said of some of Ezekiel's prophecies, **"When all this comes true—and it surely will—then they will know that a Prophet has been**

⁴⁵¹ The NIV translation of 1 Samuel 3:19 can be misleading. It can be interpreted as saying that *Samuel* did not let any of *God's* words **"fall to the ground,"** or fail. This could be understood in the sense that Samuel obeyed or carried out everything God told him. While this is certainly true, this is not the meaning of the text.

Admittedly, the NIV translation of *naphal* ["fall"] *erets* ["earth"] is even more literal than the NASB's **"fail."** But God's ensurance that none of Samuel's word **"fell to the ground"** can be understood as a metaphor for the fact that, as is said of the Prophet a few chapters later, **"everything he [Samuel] says comes true"** (1 Sam 9:6). This is confirmed by the fact that the text says that *because* none of Samuel's words **"fell to the ground,"** (3:19), **"all Israel . . . recognized that Samuel was attested as a Prophet of the LORD"** (v. 20).

Accordingly, the NCV translation is among the clearest, stating:

The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up; He [God] did not let any of Samuel's messages fail to come true. Then all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew Samuel was a true Prophet of the LORD. (1 Sam 3:19-20)

Likewise, Drs. Keil and Delitzsch paraphrase the text:

Thus Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and let none of his words fall to the ground, i.e., left no word unfulfilled which He spoke through Samuel. (On הפיל, see Josh 21:45; 23:14; 1 Kings 8:56.). By this all Israel from Dan to Beersheba (see at Judg 20:1) perceived that Samuel was found trustworthy, or approved (see Num 12:7) as a prophet of Jehovah. (*in loc.*)

among them" (Ezek 33:33). But God did not expect them to know that until the prophecies were fulfilled.

While many of the predictions of biblical Prophets were relatively far into the future, limiting this authentication for their current generation, God ensured that Prophets were thus proven when they needed to be so. Therefore, many of the Prophet's predictions were fulfilled in rather short order. This was true of much of Moses' predictions (cf. Exod 4:21-23; Num 16:28-30; 17:5), Samuel's predictions concerning Saul (cf. 1 Sam 10:1-8; 13:14; 28:16-19), Jeremiah's prediction of the death of Hananiah within a year (cf. Jer 28:15-17), Micaiah's prediction of the defeat and death of Ahab (cf. 1 Kgs 22:28), Isaiah's prediction of the failure of the northern coalition to subdue Jerusalem was fulfilled in a few years (cf. Isa 7:1-17); likewise, the overthrow in two or three years of Damascus and Samaria (cf. Isa 8:3-4), the failure of Sennacherib to capture Jerusalem, and the melting away of his army (cf. Isa 37:33-37).

C) The Test of Prediction for Christ

Because Christ was a Prophet (cf. Deut 18:15; Matt 21:11; Luke 24:19) He predicted the future accurately. His fulfilled predictions include Judas' betrayal (cf. Matt 26:21-25); the disciples' desertion (cf. Matt 26:31-35), His suffering and death "**at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law**" in "**Jerusalem**" and His subsequent resurrection (Matt 16:21), the Apostle Peter's martyrdom (John 21:18), and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. (Luke 21:20-21).

D) The Test of Prediction for NT Prophets

The words of the popular Bible commentator, William Barclay (1907–1978), are typical of modern NT scholarship regarding the gift of prophecy:

It is only rarely that prophecy in the New Testament has to do with foretelling the future; it usually has to do with *forthtelling* the word of God.⁴⁵²

This simply is not true. In fact, as demonstrated below, almost *all* of the pronouncements of Christian Prophets described in Scripture involved foretelling the future.

John the Baptist had foretold things about Christ (cf. John 1:26-7) of which people said later, "**Though John never**

⁴⁵² William Barclay, quoted in the *Life Application Bible*.

performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true" (John 10:41). The NT Prophets Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna are recorded as making fulfilled prophecies as well (Luke 1:67-79; 2:25-38). The Prophets in Ephesus had made predictions concerning Timothy that were fulfilled (cf. 1 Tim 1:18). John, in his prophecies recorded in Revelation, made predictions that were accomplished a short time afterwards (cf. 2:10, 21-23). Finally, we have already noted that the NT Prophet Agabus is described twice as making predictions that miraculously came true (cf. Acts 11:27-8; 21:10-11). In fact, we do not have a record of Agabus giving any other revelations *except* predictions. Again, the modern mantra that people can claim the gift of prophecy and speak for God, but not have to miraculously predict the future is unbiblical and therefore un-Christian and against God's wishes.

Because Agabus is such a clear example of someone possessing the NT gift of prophecy, and prediction was obviously a major part of his ministry, he has been especially singled out by *prophetists* to somehow distort his testimony. Therefore, more can be said of him here. First, let us look at his predictions. In Acts 11 Luke writes:

During this time some Prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.)" (Acts 11:27-28).

Luke specifically adds the information in parentheses in order to demonstrate that Agabus truly possessed the gift of prophecy.

Even the *prophetist* Dr. Grudem admits that, "the fulfillment of Agabus' prediction of famine in Acts 11:28 is an OT type of prophecy."⁴⁵³ But Agabus was a NT Prophet, and therefore, as we have contended, there is no difference in the biblical attributes of OT and NT Prophets. And with Dr. Grudem's admission that this Christian Prophet miraculously predicted the future, modern *prophetism* is again exposed as unbiblical because none of them do what Agabus did, *twice*.

Nonetheless, while Dr. Grudem admits that the NT Prophet Agabus reflected the attributes of OT Prophets in Acts 11, he says of the Prophet's predictions in Acts 21:

The events of the narrative itself do not coincide with the kind of accuracy that the Old Testament requires for those who speak God's words. In fact, by Old Testament standards,

⁴⁵³ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Crossway, 2000), 99.

Agabus would have been condemned as a false prophet, because in Acts 21:27–35 neither of his predictions are fulfilled.⁴⁵⁴

The prediction was not far off, but it had inaccuracies in detail that would have called into question the validity of any Old Testament Prophet. . . . This is exactly the kind of fallible prophecy that would fit the definition of New Testament congregational prophecy . . .⁴⁵⁵

This is a very serious accusation, and all to only justify the second-rate unbiblical prophecy of modern *prophetism*. Because Dr. Grudem's opinion of Agabus is so critical to his popular thesis that the error-prone prophets of today have biblical support, and his argument is somewhat complex, we will look at it further.

Luke describes Agabus' prediction as follows:

After we had been there [Caesarea] a number of days, a Prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" (Acts 21:10-11).

As we read on in Acts 21 we see that the prediction of Agabus comes true:

[S]ome Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him,²⁸ shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. . . . The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut."³¹

While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.³² He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. The commander came up and

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 78

⁴⁵⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 1052.

arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. (vs. 27-33).

Likewise, the Apostle Paul himself later describes the incident as follows:

My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.¹⁸ **They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death.**¹⁹ **But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—not that I had any charge to bring against my own people.**²⁰ **For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.** (Acts 28:17-20)

Let us notice first how incredibly accurate Agabus was in his prediction. He essentially makes three predictions: 1) Paul will be bound through the actions of the Jews; 2) The Jews will “**hand . . . over**” Paul “**to the Gentiles;**” 3) This will happen in “**Jerusalem.**” All three prophecies were fulfilled perfectly.

Dr. Grudem’s primary strategy to deny this is to claim that Paul’s description of the event in Acts 28 does not refer to the incident in Acts 21, but rather:

This whole narrative in Acts 28:17-19 refers to Paul’s transfer out of Jerusalem to Caesarea in Acts 23:12-35 . . . The narrative does not refer to Acts 21:27-36 and the mob scene near the Jerusalem temple at all.⁴⁵⁶

On the contrary, when Paul speaks of his being “**arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans**” in Acts 28 he is clearly speaking about the events recorded in “Acts 21:27-36 and the mob scene” and neither one of these things is even mentioned in “Paul’s transfer out of Jerusalem to Caesarea in Acts 23:12-35.”

It is because Dr. Grudem denies that Paul is describing his arrest in Jerusalem in Acts 28, that he claims Agabus was wrong because, “the Jews, rather than delivering him voluntarily, tried to kill him and he had to be rescued by force.”⁴⁵⁷ On the contrary, the Apostle Paul specifically says in Acts 28:

I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over [by the Jews] **to the Romans.**¹⁸ **They** [the Romans] **examined me**

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 1053.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 1052.

and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death.¹⁹ But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar

While Dr. Grudem claims that the Jews did not want Paul bound, Paul later says that actually the Jews insisted that he be so.

Finally, Agabus had said, "**the Jews . . . will bind**" Paul, but as Dr. Grudem says, "the Romans, not the Jews, bound Paul."⁴⁵⁸ Of course, Dr. Grudem is technically correct. However, as Hank Hanegraaff writes:

By [this] method of interpretation, Luke's writings would be untrustworthy as well. In Acts 1:18, Luke writes that Judas purchased the potter's field while Matthew 27:7 asserts that the chief priests purchased it. Furthermore, if [Dr. Grudem's] understanding is correct, the Old Testament Prophet Jeremiah should have been stoned for incorrectly prophesying that the purchase of the potter's field would be by the chief priests rather than by Judas [cf. Jer 18:2; 19: 1-11-1 Zec 11: 12-13].

Like Jeremiah, the Old Testament Prophet Zechariah would have received the death penalty for prophesying that Jesus would be pierced by inhabitants of "the house of David" [cf. Zec 12: 10-1 Jn 19:34], when in reality Jesus was pierced by the Romans.

In fact, if [Dr. Grudem] were right in asserting that New Testament Prophets were fallible when they asserted "the Holy Spirit says," then it necessarily follows that the New Testament is fallible as well. In truth, however, the basic principles of biblical interpretation militate against [Dr. Grudem's] reasoning. Scripture often speaks of a person performing an action when in reality that person is merely the cause or agent of the action. Thus, Agabus is perfectly accurate in saying that the Jews bound Paul because the Jews were the cause for which Paul was bound. Likewise, according to this principle, Luke, Matthew, Jeremiah, and Zechariah are perfectly accurate in both their proclamation and predictions.⁴⁵⁹

Accordingly, Dr. Grudem admits:

I agree that Scripture can speak of someone as doing an act that is carried out by that person's agent. But in every case

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Word, 1997), 76-77.

the person who is said to do the action both wills the act to be done and gives directions to others to do it.⁴⁶⁰

In other words, Dr. Grudem is willing to accept the above described aspect of biblical prophecy and fulfillment even for Agabus, but only if it was the Jews' desire to have Paul bound. And because he denies this is the case, he still wants to accuse Agabus of error. However, as noted, Dr. Grudem's conclusions are only possible by denying that Paul was describing the incident in Acts 21 in his statement in Acts 28, because there, Paul says "**I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over [by the Jews] to the Romans**" and that "**the Jews objected** to his being released.

It should also be added that Agabus prefaced his prediction with, "**the Holy Spirit says**" and any critique of Agabus' words here is actually a critique of the Holy Spirit's predictive ability.

Finally, Sinclair Ferguson shares:

The case of Agabus may not be essential to this thesis, but it *de facto* plays a major role in the demonstration of it since it is claimed as an explicit New Testament illustration of fallible prophecy which is not false prophecy. The problem with the thesis is that, if this is the case, the line between fallible and false becomes dangerously thin. We may well ask: How fallible is false?

For if we follow the two-level prophecy hypothesis in this particular instance, Agabus was doubly in error: (a) His prophecy errs in detail--and, in Grudem's view, in details which lie at the heart of the prophecy. (b) In addition, Agabus does not seem to be aware of the very distinction that Grudem regards as widespread in the New Testament era--the distinction between first and second-level prophecy.

Otherwise, instead of saying 'The Holy Spirit says' (Acts 21:11), he should have said something like: 'It looks to me as though the Spirit is perhaps indicating that something like this may well happen to Paul if he goes to Jerusalem; but I could be wrong, especially on the details.' Luke's record certainly gives no indication that Grudem's hypothesis was the working assumption of either Agabus or Paul. . . .

Rather than confirming Grudem's thesis that the prophecy of Agabus contains basic errors, Paul's testimony assumes its accuracy. We have no reason to believe that Agabus'

⁴⁶⁰ Grudem, *Theology*, 1053.

prophecy failed. Luke gives no indication that Paul thought it had done so.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶¹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Intervarsity, 1996), 216, 220. For further ancient and modern testimony to the fact that the gift of prophecy involved prediction see section 9.1.B.

Likewise, Bruce Compton writes against Dr. Grudem's attack on Agabus:

In response, Acts 21:11 can be interpreted in such a way that no such errors are found. The prophecy by Agabus may be taken as accurate, if it is allowed that the Jews in Jerusalem are the ultimate cause of Paul's incarceration by the Gentiles. In other words, it is the actions of the Jews against Paul that ultimately lead the Gentile authorities to incarcerate the apostle.

This interpretation appears to be the very one that Paul himself endorses in Acts 28:17. In explaining to the Jews in Rome the circumstances behind his arrest, Paul says, "I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans." Although Paul does not say specifically who it was that delivered him, the larger context argues that it was the violent treatment by the Jews in Jerusalem that resulted in Paul's being taken into custody by the Romans (cf. Acts 21:30-33; 24:6; 26:21).

Grudem attempts to distance Paul's explanation of the events of his arrest in Acts 28:17 from the prophecy by Agabus. He argues that Paul is describing his subsequent transfer into the Roman judicial system, not his original incarceration in Jerusalem. Thus, says Grudem, Paul's explanation and the prophecy by Agabus are not addressing the same event (*The Gift of Prophecy*, p. 310).

But Grudem's explanation is difficult to square with the other accounts recorded in Acts of Paul's initial arrest. Describing to Felix the account of Paul's arrest in Acts 24:6-7, the Jewish lawyer Tertullus, representing the Jewish authorities from Jerusalem, states, "Then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. But Lysias the commander came along and with much violence took him out of our hands]." Furthermore, in Acts 26:21, Paul himself reports the account of his arrest to Agrippa and Felix, saying, "For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death."

In that this passage is Grudem's chief example of errant New Testament prophecy, he has failed to make his case. Consequently, there is no compelling evidence that New Testament prophecy is different from Old Testament prophecy. As such, New Testament prophecy is nothing less than inerrant and fully authoritative. ("1 Corinthians 13:8-13 And The Cessation Of Miraculous Gifts," *DBSJ* 9 (2004), 116-117

E) Limitations to the Test of Prediction

While Deuteronomy 18:17-22 and the example of the Christian Prophet Agabus (cf. Acts 11:27-30; 21:10-11) make it clear that the accurate prediction of the future was an integral part of God's gift of prophecy, Deuteronomy 13:1-5 tells us it is not sufficient in itself to authenticate real Prophets:

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.

The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and Him you must revere. Keep His commands and obey Him; serve Him and hold fast to Him.

⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God . . . he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you. (Deut 13:1-5)

Here God warns that a false prophet may predict a "**sign or wonder . . . which . . . takes place**" (v. 2). Why would God allow that? "**Your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul.**" And as we have noted, far too many Christians are failing this test.

While *prophetists* would like to use this example to claim that prediction has no value in authenticating the gift of prophecy, they forget that merely five chapters later after the warning in Deuteronomy 13, God still prescribes false predictions as a sign of false prophets that "**must be put to death**" (18:20). Accordingly, while the test of accurate prediction is not the only test of authentication needed for those who claim the gift of prophecy, it remains a vital one.

Nonetheless, it must be admitted that even predicting the future can be counterfeited by the devil to such a degree as to deceive many. Accordingly, we read in Acts:

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed

Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her [and her apparently predictive powers]. (Acts 16:16-18)

While Christians would affirm that the devil does not know the future as God knows it, Luke does not deny here that this sorceress "**predicted the future**" well enough to entice people to spend a "**great deal of money**" for her services. Obviously this sounds familiar as David Myers reports: "The dial-a-psychic industry topped \$1 billion a year recently, much of that revenue from low-income people."⁴⁶² While the majority of the divinations of fortune-tellers relate to a person's past, some of them attempt to predict the future as well, and at times appear to have some supernatural success.

Of course the devil is behind all of this, just as "**a spirit**" other than the Holy Spirit empowered the sorceress in Acts 16. While Satan is not omniscient, it is conceivable that because of his great intellect and vast knowledge of past and present events, conversations, etc., he could accurately predict certain other events. In other words if one of his demons overheard a man promising to do something to another, that demon could enable a fortune-teller to make a rather accurate prediction. Along these lines, the very early Church leader Tertullian (155-222) wrote the following very insightful look at the devil's schemes:

What is daintier food to the spirit of evil, than turning men's minds away from the true God by the illusions of a false divination? And here I explain how these illusions are managed. Every spirit is possessed of wings. This is a common property of both angels and demons. So they are everywhere in a single moment; the whole world is as one place to them; all that is done over the whole extent of it, it is as easy for them to know as to report. Their swiftness of motion is taken for divinity, because their nature is unknown.

Thus they would have themselves thought sometimes the authors of the things which they announce; and sometimes, no doubt, the bad things are their doing, never the good. The purposes of God, too, they took up of old from the lips of the

⁴⁶² David Myers, *Intuition: Its Power and Perils* (Yale University Press, 2002), 227.

Prophets, even as they spoke them; and they gather them still from their works, when they hear them read aloud. Thus getting, too, from this source some intimations of the future, they set themselves up as rivals of the true God, while they steal His divinations.

But the skill with which their responses are shaped to meet events, your Croesi and Pyrrhi know too well. On the other hand, it was in that way we have explained, the Pythian [false Greek prophetess] was able to declare that they were cooking a tortoise with the flesh of a lamb; in a moment he had been to Lydia.

From dwelling in the air, and their nearness to the stars, and their commerce with the clouds, they have means of knowing the preparatory processes going on in these upper regions, and thus can give promise of the rains which they already feel.

Very kind too, no doubt, they are in regard to the healing of diseases. For, first of all, they make you ill; then, to get a miracle out of it, they command the application of remedies either altogether new, or contrary to those in use, and straightway withdrawing hurtful influence, they are supposed to have wrought a cure.⁴⁶³

Likewise, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) wrote:

Above the human intellect there is not only the Divine intellect, but also the intellects of good and bad angels according to the order of nature. Hence the demons, even by their natural knowledge, know certain things remote from men's knowledge, which they can reveal to men; although those things which God alone knows are remote simply and most of all.

Accordingly prophecy, properly and simply, is conveyed by Divine revelations alone; yet the revelation which is made by the demons may be called prophecy in a restricted sense. Wherefore those men to whom something is revealed by the demons are styled in the Scriptures as prophets, not simply, but with an addition, for instance as "false prophets," or "prophets of idols."

Hence Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit.* xii, 19): "When the evil spirit lays hold of a man for such purposes as these," namely

⁴⁶³ Tertullian, *Apology*, Xxii; online at www.ccel.org.

visions, "he makes him either devilish, or possessed, or a false prophet." ⁴⁶⁴

More will be said of such demonic divination under our discussion of clairvoyancy in the next chapter.

It is perhaps because the early Church recognized the devil's limited ability to manipulate events in one person's life, that it clearly described anyone honoring requests for personal predictions as a false prophet. Accordingly, the early Christian document *The Shepherd of Hermas* (c. 175), which "stands as an important witness to the state of Christianity in Rome in the mid-second century," ⁴⁶⁵ relates:

These double minded ones come to him [a false prophet] as to a fortune teller, and ask him what will happen to them. And that false prophet, not having the power of a divine spirit in himself, answers them in accordance with their questions and their wicked desires, and fills their souls just as they themselves wish. For since he himself is empty, he gives empty answers to empty inquirers, for no matter what is asked, he answers according to the emptiness of the man asking.

But he does speak some true words, for the devil fills him with his own spirit, to see if he will be able to break down any of the righteous. So, those who are strong in the faith of the Lord, having clothed themselves with the truth, do not associate with such spirits, but have nothing to do with them. But those who are double minded and frequently change their minds practice fortune telling like the pagans and bring greater sin upon themselves by their idolatries. For the one who consults a false prophet on any matter is an idolator and lacks the truth and is senseless. ⁴⁶⁶

Obviously, in contrast to modern *prophetism*, fortune-telling has little to do with the biblical gift of prophecy.

Nevertheless, God's far superior knowledge and control of the future can still be readily recognized in His Prophets. His ability to predict the future of whole nations through centuries is something the devil cannot do, and therefore biblical prophecies given by God's

⁴⁶⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 172, Art. 5; online at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Apostolic Fathers*, Michael W. Holmes ed., trans. by J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (Baker, 1989), 189.

⁴⁶⁶ *Shepherd of Hermas*, 43; online at www.ccel.org.

Prophets will always show themselves much more supernatural than anything satan can contrive.

F) Ancient & Modern Frauds Exposed by the Test of Prediction

F.1) Nostradamus

Some critics of Christianity have claimed that the occultic French astrologer Nostradamus (1503-1566) made accurate predictions of the future on par with biblical Prophets. He wrote the majority of his prophecies in obscure poetry in his book *Les Propheties* in 1555, which continues to be popular.

First of all, Nostradamus' prophecies were so vague that they were rather meaningless. For example, he wrote:

The great swarm of bees will arise
 But no one will know from whence they have come.
 An ambush by night, the sentinel under the vines;
 A city handed over by five tongues, not naked.⁴⁶⁷

According to a leading expert and promoter of Nostradamus, Erika Cheetham, this is a "very accurate" description of "Napoleon's *coupe d'etat* in 1799."⁴⁶⁸ Sure it is.

Likewise, the famed "prophet" wrote:

The young lion will overcome the older one,
 In a field of combat in a single fight;
 He will pierce his eyes in their golden cage;
 Two wounds in one, then he dies a cruel death.⁴⁶⁹

Historically, this has been considered one of Nostradamus' most famous prophecies concerning the death of King Henry II who was wounded in a jousting contest in 1557, dying 10 days later. This particular prediction of Nostradamus, fulfilled just two years after the publishing of his *Les Propheties*, is what propelled him to fame as a Prophet.

However, as one studies the actual historical facts surrounding the death of Henry II, we find the following: Only seven years

⁴⁶⁷ Nostradamus, *Century 4*, verse 26.

⁴⁶⁸ Reference unavailable.

⁴⁶⁹ Nostradamus, *Century 1*, v. 35.

separated the ages of Henry and his opponent in the tournament, so it was hardly a contest between the young and the old; the accident occurred during a friendly sporting event, not on a battlefield; there is no evidence that Henry was wearing a gilded visor (cage) of gold; and the king's eyes were not damaged, but rather, a splinter from the lance pierced his skull and entered his brain. Both the obscurity of Nostradamus' prophecies and their lack of fulfillment put him nowhere near biblical Prophets.

The "prophet" himself explained in an unguarded moment that his ambiguous prophecies "could not possibly be understood until they were interpreted after the event and by it." How convenient.

Two of Nostradamus' more famous and contemporary predictions are dealt with by Christian apologist Norm Geisler:

Nostradamus is alleged to have predicted a great earthquake in California for May 10, 1981. This was reported on May 6, 1981, in USA Today. However, no such quake occurred. As a matter of fact, Nostradamus mentioned no country, city, or year. He spoke only of a "rumbling earth" in a "new city" and a "very mighty quake" on May 10 [no year].

Lamont claims that Nostradamus gave "a prophecy of the coming of Hitler and Nazism in a world divided within itself" (Lamont, 252). However, Hitler is not mentioned and the prediction gives no date and is vague. It reads: "Followers of sects, great troubles are in store for the Messenger. A beast upon the theater prepares the scenical play. The inventor of that wicked feat will be famous. By sects the world will be confused and divided". In this context there is a reference to "Hister" (not Hitler) by Nostradamus (C4Q68), which is obviously a place [a small town in Germany on the Danube river existing in Nostradamus' time], not a person. The attempt to read back into this both his name and birthplace is stretched. What is more, Hitler grew up in Linz, Austria, not in any place called Hister.⁴⁷⁰

Accordingly, Dr. Geisler concludes: "Not a single prediction of Nostradamus has ever been proven genuine."⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Geisler, 544-5.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. Likewise in a Wikipedia entry we read:
 [M]ost academic sources maintain that the associations made between world events and Nostradamus's quatrains are largely the result of misinterpretations or mistranslations (sometimes deliberate) or else are so tenuous as to render them useless as evidence of any genuine predictive power. Moreover, none of the sources listed offers any evidence that anyone has ever interpreted any of Nostradamus's

F.2) Jeanne Dixon

Another famous so-called "Prophet" in modern times was Jeanne Dixon (1904-1997). While she was living, occult expert Don Stewart related that:

Jeanne Dixon has made it clear that she believes her prophetic gift comes from God. "It is my belief God has given me a gift of prophecy for His own reasons, and I do not question them!" (Jeanne Dixon, *The Call to Glory*, New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972, p. 42). . . .

Furthermore, she has stated, "The future has been shown me to 2037 A.D!" (ibid, p. 175). She told her biographer, Rene Noorbergen, that, "The same spirit that worked through Isaiah and John the Baptist also works through me" (Rene Noorbergen, *The Soul Hustlers*, Zondervan, 1976, p. 114).⁴⁷²

The problem with such a claim is that her prophecies have failed repeatedly. Dr. Stewart goes on to relate:

Although Jeanne Dixon supposedly has made some predictions that have come true, she has made many other prophecies that have failed. These include:

- (1) World War III would begin in 1954;
- (2) Red China would be admitted to the United Nations in 1958, yet this did not occur until 1971;
- (3) The Vietnam war would end in 1966, yet it did not end until 1975;
- (4) On October 19, 1968, she predicted Jacqueline Kennedy was not thinking of marriage and the next day Mrs. Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis!
- (5) Union Leader, Walter Reuther, would run for President in 1964, which he did not do;

quatrains specifically enough to allow a clear identification of any event in advance.

For further research see:

Ray Comfort, *The Secrets of Nostradamus Exposed* (Living Waters Publications, 1996).

Elliot Miller and Craig Hawkins. "Nostradamus;" *Christian Research Newsletter* vol. 1, Num. 3, 1988.

Facts taken from *Nostradamus: prophet or Pretender?* by Wayne Jackson (Courier Publications, 1998).

⁴⁷² Don Stewart, *Understanding the Cults* (Here's Life Publishers, 1982), 181.

- (6) The Soviets would land the first man on the moon.
- (7) In 1970, she predicted Castro would be overthrown from Cuba and would have to leave the island.

My question is this: If such powers exist, why are they so fleeting, and why can't they be tested? The reason is a simple one. They don't exist. In the 12 years I have devoted to researching this subject, I have neither seen a valid case of prognostication, nor have I been confronted with hard-core documentation to substantiate a purported case.⁴⁷³

Nonetheless, Ms. Dixon is probably best known for allegedly predicting the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In the May 13, 1956, issue of *Parade Magazine* she wrote that the 1960 presidential election would be "dominated by labor and won by a Democrat" who would then go on to "[B]e assassinated or die in office though not necessarily in his first term." As all know, Kennedy did win the election and was assassinated in his second term. Such an occurrence brings up the issue of just what the devil is able to manipulate in order to authenticate a false prophet (cf. Deut 13:1-3), and Ms. Dixon's use of crystal balls, tarot cards and other occult artifacts to receive her prophecies makes this a possibility. However, considering the multitude of Dixon's prophecies that were false, we would suggest she just got lucky.⁴⁷⁴

Along these lines, Dr. Geisler writes:

Contemporary critics of biblical prophecy nominate psychic predictions for equality with Scripture. However, there is another quantum leap between every psychic and the unerring Prophets of Scripture. . . . Amid hundreds of prophecies, biblical Prophets are not known to have made a single error.

A study of prophecies made by psychics in 1975 and observed until 1981 showed that of the seventy-two predictions, only six were fulfilled in any way. Two of these were vague and two others were hardly surprising--the U.S. and Russia would remain leading powers and there would be no world wars.

The People's Almanac (1976) did a study of the predictions of twenty-five top psychics. The results: Of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong (Kole, 69). An accuracy rate around 8 percent could

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 184-5.

⁴⁷⁴ For further study of Ms. Dixon and other contemporary false prophets see Danny Korem and Paul Meier, *The Fakers* (Baker, 1980).

easily be explained by chance and general knowledge of circumstances.

In 1993 the psychics missed every major unexpected news story, including Michael Jordan's retirement, the Midwest flooding, and the Israel-PLO peace treaty. Among their false prophecies were that the Queen of England would become a nun, and Kathy Lee Gifford would replace Jay Leno as host of The Tonight Show (Charlotte Observer 12/30/93).⁴⁷⁵

Accordingly, David Myers reports:

Can psychics discern the future? Between 1978 and 1985, the "leading psychics" identified by the National Enquirer offered 486 predictions of the future. Two came true. . . . Sadly, the psychic whom Princess Diana consulted shortly before her death failed to see the danger that lay ahead.⁴⁷⁶

Finally, prophecy expert Grant R. Jeffrey has written:

Modern day secular prophets do dare to make predictions but they have a very poor record of accuracy. The more specific their prediction, the more certain it is to be wrong. Anyone who attempts to prophesy specific events will be confronted by the staggering odds against success created by the inescapable "laws of mathematical probability". . . .

No one, except God Himself, would dare to risk His claim to the divine inspiration of His Word, the Bible, on such a risky undertaking--humanly speaking--as predicting future events in great detail.

Current so-called "prophets," such as those you read about in magazines, understand the odds against making such accurate predictions. They are too "wise" to risk their reputation for psychic ability by an attempt to publicly predict the actual score of a football game. Such "prophets" are content to predict that "someone who is either a member or friend of the Royal family will come close to death or injury in the next few years." Considering that there are perhaps as many as twenty people within the Royal family, the odds are perhaps one in three of such an event transpiring with such a vague prediction.

David Hocking, in his April 8, 1985, radio broadcast, "Biola Bible Class," reported on a fascinating article entitled, "The Shattered Crystal Ball." This study analyzed the accuracy of

⁴⁷⁵ Geisler, 545.

⁴⁷⁶ Myers, 227-8.

the ten top psychics whose prophecies were published over a three-year period, 1976-1979. The study compared all of the published predictions with their subsequent success or failure rate. The results were certainly intriguing: 98 percent of all their predictions were totally incorrect! Only 2 percent of their predictions were fulfilled. However, some predictors were much less accurate than their colleagues: six out of ten psychics were wrong 100 percent of the time as recorded in the study.

However, when we examine the prophecies in the Bible we are confronted with a different phenomenon - of staggering mathematical proportions. The Bible contains hundreds of incredibly accurate predictions of events which historians and archeologists have verified. God declares boldly in His Word that these prophecies and their fulfillments are His signature upon the Bible and His verification that the Bible is truly the inspired (Godbreathed) Word of God.⁴⁷⁷

F.3) Modern *prophetism*: Cain, Hinn, KC Prophets

Unfortunately the contemporary Church has had its "prophets" that are no better and even more destructive to the cause of Christ than any secular false "prophets." Jesus, a real Prophet of God, accurately predicted this would happen:

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. . . . "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' (Matt 7:15, 21-23; cf. 24:24)

Likewise, the Apostle John warned the Church in his day: **"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"** (1 John 4:1).

With such warnings, why would we be surprised to find false prophets in the Church today? But we are surprised. Even more

⁴⁷⁷ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (Bantam, 1990), 13-15.

so, with such warnings, why don't we exercise more discernment with the claims of people who say they prophesy in the name of Jesus? But we don't. And as a result, there are many false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing, in the Church today.

We can only discuss the most prominent here, each of them being the foremost respected "prophets" of *prophetism* in our day, yet miserable failures in being able to truly authenticate themselves as serving God.

Perhaps the foundational second-rate "prophet" of *prophetism* is Paul Cain. Charismatic scholar Hank Hanegraaff writes in his book *Counterfeit Revival*:

Vineyard founder John Wimber believes that Paul Cain is the premier Prophet of the third wave [of the Holy Spirit in *charismaticism*]. He credits Cain with "saving the Vineyard movement" . . . Cain himself says that the power that rests upon him is, at times, so potent that it "will knock out the cameras and knock out the phone lines and knock out all the power lines and set off the fire alarms like it did in Kansas City."⁴⁷⁸

If what Mr. Cain asserts really did happen because of him, we can be certain that it was not a holy power as Mr. Cain is exposed as a fraud and false prophet on many accounts. Mr. Cain is most famous for telling people about their past or present (clairvoyance), something we discuss in the next chapter, and is especially known to be duplicated by demonic spirits. However, he has ventured to make some predictions of the future which have proven false. Accordingly, John Armstrong writes:

I once heard Mike Bickel say that we ["prophets"] all miss [predictions] sometimes, "except for Paul Cain. He hits the target all the time." That is maintained even though vague predictions of every immoral Christian's being purged from the "new breed before the nineteen-eighties are out" and of revival breaking out "in Great Britain in October 1990" have gone unfulfilled.⁴⁷⁹

Fortunately for Mr. Cain he is prophesying in the modern Church which tolerates and even celebrates "prophets" who fail to predict the future, because if he were doing so in Moses' day he would have

⁴⁷⁸ Hanegraaff, 145-148.

⁴⁷⁹ John H. Armstrong, "In Search of Spiritual Power", in *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church?* (Moody, 1992), 66-7.

been executed by the true worshippers of God (cf. Deut 13:1-3; 18:17-22).

We fear Benny Hinn is a false prophet as well, yet he too operates in a day when the Church lacks discernment. Instead of being executed under the Old Covenant or excommunicated under the New, he is perhaps the most famous and financially prosperous "Christian Prophet" on the planet. Elsewhere we have documented his overwhelming greed which disqualifies him to even be a minister (cf. 1 Tim 3:3; Tit 1:7; 1 Pet 5:2), let alone a Prophet, and brings even his salvation into grave doubt.⁴⁸⁰ Mr. Hinn seems to be a prime candidate for one of those who will "**on that day**" say to Jesus, "**Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?**" and Jesus will say to him "**I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!**" (Matt 7:22-22).

Not only does a lack of true Christian spirituality disqualify Mr. Hinn's claims to be a Prophet of God, his pathetic record of predictions does as well. Michael Scheifler has abundantly documented many of these and a few of them include:

Orlando Christian Center, Dec. 31st, 1989: "The Spirit tells me - Fidel Castro will die - in the 90's. Oooh my! Some will try to kill him and they will not succeed. But there will come a change in his physical health, and he will not stay in power, and Cuba will be visited of God."

Orlando Christian Center, Dec. 31st, 1989: "The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid 90's, about '94-'95, no later than that, God will destroy the homosexual community of America [audience applauds]. But He will not destroy it - with what many minds have thought Him to be, He will destroy it with fire. And many will turn and be saved, and many will rebel and be destroyed."

Mr. Scheifler goes on to relate:

Now with that kind of record for Benny Hinn, Trinity Broadcasting Network began its Spring 2000 fundraising Praise-A-Thon with some rather astounding claims. On the April 2nd TBN program, Benny Hinn claimed that God is about to make a major move to anoint the people of God, as soon as Israel signs a treaty with the ailing Hafez Al-Assad of Syria, which will likely be within the next year. This will signal the impending large scale shift of financial wealth from the wicked to those obedient to God. But, in order to benefit from this

⁴⁸⁰ For further discussion of Benny Hinn see section 10.15.A.7 and 11.8.F.4.

unprecedented supernatural anointing, you must be obedient to God and sow your financial seed (to TBN) now!

The death of Assad on June 10th 2000 shows that Benny Hinn did *not* know what he was talking about, and is further proof that he is a false prophet, if any more evidence was needed. On the 25th of July, 2000 (Real Audio - © July 25th, 2000 by TBN) when peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down in Washington, Benny Hinn again appeared on a TBN program and said, regarding the recent death of Hafez Al-Assad and his failure to make peace with Israel, “[I]t was God's plan for it *not* to happen, really.” . . .

Is there nothing that TBN or Benny Hinn will not stoop to in order to extract money from viewers? Well, to top everything, Benny Hinn claimed that Jesus is now *physically* appearing in Moslem countries, and he predicted on the April 2nd 2000 TBN broadcast that Jesus will appear *physically* very soon in many churches to signal the nearness of the second coming, and that Jesus would also appear *physically on the stage* at his crusade in Nairobi Kenya (29-30 of April, 2000)! He told Paul Crouch he might very well have video of Jesus on the stage when he returned from his trip to Kenya!

Benny Hinn was the guest on the May 9th *Behind the Scenes* program of TBN with Jan Crouch, and video from his Nairobi Crusade was shown, but there was not even the slightest mention of Jesus physically appearing, and neither did Benny Hinn explain why the widely prophesied appearance had not happened.⁴⁸¹

It should not surprise us that such false prophets would infiltrate the Church as Jesus warned us of imposters like Benny Hinn. What is surprising is how many real sheep of Jesus are following the wolves.

The most famous group of the second-rate “prophets” of modern *prophetism* were known as the “Kansas City Prophets,” because they primarily ministered at a Vineyard church in that city. While these “prophets” were the foremost founders of modern *prophetism*, they have been thoroughly exposed as sexually immoral, lying, and abusive heretics.⁴⁸² They included such men as Bob Jones, whose gross moral failures are discussed below. In

⁴⁸¹ Mike Scheifler at <http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/tbn.htm>.

⁴⁸² For a detailed report of the gross immorality and heresy surrounding the Kansas City prophets see the in-depth article by the charismatic pastor Ernie Gruen at <http://intotruth.org/kcp/Abberent%20Practises.pdf>

addition, Mr. Jones' prophetic record has been so pathetic that he has had to defend himself in the book, *Some Said It Thundered*. There, Mr. Jones claims that God told him why so many prophecies in modern *prophetism* are false:

God said, "If I release the hundred-percent *rhema* [revelation] right now, the accountability would be awesome and you'd have so much Ananias and Sapphiras going on that the people couldn't grow-they'd be too scared. If it [the modern gift of prophecy] were on target, it would kill instead of scaring the people to repentance. . . . This is what He told me, so I figure if I hit two-thirds of it, I'm doing pretty good."⁴⁸³

Mr. Jones's prophetic partner, Mike Bickle, defended Jones's ridiculous statement by replying that: "Well, [two-thirds success rate is] better than it's ever been in this nation up to now, you know. That's the highest level it's ever been."⁴⁸⁴ Evidently Mr. Bickle has forgotten about the time of real biblical Prophets. And by the way, Mr. Jones has never gotten even near two-thirds of his predictions right, so he is lying even about that.

In another attempt to defend *prophetism's* pathetic record of predictions, the author of *Some Said It Thundered*, John White, writes five entire pages instructing believers on how to discern false prophets, yet never once mentions either accuracy in predictions or truthfulness of revelations as a test. He in fact explicitly claims that lying prophecies do not necessarily disqualify a person from speaking for God. He concludes his section on discerning false prophets by stating: "Prophets are of course human beings. As such, they can make mistakes and lie. They need not cease to be Prophets for their mistakes and failings."⁴⁸⁵ And there are millions in the Church who are following these people.

Fortunately, some have confronted the heresy surrounding such a momentous fraud and have exposed *prophetism* as such. But Mr. White has an ingenious answer even for this, that should continue to protect the false prophets in the Church indefinitely for those that would believe him:

Battles about prophets have plagued the church from time to time. . . . In fact, the Church has had so many bad experiences with prophets that now we react too rapidly and fearfully. We could be in danger of discarding a live baby in

⁴⁸³ John White, in *Some Said It Thundered: A Personal Encounter With the Kansas City Prophets* (Thomas Nelson, 1991), 57.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

our horror over dirty bath water. . . . Satan fears those [extra-biblical] words [of new revelation] that come fresh from God's lips [through *prophetism's* "prophets"]. . . . Because Satan so dreads the fresh Word, he will arouse controversy wherever it comes forth miraculously through the lips of a real Prophet. . . . We are warned that [false prophecy] is to happen. . . . How are we to discern the false from the true? For one thing, true prophets will be unpopular.⁴⁸⁶

Such a statement is so clearly ridiculous that nothing more will be said except a humble prayer to God that He would purge such false teachers from His precious people. Jeremiah, a real Prophet of God, said, "**The Prophet who prophesies . . . will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true**" (Jer 28:9). Oh God, may that be true of Your Church!

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 59.

Extras & Endnotes

A Devotion to Dad

Our Father in Heaven, we come to You today thankful for the Prophets You have granted Your people. Through the Scripture they have written, they have given us priceless revelation about Your character, Your will, and Your plans for the world. Thank You for the Prophets! And help us to study them, understand them, believe them, and obey them, all to Your glory.

And help us recognize and expose false prophets also for Your glory. How the devil must snicker about having so many of his imposter among Your people manipulating them, deceiving them, drawing them away from you and bringing Your children great misery. Oh God, for their sake, please send them Shepherds who will have the convictions, courage, and love to drive those wolves from the sheep!

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) In what ways does Scripture reveal that accurate prediction is an important part of the revelation of His Prophets?
- 2) How does this contrast with the place of accurate prediction in *prophetism*?
- 3) How does fulfilled prophecy uniquely authenticate Scripture?
- 4) *Prophetists* accuse Agabus of failing to accurately predict the future in order to excuse their own prophets from doing so? What is your response to this?
- 5) What is the warning we must recognize in Deut 13:1-5? How can we reconcile this with Deut 18:18-20?
- 6) What are some specific statistics regarding the prediction record of secular "prophets"?
- 7) Knowing only something regarding their failed predictions, what is your opinion of men like Paul Cain and Benny Hinn? What is the meaning of the fact that in many Christian circles they are celebrities?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.12

Other Biblical Tests for Modern Prophets

Recognizing False Prophets in the Church Today

Table of Topics

A) The Test of Clairvoyancy

A.1) Biblical Examples of Clairvoyancy

A.2) Demonic Counterfeits of Clairvoyancy

B) The Test of Miracle Working

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D) The Ultimate Test of Virtue

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- Clairvoyancy is the supernatural ability to “see” events of the past or present apart from the natural senses. It may also include the miraculous ability to know a person’s thoughts.
- Because things like ESP have been proven not to exist, it would seem we can be confident that if someone truly exhibits clairvoyant abilities that they are enabled by a supernatural power. However, as we have repeated throughout *KOG*, *not everything supernatural is holy*.
- satan’s knowledge of the past could give him the ability to give others clairvoyant abilities. In general, Christians are fairly unaware of just how supernatural modern, demonized, psychics are.

A) The Test of Clairvoyancy

A.1) Biblical Examples

The word clairvoyancy comes from a French word which means "to see." Thus, clairvoyancy is the supernatural ability to "see" events of the past or present apart from the natural senses. It may also include the miraculous ability to know a person's thoughts. For our purposes, we differentiate between prophecy (predicting the future), and clairvoyancy which is knowing the present or past. Because this supernatural ability to "see" the present or past apart from natural means was a biblical attribute of Prophets, they were referred to as "Seers" (cf. 1 Sam 9:9).

Clairvoyancy seems to be described when the Prophet Jeremiah remarks: **"Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time He showed me what they were doing"** (Jer 11:18). Again, such clairvoyant abilities do not necessarily include knowledge of the future, but the past or present.

Another example was demonstrated by Elisha when we read:

Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, "I will set up my camp in such and such a place." The man of God [Elisha] sent word to the king of Israel: "Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, "Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?" "None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the Prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom." (2 Kgs 6:8-12; cf. 5:19-27)

This ability was particularly prominent in Christ's ministry. First, He revealed His ability to know someone's past when He tells the Samaritan woman: **"You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."**

The woman replied, **"Sir . . . I can see that you are a Prophet,"** and she later tells the towns people, **"Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did"** (John 4:17-19, 29).

Likewise, concerning His meeting of Nathanael we read:

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, He said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." "How do You know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you [clairvoyantly] while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." (John 1:47-49)

Along the same lines, we read:

At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, "This fellow is blaspheming!" Knowing their thoughts [apart from physically hearing them], Jesus said, "Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? (Matt 9:3-4; cf. Matt 12:25; Luke 6:8; 9:47)

Accordingly, Jesus knew that His friend Lazarus had died (cf. 11:11, 14). Similarly, upon the entrance of an uninvited woman to a dinner party at which Christ was present, an observing Pharisee, **"said to himself, "If this man were a Prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner"** (Luke 7:37-39). And Jesus of course did know this, and he knew what the Pharisee was thinking as well (cf. v. 47).

We can also point to the Apostle Peter who apparently had clairvoyant knowledge of the "secret" sin of Ananias and Sapphira (cf. Acts 5:1-10).

Finally the Apostle Paul would seem to be describing the same attribute of biblical Prophets in 1 Corinthians 14 where we read:

If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all [who are prophesying] that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!" (vs. 24-5) ⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ It should be noted that there is considerable debate regarding the manner in which the unbeliever's "secrets" are "laid bare." Does Paul imagine that those "prophesying" will somehow read the unbeliever's mind and disclose his secrets to the congregation, or is the unbeliever simply convicted by the preaching of God's word and so confesses his secret sins himself? Most commentators support the latter, and Leon Morris is typical when he says:

Prophecy conveys a divine message, and this will have powerful effects. *Convinced* means 'convicted'; it is used of the Holy Spirit's work of convicting the world of sin (Jn. 16:8). The divine word comes to the non-Christian with convicting power. The effect of the

Obviously then, the ability to supernaturally “see” the past and present actions and thoughts of people, not just to predict them in the future, was also an authenticating ability of a divine Prophet.

prophetic word is to reveal to the man his [sinful] state. His whole inner being is searched out. Those things he fondly imagined to be hidden in *his heart* he finds reproved and judged, and he can ascribe this only to the activity of God. (*1 Corinthians (TNTC)* [Eerdmans, 1999], 193-4)

Those who are alarmed by all the psychic fortune-telling-like activity among some Christians today are tempted to wholeheartedly agree with this interpretation and claim that Paul’s statement gives them no biblical support for such practices. However, the view of Dr. Morris and others like him cannot be dogmatically asserted. It would seem just as likely that Paul imagined that those with the gift of prophecy had clairvoyant abilities. As we have demonstrated, God is, at times, seen in the Scriptures revealing things to His representatives about other people.

On this matter, then, we would side with Gordon Fee who writes concerning 1 Corinthians 14:24-5:

Here the revelation comes by means of prophetic utterances within the believing community when unbelievers are present. What is revealed in this case are the secrets of the unbelievers’ hearts, leading them to repentance and conversion. (*God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Hendrickson, 1994], 852)

A.2) Demonic Counterfeits

Clairvoyant abilities are obviously supernatural and would not seem possible by unaided humans. Accordingly, David Myers reports:

Psychic intuitions offered to police departments have also, on analysis, fared no better than guesses made by ordinary folks. Psychics working with police have scored some hits, but only after generating dozens or even hundreds of predictions. Most major police departments are now wise to this.

When Jane Ayers Sweat and Mark Durm asked the police departments of America's fifty largest cities whether they ever used psychics, 65 percent said they never had. Of those that had, not one had found them helpful.

Reflecting on the flood of psychic tips concerning the whereabouts of Chandra Levy, Washington, D.C., police chief Terrance Gainer said "They haven't proven very useful. You got 100 different psychics and they've got 100 different places." Indeed, over the years, notes psychologist Robert Baker, dogs have located more missing persons, dead bodies, and drug stashes than psychics ever have or ever will. . . .

The scientific search for psychic phenomena is replete, notes Ray Hyman, "with examples of Psychological researchers claiming they finally proved the existence of the paranormal. In each instance, subsequent generations of parapsychologists have had to discard as badly flawed what had seemed to the previous generation to be irrefutable proof of psi, or psychic phenomena." . . .

Indeed, after thousands of experiments, no reproducible ESP phenomenon has ever been discovered, nor has any researcher produced any individual who can convincingly demonstrate psychic ability. A National Research Council investigation of ESP similarly concluded that the "best available evidence does not support the contention that these phenomena exist." In 1995, a CIA-commissioned report evaluated ten years of military testing of psychic spies, in which \$20 million had been invested. The result? The program produced nothing and the psychic spy program was scrapped.⁴⁸⁸

Therefore, it would seem we can be confident that if someone truly exhibits clairvoyant abilities that they are enabled by a

⁴⁸⁸ David Myers, *Intuition: Its Power and Perils* (Yale University Press, 2002), 229, 233-4.

supernatural power. However, as we have repeated throughout *KOG*, *not everything supernatural is holy*.

While we noted in the previous chapter a limited ability of satan to predict the future based on what he knows of the present, his knowledge of the past could, of course, give him the ability to give others clairvoyant abilities. In general, Christians are fairly unaware of just how supernatural modern, demonized, psychics are. And this is understandably so. But it is certain that if they were more aware of what demonic psychics can do, they would not be nearly as impressed with the antics of so called "prophets" in the Church.

There is a reason that multitudes of people are flocking to psychics in local establishments and over the phone and Internet today. This is because if you were to interview such people, they could relate experiences with psychics, fortunetellers, and New Age channelers that are just as true and supernatural as any story that someone could tell concerning some "prophet" in a church. Accordingly, here are a few testimonies from psychic websites, and as you read them, can you discern how satan would be able to manipulate everyone of them?:

"My pastlife reading was so right on, it summed up everything that was [present tense] going on in my life. It was like it all clicked together. I was truly amazed. My reader's insight floored me." – Vicky

"I was grappling with a situation which had troubled me for many years. After I visited the 3rd Eye website, I decided to give it a try and requested a Past Life reading. I was astonished at the contents of the reading. It exactly pinpointed the cause of my problem and I must say that it really helped me a lot. I do not think that I could have got that information by any other means. I strongly recommend to at least give it a try." – Ravinder

"You are the most accurate psychic I have spoken to. That is why I am calling again! You saw that I would have a daughter and that I would have problems with toxemia. That all happened, but we are fine now."--Kimberley S.

"The reading was amazing! You saw the [past] death of my father and how it affected me without me asking you." -- A. Nagate

"I came to Amanda not knowing quite what to expect. I had been going through a period of unsettlement with my career

and my personal relationships. Amanda was able to tell me things that no one else could have known about. She has given me predictions for the future that are beginning to pan out just as she told me.”--Robert from CA

Do some psychics today have supernatural abilities? Yes. Are these psychics helping people? Absolutely! Their “ministries” are obviously bringing a good deal of “benefit” to their clients. There should be no doubt that modern psychics have changed peoples’ lives and for the “good.” That’s why such a thing is a billion dollar business today. People get supernatural, verifiable, and helpful results. Does it surprise us then that satan would help people in order to deceive them? It shouldn’t, and as we have discussed elsewhere, it is rather sobering to consider the lengths that the enemy is willing to go to in order to deceive God’s people especially.

Along these lines, the *prophetist* theologian Wayne Grudem ironically writes:

How shall we understand contemporary reports of witch doctors, fortune-tellers, or other people evidently under demonic influence who are able to tell people accurate details of their lives which they thought no one knew such as what food they had for breakfast, where they keep some hidden money in their house, etc.?

Most of these things can be explained by realizing that demons can observe what goes on in the world and can probably draw some conclusions from those observations. A demon may know what I ate for breakfast simply because it saw me eat breakfast. It may know what I said in a private telephone conversation because it listened to the conversation. Christians should not be led astray if they encounter members of the occult or of other false religions [how about the Church!] who seem to demonstrate such unusual knowledge from time to time.⁴⁸⁹

It is a little bewildering how the foremost theologian of modern *prophetism* can write so clearly on demonically empowered clairvoyancy, while this very thing is the only real supernatural ability that some of the second-rate “prophets” of *prophetism* can muster. Remember, the more supernatural an unbiblical phenomenon is, the more likely it is demonically empowered. And modern day “prophets” in the Church are unbiblical for all the reasons given in this section of *KOG*.

⁴⁸⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Zondervan, 1994), 416.

More specifically, we can distinguish those in Scripture who possessed clairvoyant abilities with their gift of prophecy, from those who exercise these abilities today by observing two things. First, all of the former were messengers of extra-biblical, Scripture-quality divine revelation that must be believed and obeyed. False prophets today who claim such powers, but not such revelation, are not biblical. Secondly, all of those in Scripture being described as having clairvoyant powers, were also authenticated in other ways as well, whether by predicting the future, or performing undeniable miracles. False prophets today who can demonstrate clairvoyant abilities, which the devil has, but cannot predict the future like God can, should be rejected.

Nonetheless, a multitude of God's people have been duped by so called "prophets" who can tell them private details about their past, but can never convincingly predict their future, perform a miracle, or exercise supernatural virtue like all of those who really did possess the divine gift of prophecy in Scripture. We have already noted the case of William Branham (1909-1965), a celebrated foundational figure of modern *prophetism*, and able to supernaturally tell people about their lives, but was a demonic fake.⁴⁹⁰ Why has modern *prophetism* labeled such a man a hero of the faith instead of a heretic? And such a lack of sound doctrine, discernment, and courage in the movement has been repeated.

For example, former member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Vineyard Churches, Tom Stipe, says that in a private meeting of Vineyard leaders, he was introduced to several men called "prophets." He goes on to relate:

[Our skepticism] disappeared entirely later in the meeting when one of the prophets singled us out and proceeded to reveal, in detail, the secrets of our lives. Now they really had our attention. How could they not be from God? One after another, these accurate "words from the Lord" seemed to be the perfect validation for everything they were proposing. We became completely convinced of the validity of this prophetic anointing. How else could we explain their ability to "see into" our childhoods and personal histories through their prophetic gifting?⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹⁰ For further discussion of William Branham see section 9.13.J. and 11.7. B.9.b.

⁴⁹¹ Tom Stipe in forward, *Counterfeit Revival*, Hank Hanegraaff (Word, 1997), x.

Good question, and one that needs to be answered. And if such "prophets" could not demonstrate the other supernatural abilities of those in Scripture who possessed the gift of prophecy, they needed to be rejected and publicly denounced as dangerous and demonically empowered false prophets. But, no doubt, they continue to operate in God's Church, defiling it and His people.

The profession of clairvoyant abilities are a very common claim of the *prophetist* movement as supposed evidence that it is a movement of God. Accordingly, its foremost apologist Jack Deere is obviously quite eager in his book, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, to relate many stories of clairvoyant abilities. For example, he writes of Paul Cain, whom Deere would later excommunicate from fellowship because of habitual homosexuality:

Paul Cain was in town that week to speak at a conference the Vineyard was hosting. The night of the blowup between Kevin and Regina the Lord gave him a vision of the Forests. When he awoke the next morning, he called Carl Tuttle and said, "There's a domestic problem in your church."

"That's right," Carl said.

"Her name is Regina. What's his name?" asked Paul.

"It's Kevin."

"Listen, Carl, this guy wants to run. Don't let him do it.

Make sure he's in the meeting tonight. The Lord may do something for him."

Then Paul hung up.

Both Kevin and Regina came to the church that night. . . . At the end of his message, Paul asked Kevin to stand up. A man named Kevin jumped up immediately, but it was not Kevin Forest. Paul said, "No, you're not the Kevin I saw in the vision. There is another Kevin here." Then slowly Kevin Forest stood up.

"Kevin, I don't want to embarrass you, but your marriage is on the rocks," Paul said. Last night I had a vision of you and Regina-that's your wife's name, isn't it? I don't want to embarrass you. I want to restore you. . . . You're twenty-eight years old, and the devil plans to kill you before your thirtieth birthday. He hasn't been able to kill you yet. . . . satan wants to kill you because he knows what God has for you and Regina.⁴⁹²

Another interesting article regarding the Vineyard "prophet" Paul Cain which has appeared in a Vineyard publication is by Nick Gumbel. In the article the "accuracy" of Cain's prophecies are

⁴⁹² Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Zondervan, 1996).

stressed with a "few examples from the evening" where these "prophets" "seemed to have information that was not available by natural means." Gumbel reports:

It appeared that people's names had been accurately revealed to [Cain], often in riddles. For example, he said, 'Thomas, you are a chip off the old block' to a man named Thomas Chipper. To Philip, he said, "You have a pastor's heart and you are a noble man"; he was a pastor named Philip Noble.

One of the more remarkable words was given to a man I know well. [Cain said], 'a real bishop . . . Richard the Lionhearted . . . Pontefract or something like that, Pontefract . . . The Lord gave me an open vision of a field that is going to wake up. It is called 'Wakefield.' This was spoken to Richard Hare, Bishop of Pontefract in the diocese of Wakefield."

Gumbel concludes, "As I read my Bible, I see we are to test prophecy . . . To me, all the evidence suggests that they are genuine men of God with an important message for the church."⁴⁹³

By relating these stories in order to give *prophetism* a divine signature, Mr. Deere and Mr. Gumble have actually exposed it all the more as a demonic fraud. This is because Mr. Cain who exhibited such supernatural abilities was later forced to confess alcoholism and a homosexual lifestyle as discussed further below. Even Jack Deere, who was so willing in his book to use Mr. Cain to prove his case, has since distanced himself from this false prophet.

If you want to believe that God would give an alcoholic homosexual such gifts, that is, of course, your choice. We would only remind you that Jesus warned us of "**false prophets**" who "**come in sheep's clothing**" who would be "**evildoers**" who would prophesy in His "**name**," but would be recognized "**by their fruit**" because "**a bad tree bears bad fruit**" (Matt 7:15-17, 22-23). Mr. Cain is a "**false prophet . . . in sheep's clothing**" who "**bears bad fruit**" if there ever was one.

As noted above, Jack Deere claims all kinds of clairvoyant gifts for himself throughout his book. No doubt, his description of his deeds might impress someone, but what about his doctrine? It is suggested here again that if anyone would agree with the interpretation of the Scriptures presented in this study, and then compare those to what Mr. Deere writes, you might conclude with us that he is one of the most dangerous false teachers in Christianity today. While there are many examples throughout

⁴⁹³ Nick Gumbel, "The Feedback Loop at London's HTB," *Equipping the Saints* 4 [Fall 1990]: 30-31.

KOG, we can offer a few more false teachings of Mr. Deere here to illustrate our point.

In a tape recorded message at the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Denver, CO Mr. Deere is teaching on the topic of the restoration of Apostles and Prophets to the Church today. At one point he declares that these Apostles and Prophets (like, he claims, Paul Cain) will "do greater works than the Apostles, than Jesus, or any of the Old Testament Prophets."⁴⁹⁴ Is that setting people up for the antichrist or what?

In another taped teaching, Mr. Deere admits that he witnessed a "prophet" once calling an eighteen year old kid out of a crowd of 800 people and claiming that the Holy Spirit had told him that the kid was addicted to pornography. The kid was obviously embarrassed, but the "prophet" and Mr. Deere were even more embarrassed when it was proven to be false. Still, in order to protect his "doctrine" about prophets today, Mr. Deere was rather unrepentant about what occurred and replied:

But you know what? God is in the process of offending our minds in order to reveal our hearts. . . . And I don't know any place where He is going to give us a pure ministry. I don't know any place where it's going to be 100 percent right. There's going to be stumbling blocks in every ministry that the Holy Spirit is really responsible for.⁴⁹⁵

How dare Mr. Deere blame the Holy Spirit for such an immoral and embarrassing incident. Is this the kind of man that God would wish to authenticate with the miraculous abilities that Mr. Deere claims for himself? We think not, and would hope not.

B) The Test of Miracle Working

While we have noted above that virtually every named Prophet in the Bible is described as accurately making a prediction, other kinds of miracle working authenticated them as well. Because we have discussed miracle working a great deal elsewhere, including its authenticating purpose for Prophets, we will only do so briefly here.

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⁴⁹⁴ Jack Deere, "Intimacy with God and the End Times Church," Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Denver, CO, 1989, audiotape (session 2A).

⁴⁹⁵ Jack Deere, Toronto Airport Vineyard, 20 November 1994, audiotape.

⁴⁹⁶ For further discussion on the place of miracle working in authenticating Prophets see section 10.5.A.3.

God illustrated the foundational nature of miracle working for authenticating His Prophets when He initially recruited the first great Prophet Moses. Therefore, in God's initial commissioning of Moses, He gives him miracle working powers after which God says, **"This is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you"** (Exod 4:5). Accordingly, unlike self-proclaimed prophets today, Moses was willing to prove himself as a messenger of God. When some of the Israelites questioned his status as a Prophet, he replied:

This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the Earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt [because they had treated one of His Prophets with contempt] (Num 16:28-30)

And we know what happened on that day. And this is because God is more than willing to authenticate anyone He has truly called to be one of His Prophets.

Likewise, we are reminded of Elijah's raising of a woman's son from death, upon which she said: **"Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth"** (1 Kgs 17:24).

While miracle working is abundantly recorded as an authentication of OT Prophets, we find no such thing in the NT. Christian Prophets such as Agabus and Anna are described as predicting the future. It would seem that while such foreknowledge remained the primary authentication of Prophets in the NT, other types of miracle working were more common with Apostles.

C) The Test of Doctrine

While we would, of course, necessarily be wary of any self-proclaimed "prophet" speaking something unbiblical, there are several other problems with the doctrinal test for true Prophets of God. First, we argue elsewhere that Romans 12:6 is probably not prescribing that a Prophet speak **"in accordance with"** the

Christian faith, but rather the *gift faith* that would accompany his ministry as a Prophet.⁴⁹⁷

Secondly, while there certainly are doctrinal tests prescribed in Scripture for those professing to speak for God, they are only adequate to expose the most obvious pretenders. The test in Deuteronomy 13:3 is the false prophet's statement: "**Let us follow other gods.**" But what if the false prophet prophesied in the name of Jesus, as Jesus Himself said they would (cf. Matt 7:23-24)?

Likewise, the Apostle Paul, in an effort to expose fraudulent and even demonically inspired speaking in the Corinthian assembly advised, "**Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit"** (1 Cor 12:3). The first statement is certainly true, but again, a false prophet's ability to prophesy in the name of Jesus would seem to qualify the second statement.

Along the same lines, the Apostle John writes:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Such a test would probably expose an especially demonically empowered individual, but what of a Christian who is merely self-deceived about speaking for God and having the gift of prophecy? And even these tests prescribed by John were not all-sufficient in his mind as he added the test of supernatural virtue as well (cf. 1 John 2:18-19; 3:7, 10).

A third reason that doctrinal tests are insufficient of themselves to expose false prophets is that the gift of prophecy enables one to speak extra-biblical revelation. For example, Jesus Christ spoke new divine revelation, some of which replaced OT revelation.⁴⁹⁸ This is clearly one of the reasons the Jewish religious authorities

⁴⁹⁷ Regarding the *gift faith* that accompanies the gift of prophecy see section 6.9.A.

⁴⁹⁸ 8.4.A.1.

rejected Christ, in spite of His obvious ability to work miracles. Accordingly, Dr. Brown writes:

At a very early stage Jesus was perceived by His opponents as a blasphemous false teacher, who was possessed by Satan and who must be eliminated. Underlying this attitude was the conviction that action must be taken in accordance with the teaching laid down in Dt. 13. Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath and the current interpretation of the law and His presumption in pronouncing forgiveness of sins (Mk. 2:7,18, 23 par.) were perceived as the work of a blasphemous false prophet who used signs and wonders in order to accredit Himself. The healing of the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath led to the Pharisees taking counsel with the Herodians to destroy Jesus (Mk. 3:6 par.).⁴⁹⁹

However, Christ was not violating Deuteronomy 13 and telling people to "**follow other gods (gods you have not known),**" but was communicating a New Covenant with the same God. Nonetheless, someone holding to the primacy of sound doctrine in order to expose false prophets would have rejected Jesus just like the Pharisees.

Likewise, the Christian Prophets shared in the ability to possess and communicate the new divine revelation of the New Covenant, which contained some radical changes from the OT (cf. Eph 2:20; 3:4-5). All of which is why adherence to previously received revelation is not an adequate authentication of a Prophet on its own.

D) The Test of Virtue

We have already observed that the inability of the modern second-rate "prophets" of *prophetism* to work miracles or accurately predict the future immediately disqualifies them for any claim to the biblical gift and ministry of prophecy. But what of a false prophet who did come along who could perform the miraculous and sounded very Christian? What test is left to expose them?

The ultimate test, according to the Christ Himself, is the test of supernatural virtue:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do

⁴⁹⁹ Colin Brown, "Miracles," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., 4 vols., (Eerdmans, 1988), III:373-6.

people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father Who is in Heaven. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' (cf. Matt 7:15-23).

Accordingly, as we have written at length elsewhere, ⁵⁰⁰ while these false prophets apparently could produce supernatural deeds, Christ implies they will not be able to consistently produce supernatural virtue, making it the ultimate test of those claiming to speak for God. This is because, while satan is able to empower physical miracles, his power cannot and will not exhibit Christ-like virtue.

Because of the importance of the test of virtue for those we would listen to, the Apostle wrote Timothy:

[E]vil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it. (2 Tim 3:13-14)

The Bible then encourages us to receive our teaching from those whom we know well enough to trust that they are living what they are teaching. If people were simply more aware of the personal lives of the celebrity "prophets" they are following in *prophetism*, we believe most would soon abandon them.

It is a lack of virtue that exposes the false prophet of Samaria in 1 Kings 13. He is indeed called a "**prophet**," (v. 11), and God grants him an actual prophecy that is fulfilled (cf. vs. 20-22). Nonetheless, Jesus said we would be able to recognize false prophets by their fruit, and this no doubt included their virtue (cf. Matt 7:15-23). Therefore, when we read that this "**prophet**" intentionally deceived "**the man of God**" who really was a Prophet

⁵⁰⁰ For further discussion on the recognition of demonic miracle workers see chapters 11.11-13.

of God, and **"was lying to him"** (vs. 18-19), we have no reason to believe he was one of God's Prophets. Let us remember that Scripture at times refers to false prophets merely as "prophets" and God is willing to give them prophecies in order to test His people (cf. Deut 13:1-5).⁵⁰¹ Unfortunately, the **"man of God"** spoken of here neglected to carefully test a false prophet's claim to speak for God and suffered the consequences just like anyone will.

Following the instruction of our Lord, we have two documents from the very early Church that demonstrate the fact that the test of virtue was to be applied to someone claiming to possess the gift of prophecy. In the *Didache* (c. A.D. 70) we read:

Not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a Prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord. From his behavior, then, the false prophet and the true Prophet shall be known.⁵⁰²

In the *Shepherd of Hermas* (c. A.D. 140), we read of "a false prophet, ruining the minds of the servants of God. . . Some true words he does occasionally utter; for the devil fills him with his own spirit, in the hope that he may be able to overcome some of the righteous."⁵⁰³ Accordingly, in answer to the question, "How will a man know which of them is the Prophet, and which the false prophet?" the answer is given:

Try the man who has the Divine Spirit by his life. First, he who has the Divine Spirit proceeding from above is meek, and peaceable, and humble, and refrains from all iniquity and the vain desire of this world, and contents himself with fewer wants than those of other men, and when asked [for a prophecy] he makes no reply; nor does he speak privately. . .

⁵⁰¹ Commenting on 1 Kings 13, John MacArthur notes:

This passage is sometimes thought to relate the account of a true Prophet who prophesied falsely. But note that the false prophet in that narrative is never identified as a "man of God", while the honest (but disobedient) Prophet in that passage is. Second Kings 23:17 identifies the false prophet as "the prophet who came from Samaria." He may well have been an unbelieving seer whose powers were demonic-hence his superstitious request (I Ki. 23:31). Note also that he was not immediately punished for his lying, even though the "man of God" he duped died for his disobedience. There are several examples in Scripture where unrighteous men sometimes prophesied accurately. (*Charismatic Chaos* [Zondervan, 1992], 368.

⁵⁰² *The Teaching of the Twelve (Didache)*, 11.8; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁰³ *The Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 11; online at www.ccel.org.

[T]he man who seems to have the Spirit exalts himself, and wishes to have the first seat, and is bold, and impudent, and talkative, and lives in the midst of many luxuries and many other delusions; and takes rewards for his prophecy . . .

Prophets of this character are possessed by an earthly spirit. Then it never approaches an assembly of righteous men, but shuns them. And it associates with doubters and the vain, and prophesies to them in a corner, and deceives them, speaking to them, according to their desires, mere empty words . . .

Try by his deeds and his life the man who says that he is inspired.⁵⁰⁴

Not surprisingly, because the foremost "prophets" of modern *prophetism* have proven to be so immoral, its leaders have attempted to excuse their sins and still promote them as divine Prophets. On the other hand, if we follow Jesus' instruction, virtually every one of the foremost foundational "prophets" of modern *prophetism* are exposed as frauds. Even several years ago, the Pentecostal historian Walter J. Hollenweger wrote:

In his opening address for the 24th Research Conference of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (Wheaton College, Ill., 1984) Roger Stronstad criticized the "individualistic, self-centered, and, even, narcissistic" tendencies [of *prophetism*]. Thus prophecy is "trivialized and/or commercialized." The prophecies often "border on the credulous, the absurd, the blasphemous and the exploitative." They deal with new revelations and novel and authoritative interpretations of the Bible, with who to marry and when to have babies, with material prosperity and careers. All over the world there are prophets who, like Balaam, prostitute the gift of prophecy for money and power." This emphasis totally misses the first century function of Prophets.⁵⁰⁵

Several years later, the morality of *prophetism* has just worsened.

It would be one thing if only a few obscure "prophets" in the movement had been caught in gross immorality. But in fact, its foremost and foundational "prophets" have been exposed. Accordingly, we elsewhere documented Benny Hinn's gross greed.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Hendrickson, 1997), 232-3.

⁵⁰⁶ God Himself is exposing them and trying to warn His people, but they are not listening, as these false prophets continue to enjoy celebrity status.

Likewise, Bob Jones, one of the famed "Kansas City prophets" and who still has a popular prophetic ministry today, was found to have committed repeated sexually immoral acts involving several individuals in the Kansas City church he was "ministering" in. Mr. Hanegraaff reported that John Wimber, the man perhaps most responsible for promoting *prophetism*, admitted in a public statement that Jones had been using his "prophetic" powers to "manipulate people for his personal desires, sexual misconduct, rebelling against pastoral authority, slandering leaders and the promotion of bitterness within the body of Christ."⁵⁰⁷

However, in typical *prophetist* fashion, Mr. Wimber claimed that "[J]udging Jones's sexual sins should not translate into judging Jones's seer-status." The prominent *prophetist* pastor Mike Bickle agreed. While acknowledging that "the pain and trauma" of Jones's victims "was unbearable," he agreed that the prophetic anointing on Jones "was greater than ever."⁵⁰⁸ When we note Jack Deere's own insistence that "the only test for determining a genuine work of God is *whether that work manifests the fruit of the Holy Spirit*"⁵⁰⁹ one is left wondering how men professing to be so "spiritual" could be so self-deceived and deceiving. Why can't modern *prophetism* see that God Himself is angry about their fraud in His name and personally exposing the true nature of their "prophets" so the leaders of *prophetism* will repent, and their followers will find safer Shepherds.

Such divine displeasure and intentional exposure would seem to be the case with Paul Cain as well. Mr. Hanegraaff relates:

[John] Wimber claimed that, like the Apostle Paul, Cain was "a eunuch of the Lord." [Wimber claims] Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Santa Maria and physically "touched him on the chest," subsequently taking "all sexual desire out of his body. For over forty years he's lived with no cognizant sense of sexuality. . . . In spite of Cain's transformation into a "eunuch for the Lord" . . . Cain was accused of being

⁵⁰⁶ For documentation of consistent and immoral greed in Benny Hinn's life see section 10.15.A.7 and 11.8.F.4.

⁵⁰⁷ Public statement from John Wimber, 11-12-91, Association of Vineyard Churches.

⁵⁰⁸ Hanegraaff, 149-150.

⁵⁰⁹ Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* (Zondervan, 1993), 95. (italics in the original).

[sexually] involved with a woman in Scandinavia. At the time, he was allegedly at the peak of his career . . . the angel of the Lord [had] instructed William Branham to let Cain take over some of his largest crusades. Despite Cain's success, however, the accusations [and reality?] of sexual impropriety caused him to abandon his ministry and go into seclusion for twenty-five years.⁵¹⁰

Mr. Cain resurfaced in the Vineyard movement of which Mr. Hanegraaff relates:

[John Wimber has said] that Cain's prophetic prowess hinged on his personal character, not his prophetic correctness. He assured followers that he had thoroughly checked out Cain, the man who was to discover and disclose the identity of the endtime Apostle [who ironically turned out to be Wimber himself].

For many years Mr. Cain enjoyed the honor and praise of modern *prophetism* as the greatest of God's Prophets in the Church, including foremost leaders such as John Wimber and Jack Deere. However, in 2005, he was exposed as a practicing homosexual and alcoholic. Accordingly, a *prophetist* source relates:

Veteran charismatic minister Paul Cain issued a solemn apology on Jan. 31 [2005] in which he repented for immoral behavior and pledged to seek counseling for his alcoholism.

Celebrated in charismatic circles for his accuracy [in clairvoyancy, not prediction] as a New Testament Prophet, Cain was disciplined and disfellowshipped by three church leaders last fall after they determined he had engaged in a pattern of unbiblical behavior that included heavy drinking and homosexuality.

Rick Joyner, Mike Bickle and Jack Deere released their charges Oct. 19 in a statement on the Internet. They also said Cain was unwilling to submit to a restoration process.

Cain initially denied the charges in a statement on his own Web site, maintaining that his reputation was being attacked. But three months later he decided to come clean.

"I am as guilty as I can be," he told *Charisma* [magazine]. "I am going for counseling. I am getting as much help as I can."

Joyner, Bickle and Deere made their initial charges public because they found proof that Cain was involved in long-term homosexual activity and often got drunk, sometimes in public.

⁵¹⁰ Hanegraaff, 145-148.

"We apologize to the body of Christ for our lack of discernment in promoting Paul's ministry while he had these significant strongholds in his life," their statement reads. "We hope that Paul can yet be restored and used again for the glory of God in the wonderful way that so many of us have been blessed to see in the past."

Deere, who pastors Wellspring Church in Richland Hills, Texas, learned of the charges last year from a man who said he had been involved in a sexual relationship with Cain. Three witnesses also told *Charisma* that Cain drank heavily. The drinking got so serious that Cain once collapsed in public, one witness added.

Deere asked Joyner and Bickle to arrange a meeting in Moravian Falls, N.C., where they confronted Cain in April 2004. He initially confessed to the charges, Deere said. But later Cain retracted his confession and even sent out letters from doctors who vouched for his emotional health. Now, however, Cain says he is no longer in denial.

"I have struggled with homosexuality for an extended period of time," Cain said in his written apology. "I have struggled with alcoholism for an extended period of time. I apologize for denying these matters of truth, rather than readily admitting them. I am ashamed of what I have done to hurt those close to me and for the pain I have caused those who have believed in my ministry."

Cain's accuser, who spoke with *Charisma* but asked not to be named, is now undergoing spiritual rehabilitation. Meanwhile, Cain--who is 75-- says he has no intention of going back into the pulpit anytime soon. . . .

Meanwhile, Deere, Bickle and Joyner said they regret giving Cain a platform. "I think our basic mistake was to overlook a lot of serious and obvious warning signs," Joyner told *Charisma*.

Deere agreed. "We all have preached that you never put gifting over character," he said, "but that is what we did for Paul. We would have fired anyone else. The reason we didn't is because of [Cain's] gifting. We let that gifting excuse character." . . .

Today Cain has homes in Kansas City, Dallas and Moravian Falls, N.C. But he says he plans to check into an alcoholism treatment center by the first week of March. If possible, he also hopes to complete a book he is writing, *The Rise and Fall of God's Anointed*, which will include his memories of Pentecostal evangelists such as William Branham and A.A. Allen--men who, like Cain, experienced supernatural gifts of

healing and prophecy [and were also exposed as immoral reprobates ⁵¹¹]. . . .

Three prominent Spirit-filled leaders—Mike Bickle, Rick Joyner and Jack Deere—urged Cain to submit to a specific process of restoration and healing after his dramatic public confession in 2005. But Cain eventually refused their recommendations and was deemed “fully restored” by a somewhat unknown ministry in California.

Because the three men were not familiar with the process Cain underwent, Bickle, Joyner and Deere released a statement last year saying: “We cannot say with confidence that this is a genuine restoration.” ⁵¹²

Nonetheless, Mr. Cain has resumed his “prophetic” ministry, his homepage stating:

Today, Paul Cain is acknowledged as one of the most prominent leadership figures in the Christian “prophetic” movement, and is known as a spiritual father to thousands. He continues to move in the supernatural . . . ⁵¹³

But then again, *not everything supernatural is holy.*

When we consider the moral state of *prophetism’s* foremost prophets, we are reminded of God’s attitude toward the “prophets” who “ministered” in Jeremiah’s day:

The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly. Both prophet and priest are godless; even in My temple I find their wickedness,” declares the LORD. “Among the prophets of Samaria I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray. And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen something horrible: They commit adultery and live a lie. (Jer 23:10-14)

Extras & Endnotes

⁵¹¹ For further documentation of the gross immorality of the founding fathers of *prophetism* see section 11.8.E.

⁵¹² Documented at <http://www.charismamag.com/news/archives/051308.html>

⁵¹³ Documented at www.paulcain.com.

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) What is clairvoyancy? What are some biblical examples of it being empowered by God?
- 2) How could clairvoyancy be empowered by the devil?
- 3) What do we mean when we say *not everything supernatural is holy*. Why is this important to remember?
- 4) How are the various ways that we could discern a person with demonic clairvoyant powers?
- 5) What is the ultimate test for false prophets? Why is this the case?
- 6) What should we understand from the fact all of the most prominent "prophets" in *prophetism* have been exposed as immoral failures?

Publications & Particulars

Chapter 9.13

The Ancient Cessation & Modern Abuse of the Gift of Prophecy

Table of Topics

- A) The Cessation of the Gift of Prophecy**
- B) Prophecy in Intertestamental Judaism:** *Malachi was the last*
- C) 1st Century Waning of Gift of Prophecy**
- D) 2nd & 3rd Century Continuation but Discernment:** *condemnation of ancient prophetism in Montanism*
- E) 4th Century Cessation:** *Chrysostom- the gift of prophecy has long since ceased*
- F) Medieval Romanism:** *quirky testimonies*
- G) 16th & 17th Century Reformers:** *Westminster Confession- those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased*
- H) 18th Century Revival:** *Edwards- gift of prophecy has ceased*
- I) 19th Century Heresy:** *Mormon & Irvingite "prophets"*
- J) 20th Century Prophetism:** *The frauds of Branham & Robertson*
- K) End-time Restoration:** *Moses & Elijah*

Extras & Endnotes

Primary Points

- It is a historical fact that God completely stopped giving the gift of prophecy to the Church sometime around 350 A.D. Nonetheless, modern *prophetism* that it has been uniquely restored to them in the last 30 years after it was absent from the previous 1,600 some years of Church history.
- The reason that the gift of prophecy ceased c. 350 A. D. is because it was at the same time that the NT Scriptures had been completed, copied, recognized, and widely distributed.
- In addition to the historical cessation of the gift of prophecy, there are several reasons for concluding that it has not been restored today.
- What is remarkable about 2nd century *Montanism* is that its beliefs and practices were practically identical to modern *prophetism*. However, while those Christians less than a century after the apostolic age condemned and excommunicated the *Montanists* as dangerous heretics, the Church today lauds similar claims as a movement of the Holy Spirit.
- Origen was well traveled and testified to a drastic decrease in the operation of the gift of prophecy about 220 A. D.
- Why would modern *prophetists* claim that their churches are more spiritual or godly than the ancient churches, such that they deserve to have the gift restored, and the latter were judged by having it removed?

A) The Cessation of the Gift of Prophecy

It is a historical fact that God completely stopped giving the gift of prophecy to the Church sometime around 350 A.D.⁵¹⁴ And if it wasn't for the popularity of modern *prophetism* there would not even be a serious debate about this. However, *prophetists* rightly see the past cessation of the gift of prophecy, at the time of the completion of the distribution of the NT, as a problem for claiming the gift has uniquely been restored to them in the last 30 years of Church history, especially when it was absent from the previous 1,600 some years of Church history.⁵¹⁵

Nonetheless, Christopher Forbes writes in his well researched, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity*:

A general consensus pertains according to which prophecy was common in the "apostolic" period (say down to about A. D. 70), very rare in the immediate sub-apostolic period (70-100), and occasionally present thereafter until the rise of Montanism made all such phenomena highly suspect. After

⁵¹⁴ It is important to notice that we do not make the same mistake as, for example, B. B. Warfield (1851–1921), in claiming that *Scripture gifts* like prophecy ceased in the first century (cf. *Counterfeit Miracles*, [Banner of Truth, repr. 1995]). Nonetheless, this is how the cessationist (*historicist*) position is usually portrayed. Accordingly, the *Wikipedia* entry on "cessationists" has the following:

Cessationists usually believe the miraculous gifts were given only for the foundation of the Church, during the time between the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, c. AD 33, and the fulfillment of God's purposes in history, usually identified as either the completion of the last book of the New Testament or the death of the last Apostle (this is also known as the transition period for the canon of Scripture was not yet complete). (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cessationism>).

Several have taken this traditional "cessationist" view supported in Warfield's wonderful study, and attempt to discredit the whole *historicist* idea that Paul was predicting the cessation of these gifts with the completed communication of the NT revelation (e.g. Gary Steven Shogren, "Christian Prophecy And Canon In The Second Century: A Response To B. B. Warfield" *JETS* 40:4 [Dec 1997] p. 609-626.

On the contrary, the NT revelation was not sufficiently copied, distributed, and recognized until the middle of the third century, and that is why the evidence we have testifies to the cessation of these gifts about that time. See further discussion on Warfield's view at ?

⁵¹⁵ We made our calculations based on the approximation that the modern prophecy movement really surfaced in the 1980's, and the gift of prophecy was rather universally thought to be extinct since 350, which would equal the 1730 years that there was no debate about its existence.

170, prophecy is often said to be extremely rare. By the end of the second century (c. 200) some people [e.g. Hippolytus c. 200] were treating prophecy as a past phenomenon.⁵¹⁶

In spite of Hippolytus' testimony, evidence will be presented below that the gift probably lasted into the fourth century.

The reason that the gift of prophecy ceased c. 350 A. D. is because it was at the same time that the NT Scriptures had been completed, copied, recognized, and widely distributed. Accordingly we have elsewhere described the biblical/historical relationship between a *Scripture gift* like prophecy, and the establishment of a covenant between God and people.⁵¹⁷ Therefore, unless God is intending to make another covenant with humanity, we would not expect the *Scripture gifts* of Apostles, Prophets, and miracle workers to be operating.

Secondly, we have elsewhere demonstrated the historical cessation of the gifts of Apostleship, miracle working, and tongues at the same time as the historical completion of the revelation, copying, recognition, and distribution of the written NT covenant and Scriptures.⁵¹⁸ This historical fact confirms the biblical purpose of these gifts which the Apostle Paul clearly described particularly in Ephesians. We have noted elsewhere:

While the divine authority of OT prophesying is obvious and widely recognized, it is apparent in the NT as well, although ardently attacked by modern *prophetists*. Perhaps the clearest indication of the authority of NT Prophets was their equality with NT Apostles. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul said of Christian Prophets:

In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [NT Christian] Prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. (Eph. 3:4-5)

⁵¹⁶ Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity And Its Hellenistic Environment* (J. C. B. Mohr, 1995), 247, 249. Although both we and Mr. Forbes find some evidence of the gift operating into the mid second-century.

⁵¹⁷ For further discussion on the relationship between covenant making and the *Scripture gifts* such as prophecy, see section 7.3.B-D.

⁵¹⁸ For the historical demonstration of the cessation of the gift of Apostleship see chapter 8.5 For miracle working see 11.7. And for tongues see 12.13.

In terms of speaking direct revelation from God, Christian Prophets in the early Church possessed the same ability as the revelatory Apostles. This is why the Apostle Paul makes the rather remarkable statement that the Church was **"built on the foundation of the Apostles and [NT] Prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone"** (Eph. 2:20). Both revelatory Apostles and Christian Prophets uniquely possessed the New Covenant revelation upon which the Church was founded, and because all divine revelation is absolutely and equally authoritative, Apostles and Prophets were equally authoritative. . . .

In 3:5 the Apostle writes with almost identical wording to 2:20, that, **"the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men [i.e. OT Prophets] in other generations . . . has now [in the apostolic age] been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy Apostles and [Christian] Prophets."** Because the **"Prophets"** coupled with the **"Apostles"** in 3:5 are clearly Christian Prophets, common sense would lead us to believe that when the same coupling is expressed 6 verses earlier in 2:20 that Christian Prophets are meant as well. In fact, it was the divine revelation concerning **"the mystery of Christ"** (3:5) that was the essence of the foundational revelation of the Christian Prophets referred to in 2:20.⁵¹⁹

The purpose of the gift of prophecy, with Apostles then, was to provide the revelational **"foundation"** of the Church, consisting of **"the mystery of Christ."** After this revelation was recorded, copied, recognized and distributed, these gifts were no longer needed and they ceased, just as early Church history testifies.

Accordingly, in chapter 8.6, we argue that the Apostle Paul in fact predicted the cessation of the Apostolic gift of divine knowledge, and the gifts of prophecy and tongues with the completion of the communication of the NT covenant (cf. 1 Cor 13:8-13).⁵²⁰ This is what we believe the Apostle meant when he wrote, **"prophecies . . . will cease . . . when the completed thing [NT revelation] comes"** (1 Cor 13:8, 10). One thing for sure is that Church history clearly demonstrates this is precisely what happened.

⁵¹⁹ Excerpt from section 9.6.C.1.

⁵²⁰ For an argument for interpreting 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 as a prediction of the cessation of the *Scripture* and *Sign gifts* with the completion of the communication of the NT covenant see chapter 8.6.

Accordingly, Dr. Robert L. Saucy, Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Talbot School of Theology, would seem to express our own conclusions concerning the question of whether or not the biblical gift of prophecy is operating today, and offers additional biblical evidence for the gifts cessation when he says:

Present experience and church history do not give much evidence of it [the gift of prophecy continuing]. It is certainly valid, as the church has largely done throughout history, to see the need for such prophecy to decrease when the explanation of the saving activity of Christ as given in Scripture became accessible to all believers. . . .

It is significant that in the last letters of Paul, there is no reference to prophecy save to remind Timothy of the prophecy made at his ordination (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14). The focus of these letters, which are termed the "Pastorals" because they give instructions for ministry in the church, is on teaching, exhorting, and commanding the Scriptures [not receiving more prophecy].⁵²¹

In addition to the historical cessation of the gift of prophecy, there are several reasons for concluding that it has not been restored today. First of all, it has been demonstrated that the gift involved the reception of new, Scripture-quality revelation from God.⁵²² To insist that it exists today obviously results in some alarming claims. Which is why, of course, that *prophetism* has expended so much energy in attempting to redefine the gift into something less miraculous and authoritative than it was in the early Church. No "prophet" today can claim that they speak as authoritatively for God as Agabus did.

The OT prophets prefaced their statements with "This is what the Lord says" and Agabus the Christian Prophet similarly prefaced his statement with "**This is what the Holy Spirit says**", and they weren't just quoting Scripture. The words of God-sent Prophets are God's words, not merely human words, and because they are God's words, it is grievous sin to disregard or disobey their words. Who would claim to speak with such authority today apart from quoting Scripture? If no one would, then no one should be claiming to be a God-sent Prophet either.

⁵²¹ Robert L. Saucy in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*, Wayne Grudem, ed. (Zondervan, 1996), 128; underlining added.

⁵²² Regarding the biblical fact that the gift of prophecy involved the reception of new, Scripture-quality revelation from God see chapters 9.4 and 9.6.

Unfortunately, what is defined today as prophetic utterances have no resemblance to the words of biblical Prophets. Throughout the OT and in the NT prophetic utterances were supernatural and could not have originated from simple human reasoning or current common knowledge. They revealed new Scripture-quality revelation directly from God and were to be believed and obeyed as such. The supposed "prophets" of today do no such thing. For someone to stand up and announce "God loves you" and then claim such an utterance to be prophetic is absurd. Yet much of what supposed "prophets" say today could have been discerned by human reason or from the knowledge that God has already revealed in the Bible.

Noting also that biblical Prophets perfectly predicted the future, we have another obvious reason to conclude no one possesses the real thing today. This is the clearest test that God has given His people in order to recognize a Prophet He has sent. Not even God expects us to accept a claim to the gift of prophecy unless they can miraculously pass God's own test. None today can. At least not any better than the fortune teller you can find at the circus or on the Internet. God's people can be confident that when He sends a Prophet, their divinely-empowered abilities will clearly distinguish themselves from the demonically-empowered abilities that are apparently sufficient to convince so many today.

The predictive record of modern day "prophets" in the Church is dismal, even though their predictions are often quite vague. In essence, there is nothing new, supernatural, perfectly predictive, or authoritative about the supposed prophetic utterances of today, and yet all of these characteristics were essential in identifying the gift of prophecy in the Scriptures. And if *prophetism* cannot produce Prophets with these biblical attributes then they have no God-given right to claim the gift of prophecy.

The historical fact that the gift of prophecy ceased with the completion of the communication of the NT covenant would hardly be a debatable issue, and never was, except for the modern rise of *prophetism*. Accordingly, it is becoming more common in *prophetist* circles to attempt to revise the history of the gift of prophecy in order to give some support for their claims that God intended the Church to always possess it. Therefore, below, we will describe the history of the gift of prophecy.

B) Prophecy in Intertestamental Judaism: *Malachi was the last*

Most Evangelical scholars claim that Jewish history reflects the cessation of the gift of prophecy after the Prophet Malachi (c. 450 B. C.). Even *prophetist* theologian Wayne Grudem admits:

The belief that divinely authoritative words from God had ceased is quite clearly attested to in several strands of extra-biblical Jewish literature.... Thus, writings subsequent to about 430 B.C. were not accepted by the Jewish people generally as having equal authority with the rest of Scripture.
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Likewise, Dr. Saucy writes:

According to the Jews, Malachi was 'the seal of the Prophets' and 'the last among them.' The manifestation of prophecy among God's people ceased with Malachi because it had accomplished its purpose for that time.⁵²⁴

Some primary evidence for this comes from the apocryphal writing of 1 Maccabees (c. 100 B. C.) in which we read:

So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them. (4:46)

So there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them. (9.27)

The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise (14.41)

These statements would suggest that during this period, the Jewish nation did not recognize anyone as a Prophet, and were awaiting one.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Crossway, 2000), 240–41.

⁵²⁴ Saucy, 125.

⁵²⁵ Even with such clear texts as these, Dr. Aune wishes to claim that the Jews still believed people with the gift of prophecy were in their midst. While there is no reason to believe passages in Maccabees are referring to anything but an OT type Prophet, Dr. Aune suggests they refer more to "priests" rather than the biblical idea of Prophets. He also writes: "Israelite prophecy did not disappear. Rather, like all religious and social institutions, it underwent a number of far-reaching and even radical

This would seem confirmed by the valuable Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (c. 37-100). In *Against Apion* he writes:

It is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes [cf. Neh 2:1; i.e. time of the last biblical Prophets] very particularly [e.g. 1 & 2 Maccabees], but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time.⁵²⁶

Here, Josephus is claiming that the last reliable history of the ancient Jews was written during the time of Nehemiah. Subsequently, additional history has been written such as is found in 1 & 2 Maccabees. However, Josephus says this latter history "has not been esteemed of the like authority . . . because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time."

In addition, there are texts from first and second century Judaism that confirm our claim that the gift of prophecy had ceased with the closing of the OT canon. In *Tosephta Sotah* 13:2 we read:

When the last of the prophets - i.e. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi - died, the holy spirit ceased in Israel. Despite this they were informed by means of oracles.⁵²⁷

It is rather impossible to tell what the writer meant by "oracles," as it could refer to written Scripture, but it meant something other than the gift of prophecy.⁵²⁸

Another passage is from *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30:

Until then [the last of the OT Prophets], the prophets prophesied by means of the holy spirit. From then on, give

changes during the period of the Second Temple" (*Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* [Eerdmans, 1983], 103).

His view is untenable. Priests were available in abundance. But there was no one with the gift of prophecy. In addition, even what Dr. Aune believes does not contradict the fact that biblical prophecy ceased with Malachi.

⁵²⁶ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, i.8; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵²⁷ Aune, 103.

⁵²⁸ Dr. Aune comments on this verse: "The medium of revelation was no longer the inspired prophet, but rather the *bat qol* (literally "daughter of a voice"), a heavenly voice or sound which had both oracular and divinatory functions" (104). Nonetheless, the meaning is far too obscure to claim that new divine revelation was still being provided.

ear and listen to the words of the sages [i.e. teachers of the written Torah].⁵²⁹

All of this would indicate that the Jews considered Malachi to be the last of God's Prophets.⁵³⁰

Nevertheless, some debate has been caused by another statement of Josephus in *Wars of the Jews*. Writing of the Jewish leader John Hyrcanus (reigned 134 BC-104 BC), we read:

He it was who alone had three of the most desirable things in the world,--the government of his nation, and the high priesthood, and the gift of prophecy. For the Deity conversed with him, and he was not ignorant of any thing that was to come afterward; insomuch that he foresaw and foretold that his two eldest sons would not continue masters of the government.⁵³¹

Even though Josephus reported that the intertestamental Jews in general believed Malachi to be the last true Prophet, perhaps Josephus himself believed otherwise. Nonetheless, his description of John Hyrcanus makes a claim to the gift of prophecy suspect. Especially the man's predictive powers. First, Josephus seems to exaggerate when he says Hyrcanus "was not ignorant of anything that was to come." We doubt that. Especially when the example Josephus offers for Hyrcanus' predictive powers was merely that, "his two eldest sons would not continue masters of the government." That would not seem to require divine revelation.

Accordingly, most have concluded that indeed the gift of prophecy ceased for about a 400 year period of time between Malachi and John the Baptist. Perhaps it is more than ironic that it was Malachi who predicted the arrival of the Prophet John the Baptist (cf. Mal 3:1).

In our opinion, the primary reason anyone would question this is how loosely some define the gift of prophecy. Malachi was a

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Nonetheless, Dr. Aune writes: "According to other rabbinic traditions, famous rabbis claimed the gift of prophecy and/or the possession of the Spirit of God." (104) Dr. Aune provides no examples of these claims. The first claim of some rabbis is most likely similar to the fact that we have other reports of some Jews referring to first century sages (teachers) as prophets, but as Dr. Aune admits, "in a form considerably different from that of classical OT prophecy" (Ibid.). Sound familiar?

⁵³¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, I.2.8; cf. *Antiquities* XIII.10.7; online at www.ccel.org.

messenger of divine revelation direct from God, as was the Baptist. All the "prophets" between them were not. An important distinction should be made between biblical Prophets and nonbiblical prophets. Accordingly, we read in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*:

Long before the time of Jesus, prophecy had ceased to appear in Israel (Ps. 74:9; 1 Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41), although a special form of it continued to flourish in the writing of [apocryphal] apocalyptic visions. . . . It is in light of this . . . that one must understand the claim, recorded by Josephus, that John Hyrcanus had the 'gift of prophecy.' Josephus also states that such messianic pretenders as Theudas (*Antiq.* 20:97; cf. Acts 5:36) and 'the Egyptians' (*Antiq.* 20:168-69; *War* 861; cf. Acts 21:38) claimed that they were prophets.⁵³²

The ancient Greeks also had their "prophets" but such people need to be distinguished from OT and NT Prophets who authentically spoke direct revelation from God. It is to these Greek prophets that Paul is no doubt referring to when he mentions the Cretan prophets (cf. Tit. 1:12).⁵³³

⁵³² B. D. Napier, "Prophet in the NT," *International Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Abingdon, 1962), 3:919.

⁵³³ The most respected proponent of the idea that some form of the gift of prophecy operated after Malachi comes from Dr. David Aune in his rightly respected book, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Mediterranean World* (cf. pp. 103-106). We would respond in the following way.

First, in our opinion, Dr. Aune is not careful enough throughout his book in maintaining the distinction between Prophets and "prophets." He simply refers too often to intertestamental and Greek "prophets" simply as "prophets" and does not distinguish them carefully enough from biblical Prophets.

Second, while Dr. Aune admits that, "rabbinic texts make it clear that some rabbis did hold that prophecy had ceased during the Second Temple period, the view . . . was only one view among many" (104). Uncharacteristically, he does not quote these other rabbis, or even offer a reference to them, but rather only references some German works on the topic. However, he describes them as merely stating that some rabbis claimed for themselves the gift of prophecy or "the possession of the Spirit" which may not at all refer to the gift of prophecy (104). Few people know these ancient Jewish writings better than Dr. Aune, and it is unfortunate that he does not quote them so we can evaluate them. Nevertheless, his suggestion that there is equal evidence in first and second century Judaism for and against the idea that the gift of prophecy had ceased after Malachi seems suspect. The quotes we offer above speak for themselves.

Thirdly, reflecting our general concern that Dr. Aune does not consistently distinguish between the biblical gift of prophecy and what people may do without the Spirit, he writes:

[I]t has become increasingly recognized that prophecy did not disappear in Judaism during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but that it was alive and well, though in a form considerably different from that of classical OT prophecy. (104)

If the form claimed was "considerably different from that of classical OT prophecy" then Dr. Aune is in error to include such examples in a discussion of the biblical gift of prophecy at all (cf. section ?).

Because of the evidence reflected in 1 Maccabees, Dr. Aune attempts to dismiss the three quotes by assuming the writer is not referring to biblical type prophecy. Accordingly, he writes:

The type of prophet described is a kind of temple or clerical prophet who is to function in a manner similar to the priests consulted by Haggai (Hag. 2:11-13). . . . The general perspective of the author of 1 Maccabees is theocratic rather than eschatological, a perspective which excludes the possibility that 1 Macc. 4:46 and 14:41 refer to an eschatological [biblical] prophet. The type of prophecy reflected in 1 Macc. 4:45b-46 and 14:41 is "clerical" prophecy, i.e. a type of early Jewish prophecy which assumes that prophetic gifts are coextensive with the priestly political leadership of the nation. (105)

Dr. Aune's assumptions are unlikely and unsubstantiated. No doubt the writer of 1 Maccabees knew what a biblical Prophet was, and when we see him using the exact same words, why not assume he is referring to the same ministry?

Dr. Aune again suggests that the biblical gift of prophecy is something different than what the OT Prophets exercised when he writes:

The early Jewish attitudes toward the past and present activity of prophecy and the Spirit of God exhibit great variety [again, he fails to substantiate that]. While some of the rabbinic sages of the early talmudic period were convinced that the Holy Spirit had been taken from Israel and that the voice of prophecy had ceased, other forms of prophecy and divination were still recognized as legitimate and were practiced. These alternate forms of revelation, however, occupied a subordinate position to the Mosaic revelation codified in the Torah [therefore, not the biblical gift of prophecy]. (105)

We have pointed out above that Josephus seemed to directly relate the closing of the OT canon with the cessation of the gift of prophecy. Dr. Aune, however, writes:

The formation of the OT canon, a process which was completed by the first century B.C., appears to have had no connection with the view that prophecy had ended in Judaism. Even in the famous passage found in Josephus *Contra Ap.* i-37-41, where the Jewish historian discusses the boundaries of the Hebrew scriptures, he does not say that prophecy has ceased, only that there is no longer an "exact succession" of prophets, i.e. there is no direct relationship between the desultory [inconsistent] appearances of various prophets. (106)

C) 1st Century Waning of Gift of Prophecy

There are indications that the gift of prophecy was waning considerably even before the end of the first century. What we have written concerning the gift of Apostleship and the Pastoral Epistles would equally apply to the gift of prophecy:

In addition, many have pointed out the fact that the Pastoral Epistles clearly pass on the authority of the churches to Teachers and Pastors, and there is no hint of the continuation of apostolic ministry. These epistles were specifically intended by the Apostle Paul to give the principles and positions for church leadership throughout its existence, and while they mention Elders, Evangelists, Teachers and Deacons, they never mention Apostles. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul encouraged a Teacher like Timothy to preserve apostolic revelation precisely because the gift would not continue (cf. 2 Tim 2:2).⁵³⁴

We simply disagree, especially because of the context that Josephus made the statement. He is explaining why Jewish writings since the biblical Prophets "has not been esteemed of the like authority" and it is because no one since those biblical Prophets has confidently been thought to possess such divine revelation.

Dr. Aune concludes:

Certainly there was no antithesis between a divinely inspired and centrally authoritative collection of sacred writings on the one hand and the continuing role of inspired prophecy on the other. (106)

In other words, he continues to deny that first and second century Jews believed prophecy had ceased just because the OT canon had been established. His reason for this is: "Early Christianity itself was a sect within Judaism that revered the OT and yet was characterized by a flurry of prophetic activity" (Ibid.). Our point exactly. But this is precisely because the OT canon of Scripture was being broken by the revelation of a new covenant.

All in all, Dr. Aune is rightly respected on the topic of early Christian prophecy. However, his arguments for denying that first and second century Jews thought the biblical gift of prophecy had ceased are unconvincing for us. For a further critique of Dr. Aune's view see F. David Farnell, "The Gift of Prophecy in the Old and New Testaments," *BSac* 149 (1992) 389-90 n. 5. For further arguments concerning the fact that there were no God-sent Prophets operating between Malachi and John the Baptist see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), 55ff.

⁵³⁴ section 8.5.C.

In addition, we have already quoted Dr. Saucy above:

It is significant that in the last letters of Paul, there is no reference to prophecy save to remind Timothy of the prophecy made at his ordination (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14). The focus of these letters, which are termed the "Pastorals" because they give instructions for ministry in the church, is on teaching, exhorting, and commanding the Scriptures [not receiving more prophecy].⁵³⁵

We find additional evidence for the waning of the gift in John's letters to the seven churches c. 90 A.D. While John was certainly a NT Prophet, the messages to the churches were delivered in written form to the Pastors of these congregations, not the Prophets, suggesting the rarity of the gift even then.⁵³⁶

D) 2nd & 3rd Century Continuation but

Discernment: *condemnation of ancient prophetism in Montanism*

Traditionally, many have claimed that the gift of prophecy ended with the Apostles. For example, Andrew Walls, writing in an introductory article to the very popular *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, writes, "[T]he age of Christian prophecy does not seem to have outlasted that of the apostles."⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Saucy, 128.

⁵³⁶ Understandably, there is a great deal of discussion on what *aggelō* refers to here. In our opinion, the best interpretation is that it refers to the Pastors/Teachers who would be leaders over these congregations.

In ancient Greek, *aggelos* simply meant "messenger" and could equally refer to human or angelic (divine or demonic) messengers (cf. *BADG*). Accordingly, while it is most often used to refer to God's Angels in Scripture, several times it refers to human messengers (cf. Matt 11:10, Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; James 2:25; in LXX Gen 32:3, 6; Hag 1:13; Mal 2:7; 3:1). Accordingly, in the context of someone who was to give a message to a local church, "angel" doesn't fit, but the Pastor/Teacher of the church would. A local Prophet wouldn't need such a message.

See extended discussion by Albert Barnes at Rev 1:20 (*Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*; online at www.ccel.org) to support our translation.

⁵³⁷ Andrew Walls, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, Frank E. Gaebelien ed. CD-ROM (Zondervan, n.d.), 638.

On the contrary, we have good evidence that the gift of prophecy operated a considerable time after the cessation of Apostles, and sporadically even into c. 350 A. D. For example, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (c. 108 A. D.) seemed to claim attributes of a Christian Prophet when he wrote:

[W]hen I was among you, I cried, I spoke with a loud voice—the word is not mine, but God’s: “Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons.” But if you suspect that I spoke thus, as having learned beforehand the division caused by some among you, He is my witness, for whose sake I am in bonds, that I learned nothing of it from the mouth of any man. But the Spirit made an announcement to me, saying as follows: “Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; avoid divisions; be followers of Paul, and of the rest of the Apostles, even as they also were of Christ.”⁵³⁸

There are, in fact, numerous other examples in the postapostolic and early patristic communities, in which various authors exhibited the attributes of NT Prophets. According to Dr. Aune, these included Ignatius (died c. 108), Cerinthus (c. 120), Quadratus (died c. 138), Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 70-150), Ammia of Philadelphia (c. 100-180), and Melito of Sardis (died c. 190).⁵³⁹

Accordingly, NT scholar F. F. Bruce (1910–1990) wrote:

Prophets were active in many of the churches until well into the second century. The *Didache* gives them an honoured place; Ignatius was subject to prophetic [pronouncements]; the *Shepherd of Hermas*, itself the composition of a Christian prophet, indicates that prophets were known in the Roman church.⁵⁴⁰

Likewise, Justin Martyr (c. 150) writes in his *Dialogue to Trypho*: “[T]he prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time.”⁵⁴¹ However, we need not assume that Christian Prophets were abundant. Interestingly, Justin describes what would appear to be a typical Sunday service c. 150 and there is no mention of 1 Corinthians 14 type service:

⁵³⁸ Ignatius, *Epistle to Philadelphia*, vii; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵³⁹ Aune, 196.

⁵⁴⁰ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians* (Oliphants, 1971), 137.

⁵⁴¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, sec. 82, p. 240; online at www.ccel.org.

[O]n the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.⁵⁴²

Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (c. 180), writes somewhat more specifically than Justin:

Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. . . . Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. . . . We do also hear many brethren in the church, who possess prophetic gifts . . . and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God.⁵⁴³

In the western realm of the Church, Tertullian (c. 200) wrote:

Let Marcion [a false teacher] then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart . . . Now all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty.⁵⁴⁴

Likewise, an early Bishop of Rome, Novation (c. 200-258) wrote:

This is He [Christ] who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata; and thus makes the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and complete.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 67; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁴³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book II, ch. 23, Book V. ch. 6.1; online at www.ccel.org

⁵⁴⁴ Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, V:8; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁴⁵ Novation, *Treatise of Novation Concerning the Trinity*, ch. XXIX; online at www.ccel.org. Forbes says that Novation's reference to speaking in tongues is the last reference to this gift that even the pro-Charismatic study by Kydd can find. (81).

Nonetheless, it is a well known fact that with the excommunication of the Montanists (c. 170), who falsely claimed the gift of prophecy, there was a sharp decline in the recognition of the gift. Writing c. A. D. 90, the Apostle John warned: **"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"** (1 John 4:1). Less than a century after the Apostle's warning, the early Church witnessed the rapid and widespread rise of the Montanists "prophets" who claimed to be receiving new, extra-biblical revelation from God.

Church historian Kenneth Latourette (1884-1968), Professor of Church History at Yale, explains that the group derived their name from a recent convert named Montanus who, "At his baptism spoke in tongues and began prophesying, declaring that the . . . Holy Spirit . . . was finding utterance through him."⁵⁴⁶ Latourette adds:

The Montanist movement spread widely. . . . It prized the records of the teachings of Christ and his apostles, but it believed, although not contradicting what had been said there, that the Holy Spirit continued to speak through prophets. . . . The first . . . synod [gathering of early Church leaders] . . . was held to deal with Montanism. The movement was condemned as heretical and its adherents were expelled from the Church and debarred from communion.⁵⁴⁷

Which makes it unfortunate that, according to the well-known Presbyterian theologian Donald Bloesch, "[John] Wesley was remarkably open to the gifts of the Spirit and had a high regard for the Montanists, whom he designated as the 'real, scriptural Christians.'"⁵⁴⁸

What is remarkable about *Montanism* is that its beliefs and practices were practically identical to modern *prophetism*. However, this is where the similarity ends. While those Christians less than a century after the apostolic age condemned and excommunicated the *Montanists* as dangerous heretics precisely because of their claim to divine revelation outside of Scripture, the Church today lauds similar claims as a movement of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, even John Wesley "was remarkably open to the gifts of the Spirit and had a high regard for the Montanists, whom he

⁵⁴⁶ Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (Hendricksen, 1975), 128.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 129, 132.

⁵⁴⁸ Donald Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit* (InterVarsity, 2000), 127

designated as the "real, scriptural Christians."⁵⁴⁹ Accordingly, Dr. Bloesch, who is sympathetic to much in modern *super-supernaturalism*, writes:

The Montanists heralded the new age of the Spirit and the fulfillment of Christian baptism in a baptism of the Spirit. They were eager to reclaim the charismatic gifts, including prophecy and speaking in other tongues (glossolalia). . . . The Montanists saw themselves as the illuminati, the specially enlightened.⁵⁵⁰

Much of our information regarding *Montanism* is derived from the early Church historian Eusebius (c. 260-340) who relates a report of Apolinarius, Bishop of Laodicea (c. 310-390). While the following report was given over 1600 years ago, the popular acceptance of practices within the modern prophetic movement make it very valuable for the contemporary Church. Apolinarius wrote:

A little while ago I visited Ancyrus in Galatia and found the local church deafened with the noise of this new craze - not prophecy, as they call it, but pseudo-prophecy, as I shall shortly prove. So far as I was able, the Lord helping me, I spoke out for days on end in the church about these matters, and replied to every argument they put forward. The church was delighted and confirmed in the truth, while the enemy was repulsed for the time being and the opposition demoralized. . . .

There is, it appears, a village near the Phrygian border of Mysia called Ardabau. There it is said that a recent convert named Montanus . . . in his unbridled ambition to reach the top laid himself open to the adversary, was filled with spiritual excitement and suddenly fell into a kind of trance and unnatural ecstasy. He raved, and began to chatter and talk nonsense, prophesying in a way that conflicted with the practice of the Church handed down generation by generation from the beginning.

Of those who listened at that time to his sham utterances, some were annoyed, regarding him as possessed, a demoniac in the grip of a spirit of error,' a disturber of the masses. They rebuked him and tried to stop his chatter, remembering the distinction drawn by the Lord, and His warning to guard vigilantly against the coming of false prophets. Others were

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 88

elated as if by the Holy Spirit or a prophetic gift, were filled with conceit, and forgot the Lord's distinction. They welcomed a spirit that injured and deluded the mind and led the people astray; they were beguiled and deceived by it, so that it could not now be reduced to silence.

By some art, or rather by methodical use of a malign artifice, the devil contrived the ruin of the disobedient, and was most undeservedly honored by them. . . . On those who were elated and exultant about him the spirit bestowed favors, swelling their heads with his extravagant promises. Sometimes it reproved them pointedly and convincingly to their faces, to avoid appearing uncritical. . . .

They were taught by this arrogant spirit to denigrate the entire Catholic Church throughout the world, because the spirit of pseudo-prophecy received neither honor nor admission into it; for the Asian believers repeatedly and in many parts of Asia had met for this purpose, and after investigating the recent utterances pronounced them profane and ejected the heresy. Then at last its devotees were turned out of the Church and excommunicated. . . . They called us 'prophet-killers' because we would not receive their chatty prophets. . . .

Hence whenever members of the Church called to martyrdom for the true Faith meet any of the so-called martyrs of the [Montanist] sect, they part company with them and have nothing to do with them till their death, because they will not be associated with the spirit that spoke through Montanus and the women. That this is true, and that it occurred in our own time in Apamea on the Meander, in the case of Gaius and Alexander and the other martyrs from Eumenia, is perfectly clear.⁵⁵¹

D. F. Wright points out in an entry to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* that "nothing strictly heretical could be charged against Montanism,"⁵⁵² as their prophets were careful not to say things that were blatantly unbiblical. In fact, the highly respected and usually astute Bible scholar Tertullian (c. 200) joined them in his old age, as did many Christians at the time.

However, the early Church was alarmed by several things about the *Montanists*. First, they professed to receive direct divine

⁵⁵¹ Eusebius of Casaerea, *Ecclesiastical History* V.16, Louth; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁵² D. F. Wright, "Montanism," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, 1984), 733.

revelation from God, "speaking often in the first person" as God's "prophetic mouthpieces" which was "felt to threaten . . . scriptural authority."⁵⁵³ Such un-biblical and extra-biblical "prophecies" were used to introduce several legalistic practices into the *Montanist* churches. These included a multiplication of fasts and strict ascetism denying any enjoyment of things in the world (cf. 1 Tim 6:17), including art. Montanist virgins were required to be veiled in public. The renowned ancient Roman Christian Teacher Hippolytus (c. 170-c. 236) wrote of the *Montanists*:

They have been deceived by two females Priscilla and Maximilla by name, whom they hold to be prophetesses, asserting that into them the Paraclete -spirit entered. . . . These people agree with the Church in acknowledging the Father of the universe to be God and Creator of all things, and they also acknowledge all that the Gospel testifies of Christ. But they introduce novelties in the form of fasts and feasts, abstinences and diets of radishes, giving these females as their authority.⁵⁵⁴

Secondly, the reason that the authority of such "prophets" was denied by the wider Church was because they could not authenticate themselves by accurately predicting the future as God had instructed and as biblical Prophets did.⁵⁵⁵ Accordingly, Apolinarius quoted above remarks that what truly exposed the *Montanists* "prophets" as false was their inability to predict the future.⁵⁵⁶ For example, Maximilla, one of their foremost prophetesses had famously predicted, "After me there is no more prophecy, but only the end of the world."

Thirdly, the *Montanists* "incurred the hostility of church leaders [because of] the women's unusual prominence,"⁵⁵⁷ and unbiblical behavior regarding the role of women in the Church (cf. 1 Tim 2:11-14; 1 Cor 14:33-35). Finally, a lack of Christian virtue exposed the leadership of *Montanism* as demonic frauds. The leading "prophetesses" Maximilla and Priscilla were married women who left their husbands to become disciples of Montanus, and were given the rank of virgins in his church.

⁵⁵³ Wright, 732-3.

⁵⁵⁴ Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, viii; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁵⁵ For further on the biblical mandate for those claiming the gift of prophecy to miraculously predict the future see chapter 9.11.

⁵⁵⁶ Eusebius, V.16.

⁵⁵⁷ Wright, 732.

Again, it is rather remarkable to note that what is accepted and even applauded among so many today, incurred the divinely commanded death penalty in the OT Scriptures (cf. Deut 18:20-22) and the forceful condemnation as a demonic counterfeit by the second century Christians. The very first heresy that was popular and serious enough to bring the leadership of the early Church together in a synod was *Montanism* and it was condemned for the very things that are unique to modern *prophetism* today.⁵⁵⁸

However, even in spite of the heretical form of prophecy practiced by the Montanists, the Church was still willing to recognize those claiming the gift if they exhibited the biblical attributes. The testimonies of Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Novation above bear this out. This is an important point, because *prophetists* usually insist that the unnecessarily harsh reaction of the Church to *Montanism* was what caused the cessation of the gift of prophecy. On the contrary, some evidence of its acceptance continued into the middle of the third century.

Montanism certainly sharpened the Church's discernment regarding the gift of prophecy, and a noticeable decline is evident after their excommunication. Accordingly, Origen would seem to give a fairly accurate description of the operation of these gifts when he wrote in defense of Christianity *Against Celsus* (c. 240):

The Holy Spirit gave [past tense] signs of His [the Holy Spirit's] presence at the beginning of Christ's ministry, and after His ascension He gave still more; but since that time these signs have diminished, although there are still traces of them with a few who have had their souls purified by the gospel. . . . And Celsus is not to be believed when he says that he has heard such men prophesy; for no prophets bearing any resemblance to the ancient prophets have appeared in the time of Celsus.⁵⁵⁹

Origen was well traveled and highly respected and probably had a very good knowledge of what was happening throughout Christianity at the time. He certainly testifies to a drastic decrease in the operation of the gift of prophecy about 220 A. D.

This rather clear historical evidence forces even most *prophetist* scholars to admit the same. For example, Max Turner is at least

⁵⁵⁸ For further discussion of the early history of claims to miraculous gifts in the Church see chapter 11.7. Particularly regarding further discussion of the Montanists see section 10.14.A and

⁵⁵⁹ Origen, *Against Celsus*, sec. VII.9, 11; online at www.ccel.org. Forbes writes that Origen reflects similar sentiments in his commentary on Matthew 28.

willing to concede, "The only claim that can be made with confidence is that [the supernatural] gifts gradually became marginalized" and the gift of prophecy became "increasingly peripheral."⁵⁶⁰ In actuality, it essentially ceased altogether. Along these lines, in his classic study of the miraculous gifts in the ancient Church, Cambridge scholar H. B. Swete (1835-1917) concluded:

[U]pon the whole the references in postapostolic writings to . . . prophecy are relatively few, while on the other hand there is a growing insistence on the spiritual and ethical effects of the Spirit's indwelling in the hearts of men.⁵⁶¹

Some important conclusions can be drawn from this evidence. First, the fact that the gift of prophecy was still operating throughout the churches especially up to around 200 A. D. may be the best explanation for the unexpected relative absence of Christian literature between 100 and 200 A. D. During this period, the Apostles had ceased and the NT Scriptures were not yet widely available. It was during this period, between the first century Apostles and the widespread establishment of regional Bishops possessing the NT Scriptures in the third century, that Christian Prophets filled the void of authoritative revelation.

E) 4th Century Cessation: *Chrysostom- the gift of prophecy has long since ceased*

Although some suggest that Novation's testimony (c. 250) to the existence of Christian Prophets in the Church is the last such evidence, even a hundred years later Church leaders seem to suggest they still ministered.

In the West Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-367) wrote in his treatise *On the Trinity*:

The gift of the Spirit is manifest . . . where there is . . . the gift of healings . . . or by the working of miracles . . . or by prophecy . . . or by discerning of spirits . . . or by kinds of tongues, that the speaking in tongues may be bestowed as a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit; or by the interpretation of tongues. . . .

⁵⁶⁰ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts* (Hendrickson, 1998), 301-2.

⁵⁶¹ Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (MacMillan, 1912), 400-01.

Truly how rare and hard to attain are such spiritual gifts! ⁵⁶²

While Hilary recognizes the continuing operation of the gift of prophecy, contrary to modern *prophetists* he declares them “rare and hard to attain.”

Likewise, Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 310–386), speaking of spiritual gifts operating in the Church wrote:

Though He [the Holy Spirit] is One in nature, yet many are the virtues which by the will of God and in the Name of Christ He works. For He employs the tongue of one man for wisdom; the soul of another He enlightens by prophecy; to another He gives power to drive away devils; to another He gives to interpret the divine Scriptures. He strengthens one man’s self-command; He teaches another the way to give alms; another He teaches to fast and discipline himself; another He teaches to despise the things of the body; another He trains for martyrdom: diverse in different men, yet not diverse from Himself, as it is written, But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to benefit all. ⁵⁶³

Yet, generally in the same geographical locale, Bishop Chrysostom (c. 347-407) had taught concerning the discussion of miraculous gifts in 1 Corinthians:

This whole place [I Corinthians 12-14] is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to, and by their [the gifts listed] cessation, being such as then used to occur, but now no longer take place. ⁵⁶⁴

Writing specifically regarding the Apostle’s statement that: **“where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away”** (1 Cor 13:8), Chrysostom wrote:

Now then after [Paul] in every way had shown her [the Church] to be very exceedingly great, he does so again from another most important head, by a fresh comparison exalting her dignity, and saying thus; “but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease.”

⁵⁶² Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, viii.30, 34; cf. 33; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁶³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, 16.2; online at www.ccel.org.

⁵⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homily on 1 Cor 29*; online at www.ccel.org.

For if both these [gifts of prophecy and tongues] were brought in for the sake of the faith; when that is every where sown abroad, the use of these is henceforth superfluous. . . . It is no marvel that prophecies and tongues should be done away.⁵⁶⁵

Thus, c. 350 Hilary of Poitiers in the Western Church claimed the gift of prophecy was rare, and in the East (c. 400) Chrysostom claims it has ceased some time ago. In addition, Chrysostom gives the same reason we have argued. Because the gift of prophecy was a *Scripture* and *sign gift* for the purpose of providing and authenticating direct divine extra-biblical revelation, after the NT Scriptures were completed and distributed, the gift was no longer needed and ceased to be given.⁵⁶⁶

As noted above, we hardly need to prove this as even modern *prophetists* have agreed that the gift of prophecy ceased about this time, if not earlier. However, in order to support their claim that God has restored the gift in the latter part of the twentieth century after over 1500 years of its absence, they wish to drum up rather ridiculous reasons for its cessation.

The usual suspects are the condemnation of the *Montanists*, the increasing power and worldliness of the Bishops, or the general spiritual decline of the Church. John Wesley, himself sympathetic to the restoration of the miraculous gifts, touched on all of these when he wrote:

By reflecting on an odd book which I had read, I was fully convinced of what I had long suspected. (1) That the Montanists, in the second and third centuries, were real, scriptural Christians, and (2) that the grand reason why the

⁵⁶⁵ Chrysostom, 1 Cor Homily 34.2.

⁵⁶⁶ Albert Barnes mentions in his commentary on Joel 2:28 that Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (in Syria) (c. 393- c. 460) had written in his own commentary on Joel:

It is superfluous to set myself to prove the truth of the prophecy. For down to our times this gift has been preserved, and there are among the saints, people who have the eye of the mind clear, who foreknow and foretell many of the things which are about to be. (Barnes, Joel 2:28)

However, Barnes seems to indicate, as does Theodoret's *Church History* (iii.18-19), that the Bishop's evidence of this was primarily someone's prediction of the Emperor Julian's death. As we will see below concerning particularly the Reformation Age, mere miraculous prediction does not prove the gift of prophecy, for it included the reception and revelation of extra-biblical divine truth.

miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well nigh lost, but that dry, formal, orthodox men began then to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves and to decry them all as either madness or imposture.⁵⁶⁷

On the contrary, the suggestion that the excommunication of the *Montanists* in the second century caused the cessation of the gift of prophecy in the Church is denied by the fact that, as noted above, several Bishops into the fourth century claimed that it was operating.

Secondly, the idea that the gift of prophecy was squelched by authoritarian and unspiritual Bishops is denied by the fact that many of the most influential Bishops of the second through fourth centuries claimed the gift of prophecy for themselves, let alone approvingly testified to its operation. Accordingly, Dr. Saucy writes: [I]t is difficult to see how the church through ecclesiastical authority or any other means could actually cause the cessation of prophecy. No religious authority could stop God from sending true prophets to his people in the Old Testament and at the inauguration of the Christian era. And such prophets were eventually recognized by his people.⁵⁶⁸

Thirdly, since when does sin amongst God's people stop God from giving His people Prophets? And why would modern *prophetists* claim that their churches are more spiritual or godly than the ancient churches, such that the former deserve to have the gift restored, and the latter were judged by having it removed?

Unfortunately, the reasons suggested by many non-*prophetists* for the more than 1500 year gap in the operation of the gift of prophecy are hardly better. Dr. Aune thinks the cause of the cessation of prophecy was both growing institutionalism and *Montanism*.⁵⁶⁹ Mr. Forbes rightly points out the fallacies of both these suggestions, but then concludes, "we do not yet have any convincing explanation for the decline of Christian prophecy--- the question of causation eludes us."⁵⁷⁰

D. A. Carson concludes that:

⁵⁶⁷ John Wesley, Works of John Wesley, 7 vols., 3rd ed. (Baker, 1996), 2:204.

⁵⁶⁸ Saucy, 117.

⁵⁶⁹ Aune, 189.

⁵⁷⁰ Forbes, 250.

Although to my knowledge the theory has not been worked out anywhere in great detail, it is probable that prophecy waned with the rise of Montanism because the church was seeking to protect herself from the extravagant claims of the Montanists . . . If prophecy was to be abused in the fashion of the Montanists, prophecy itself would ultimately become suspect.⁵⁷¹

Again, there would seem to be an implication that *the Church* decides when and where spiritual gifts will operate, instead of the sovereign Holy Spirit. Dr. Carson also would seem to ignore that the Church was well equipped and instructed to discern and deal with false prophets, like the *Montanists*, and there would have been no need, nor desire to "throw out the baby with the bath water," even if it would have been under their control to do so.

As argued in chapter 8.6, the Apostle did not say the gift of prophecy would cease because of a lack of faith or freedom, but a lack of purpose (cf. 1 Cor 13:8-13).

⁵⁷¹ D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Baker, 1987), 168.

F) Medieval Romanism: Quirky testimonies

As we enter the period of the Roman Catholic Church, we begin to see some testimonies that saints accurately predicted the future. While we have noted elsewhere the questionable character of testimonies of this kind during this time,⁵⁷² some of these testimonies may be true.

Among the most well known concerned a Dominican priest, Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498). He was a very good man, and a precursor to the Protestant Reformers, being tortured and executed by the wicked Pope of the time. He predicted the downfall of various leaders, and even the capture of Rome, with some detail, which happened after his death. Nonetheless, he also predicted the soon end of the world, he taught that, "all unbelievers would be converted,"⁵⁷³ and claimed to have direct communications with famous, but dead saints.⁵⁷⁴

Savonarola both claimed to speak for God and to be able to accurately predict things. It is possible that he was an extremely rare, but legitimate fifteenth century manifestation of the gift of prophecy, but the fact that at least some of his "prophecies" did not come true, and most of those that did were general in nature, and he had some odd doctrine, suggests perhaps he was not a Christian Prophet.

Nevertheless, the Church at the time certainly believed the gift of prophecy had not operated for centuries. Accordingly, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the most influential of all Roman Catholic theologians, wrote at the height of *classical mysticism*, "For our faith rests on the revelation made to the prophets and Apostles who wrote the canonical books, not on a revelation, if such there be, made to any other teacher."⁵⁷⁵

G) 16th & 17th Century Reformers:

⁵⁷² Roman Catholic Church, we begin to see some testimonies that saints accurately predicted the future. While we have noted elsewhere the questionable character of testimonies of this kind during this time, some of these testimonies may be true.

⁵⁷³ Latourette, 673

⁵⁷⁴ "Girolamo Savonarola"; online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Savonarola.

⁵⁷⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IA.I.8; online at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa>.

Westminster Confession- those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased

Church doctrine and experience in the period of the Protestant Reformation is very well reflected in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646). In regards to any claim that the gift of prophecy was still being granted to the Church, the Church replied:

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. . . .

Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing; which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.⁵⁷⁶

The authors' addition that the revelation of Scripture provides "all things necessary for . . . faith and life" would seem to include anything that modern *prophetists* would claim one of their "prophets" could provide today. And their belief that "those former ways of God's revealing His will unto His people being now ceased" certainly included the gift of prophecy.

If there was ever a man in post-apostolic Church history who would have been expected to need and possess prophetic and/or miracle working gifts, it would have been Martin Luther (1483-1546) who led a revival of truth almost as revolutionary as the Apostles. Accordingly, Lutheran scholar Douglas Judisch wrote:

Much less are we ready to admit that the participants in the Charismatic movement are more open to the Spirit than was Doctor Martin Luther, whom God prepared and sent forth as His special messenger to proclaim an eternal gospel to those who dwell on earth... If God were going to give spectacular gifts to anyone in postapostolic times, surely He would have bestowed them upon the man whom He raised up to restore to His church the apostolic doctrine. Yet the Reformer, so far

⁵⁷⁶ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Ch. 1, secs I and VI; online at http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/,.

from exercising [miraculous] gifts, repeatedly denounced those who laid claim to them.

Summing up his stand in the . . . Smalcald Articles, he [Luther] stated . . . "we should and must maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and Sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and Sacrament is of the devil."⁵⁷⁷

Accordingly, Luther never claimed the need nor possession of such gifts, and as Lutheran theologian J. Theodore Mueller relates:

Luther therefore agreed with Calvin in rejecting "heavenly prophets" and other "swarmers" (as Luther called them) who boasted special revelations from God outside and apart from the Scriptures. The reason why Luther spoke of the "spiritualists" as swarmers (Schwaermer) was because they, like bees, were swarming in the air without any certain place upon which to rest. The swarmers, he said, were aimlessly flying around in the cloudland of their own dreams and refused to base their faith on the Bible. . . .

Thus the Protestant leaders of Wittenberg and Geneva, whatever their other differences, were in full agreement in teaching that the divinely inspired Scriptures are the only source and norm of the Christian faith and so the divine means by which the Holy Spirit leads men into all truth. Both opposed the detachment of the Spirit from the Scriptures.⁵⁷⁸

Accordingly, in a response to accusations from the Roman Catholic Emser of Leipzig that Luther depended too much on Scripture, the Reformer wrote:

If the Manichaeian heresy were to arise today and men pretended that Scripture did not give us enough, that the Holy Spirit had awakened them and one should follow them, how would you, with all your papists fend them off? In this case would you also not do any more than point with your finger to your teaching? Or would you say, "Oh, you are too slow; we

⁵⁷⁷ Douglas Judisch, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Baker, 1978), 81.

⁵⁷⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* 6 Vols. (Word, 1979), 278-9.

ourselves have already discovered that one should believe and obey more than Scripture offers?⁵⁷⁹

Concerning Luther's own experience with, and stand against *prophetism* in his day, Victor Budgen writes:

The Reformers had their own versions of this "enthusiasm" in the sixteenth century. Luther once dealt directly with a group of charismatics ("enthusiasts"). An observer of this meeting wrote, "He patiently heard the prophet relate his visions; and when the harangue was finished he said, 'You mentioned nothing of Scripture.'"

Anabaptist Thomas Muntzer complained, "The doctrine of Luther is not sufficiently spiritual. Divines should . . . acquire a spirit of prophecy, otherwise their knowledge of theology would not be worth one half a penny." Luther responded, "They are not Christians who want to go beyond the Word . . . even if they boast of being full and overfull with ten holy spirits."⁵⁸⁰

Likewise, John Calvin (1509-1564) wrote under the heading of "Fanatics, Abandoning Scripture And Flying Over To Revelations, Cast Down All The Principles Of Godliness":

Those who, having forsaken Scripture, imagine some way or other of reaching God, ought to be thought of as not so much gripped by error as carried away with frenzy. For of late, certain giddy men have arisen who, with great haughtiness exalting the teaching office of the Spirit, despise all reading and laugh at the simplicity of those who, as they express it, still follow the dead and killing letter. But I should like to know from them what this spirit is by whose inspiration they are borne up so high that they dare despise the Scriptural doctrine as childish and mean [lacking value]. For if they answer that it is the Spirit of Christ, such assurance is utterly ridiculous. . .

They censure us for insisting upon the letter that kills, but in this matter they pay the penalty for despising Scripture. . . . What say these fanatics, swollen with pride, who consider this the one excellent illumination when, carelessly forsaking and

⁵⁷⁹ Martin Luther, "Concerning the Letter and the Spirit" in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, Timothy F. Lull ed. (Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 89.

⁵⁸⁰ Quoted in Victor Budgen, *Charismatics and the Word of God* (Evangelical Press, 1985), 126.

bidding farewell to God's Word, they, no less confidently than boldly, seize upon whatever they may have conceived while snoring?

Certainly a far different sobriety befits the children of God, who just as they see themselves, without the Spirit of God, bereft of the whole light of truth, so are not unaware that the Word is the instrument by which the Lord dispenses the illumination of his Spirit to believers. For they know no other Spirit than him who dwelt and spoke in the apostles, and by whose oracles they are continually recalled to the hearing of the Word. . . .

For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that . . . we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize Him in His own image, namely, in the Word.⁵⁸¹

While the Reformers and their successors certainly believed the gift of prophecy had ceased with the completion and distribution of the NT Scriptures, they too published testimonies of certain men predicting the future.⁵⁸² Accordingly, even Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600-1661), one of the primary authors of the *Westminster Confession* quoted above, wrote:

There is a 3rd revelation [in addition to Scripture and the "testimony of the Spirit" for assurance] of some particular men, who have foretold things to come even since the ceasing of the canon of the word, as John Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, have foretold things to come, and they certainly [happened]. And in our nation of Scotland, Mr. George Wishart foretold [when he was burned at the stake] that Cardinal Beaton should not come out alive at the gates of the Castle of St. Andrews, but that he should die a shameful death; and he was hanged over the window that he did look out when he saw the man of God burnt. Mr. Knox prophesied of the hanging of the Lord of Grange. Mr. John Davidson uttered prophesies, known to

⁵⁸¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.9.1-3; online at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.html>

⁵⁸² For a description of some of these see Vern S. Poythress, "Modern Spiritual Gifts As Analogous To Apostolic Gifts: Affirming Extraordinary Works Of The Spirit Within Cessationist Theology" in *JETS* 39:1 (March 1996) , 94-101.

many of the kingdom, diverse and mortified preachers in England have done the like.⁵⁸³

For the sake of argument, we can accept such testimonies that God can give men premonitions of what is to come. Indeed, the *Westminster Confession* states, as we would as well: "God, in His ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure."⁵⁸⁴ But such premonitions of themselves are not sufficient evidence to claim someone has the biblical gift of prophecy which included the reception and authoritative communication of extra-biblical divine revelation. Indeed, Rutherford added concerning the men who made such predictions:

These worthy reformers . . . never gave themselves out as organs immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost, as the Prophets doe . . . The events revealed to Godly and sound witnesses of Christ are not contrary to the word. . . . They had a general rule that Evil shall hunt the wicked man [which] carried them to apply a general rule of divine justice, in their predictions, to particular Godlesse men.⁵⁸⁵

In other words, while God may have granted premonitions of the future to men of the Reformation era, they did not believe that the gift of prophecy had been restored to the Church. Even though they may have actually accurately predicted the future which is something modern *prophetists* do not.

H) 18th Century Revival: *Edwards- gift of prophecy has ceased*

Modern *prophetists* claim that the restoration of the gift of prophecy is related to some sort of spiritual revival they are claiming today. Whatever revival that may be, it pales in comparison to the "Great Awakening" that occurred in England and

⁵⁸³ Samuel Rutherford [sic], *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist. Opening the Secrets of Familisme and Antinomianisme in the Antichristian Doctrine of John Saltmarsh, and Will. Del, the Present Preachers of the Army now in England, and of Robert Town, Tob. Crisp, H. Denne, Eaton, and Others* (Andrew Crooke, 1648), part I, chap. 7, pp. 42-44. Quoted in Don Codling, *Sola Scriptura and the Revelatory Gifts* (Press, 2005), 120.

⁵⁸⁴ Rutherford, 5.3.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

America in the eighteenth century. If *Scripture* and *sign gifts* truly belong to periods and leaders of revival as *prophetists*, *glossaists*, and *super-supernaturalists* claim, then men like Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and George Whitfield (1714-1770) would have possessed them. In fact, they denounced those who claimed them.

Not surprisingly, Edwards wrote extensively on the subject, particularly in his sermon series entitled, *Charity And Its Fruits*. On this, John Gerstner remarks: "The closed character of the canon is so important to Edwards that he devotes no less than twenty-six pages and nine arguments to this theme in his most important discussion of the cessation of the charismata."⁵⁸⁶ As discussed elsewhere, Edwards vigorously defends an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 that the gift of prophecy was to cease with the completion of the NT canon.⁵⁸⁷ Accordingly, Edwards wrote:

It is this miraculous gift [of divine knowledge] which the apostle here says shall vanish away, together with the other miraculous gifts of which he speaks, such as prophecy, and the gift of tongues, etc. All these were extraordinary gifts bestowed for a season for the introduction and establishment of Christianity in the world, and when this their end was gained, they were all to fail and cease. But charity was never to cease. . . .

These gifts are not fruits of the Spirit that were given to be continued to the church throughout all ages. They were continued in the church, or at least were granted from time to time, though not without some considerable intermissions, from the beginning of the world till the canon of the Scriptures was completed. . . .

[T]he first hundred years of the Christian era, or the first century, was the era of miracles. But soon after that, the canon of Scripture being completed when the apostle John had written the book of Revelation, which he wrote not long before his death, these miraculous gifts were no longer continued in the church.

For there was now completed an established written revelation of the mind and will of God, wherein God had fully recorded a standing and all-sufficient rule for his church in all ages. And the Jewish church and nation being overthrown, and

⁵⁸⁶ John Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* 3 vols. (Berea, 1991), 174.

⁵⁸⁷ Edwards vigorously defends an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 that the gift of prophecy was to cease with the completion of the NT canon. See section 8.6.A.1.

the Christian church and the last dispensation of the church of God being established, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer needed, and therefore they ceased; for though they had been continued in the church for so many ages, yet then they failed, and God caused them to fail because there was no further occasion for them. And so was fulfilled the saying of the text, "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away"⁵⁸⁸

This should make persons exceedingly cautious how they give heed to anything which looks like revelation, or any extraordinary gift of the Spirit. If any persons have any impression on their mind, as though something were immediately revealed to them which would come to pass concerning themselves or concerning their children, or others, or that anything is come to pass which before was hid from them, and if it were not revealed would still remain a secret; if they think the state of the soul of any person is revealed to them, or of their own souls, in any other way than by discerning the works and evidences of grace in their hearts.⁵⁸⁹

Unfortunately, there were people in the Church in Edwards' day who, like modern *prophetists*, were claiming to possess the gift of prophecy. In response, Dr. Gerstner notes that Edwards wrote an outline of a sermon which included:

Now how lamentable is the case . . . what a door is opened to Satan. How is the church of God like a city brought down and without walls exposed continually to its worst enemies.⁵⁹⁰

And, of course, the modern *prophetists* have endangered and damaged the Church in the same way.

I) 19th Century Heresy: *Mormon & Irvingite "prophets"*

The teaching and practice of the nineteenth century Church was universally against the idea that the gift of prophecy would be restored to the Church. Representing American theology, Charles

⁵⁸⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and its Fruits*, 158, 160, 161; online at www.graphebooks.org/chanditfrjed.html.

⁵⁸⁹ Gerstner, I.177

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.174.

Hodge (1797-1898) of Princeton wrote in his commentary on 1 Corinthians:

The fact that any office existed in the apostolic church is no evidence that it was intended to be permanent. In that age there was a plenitude of spiritual manifestations and endowments demanded for the organization and propagation of the church, which is no longer required. We have no longer prophets, nor workers of miracles, nor gifts of tongues. ⁵⁹¹

Likewise in Europe, the renowned Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) wrote concerning the Apostolic Age:

The Word came to the soul directly by inspiration or by a prophet's address. Now, both these have ceased, and in their stead comes the Word sealed in the Sacred Scripture, interpreted by the Holy Spirit in preaching in the Church. . . .

Although in the Old Dispensation redemption existed partly already in Scripture, and the Psalmist shows everywhere his devotion thereto, yet Scripture could be used so to a small extent only, and needed constant supplementing by direct revelations and prophecies. But now, Scripture reveals the whole counsel of God, and nothing can be added to it. Woe to him who dares diminish or increase this Book of Life which discloses the world of divine thought! ⁵⁹²

Accordingly, only heretical groups on these continents claimed to possess the gift of prophecy. For example, the *Montanist* hue of Mormonism is evident in this confession of Joseph Smith (1805-1844):

We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost being enjoyed now, as much as it was in the Apostles' days. . . . We also believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings. ⁵⁹³

Accordingly, "Belief in the gifts of the Spirit ("the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.") is indicated in the "Articles of Faith" of the Mormon Church,

⁵⁹¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., reprint (Hendrickson, 2003), 1 Cor 12:28.

⁵⁹² Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* trans. by Henri De Vries, (Eerdmans, 1946), 63.

⁵⁹³ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Confirm Book, 1977), 243.

founded in 1830.⁵⁹⁴ Not surprisingly, "Visions, revelations, ecstasies, and the gift of tongues play a considerable part in the early history of Mormonism."⁵⁹⁵

However, the gift of prophecy has continued to be claimed by the Mormon Church. As Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003) wrote:

Mormons believe that the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as their body is technically known, may receive revelations for the guidance of the church as a whole. Since its origin in 1830 the Mormon Church has barred black members of African descent from ordination to its priesthood. In 1978 the church's president announced a "divine revelation . . . that the day has come" when such restrictions of race and color are no longer to be maintained, a change in policy as significant as the church's tardy ban of polygamy in the 1890s.⁵⁹⁶

More recently, Christian apologist Josh McDowell has written:

The living prophet also occupies an important part in present-day Mormonism. Ezra Taft Benson, who at the time of this writing is President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, said in a speech on February 26, 1980, at Brigham Young University, that the living prophet (head of the church) is "more vital to us than the standard works."

Any Latter-day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the prophets, seers, and revelators of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy. . . . Lucifer . . . wins a great victory when he can get members of the Church to speak against their leaders and to do their own thinking . . . When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan -it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give directions, it should mark the end of the controversy.⁵⁹⁷

Orthodox Christians would agree that the beliefs and practices of the Mormon church are demonic in origin and yet their worldwide

⁵⁹⁴ Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics: The Origins, Development, and Significance of Neo-Pentecostalism* (Doubleday, 1976), 22.

⁵⁹⁵ Alexander Mackie, *The Gift of Tongues: A Study in the Pathological Aspects of Christianity* (Doran, 1921), 6.

⁵⁹⁶ Henry, 4:153.

⁵⁹⁷ Ezra Taft Benson, "Improvement Era" 1945, 354; in Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Understanding the Cults* (Here's Life Publishers, 1982), 68.

success is hard to deny. Unfortunately the similarities between phenomena occurring in especially early Mormonism and modern *prophetism* are startling. Obviously, of course, is the belief that God is still granting direct revelation to people apart from the Bible. The Mormons have their Book of Mormon, the *prophetist* movement has their "prophecies", "words of knowledge", and dream interpretations.

About the same time as Mormonism began in America, attended by claims to the gift of prophecy, a more authentically Christian version of *prophetism* arose in England, led by Edward Irving (1792-1834). *Irvingism* is no doubt one of the clearest predecessors of the modern *prophetist* movement. Its practices and beliefs regarding revelation and the Spirit are virtually indistinguishable. The striking difference is that the cult was banished from orthodox Christian society as a dangerous aberration, instead of exalted as a new move of the Holy Spirit.

Accordingly, Church historian Peter Toon writes:

In the late 1820s prophetic study had led Irving to teach that churches could expect a spiritual renewal with the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. He was thus somewhat prepared for the claims of divine healing and speaking in tongues occurring first in Scotland and then in his own congregation in 1831. Irving supported those who claimed to exercise such gifts.

That unpopular position, plus the heresy charges, cost him his post at Regent Square. Other believers in the validity of the gifts of the Spirit soon organized what was known as the Catholic Apostolic Church, in which Irving was ordained as a minister. His last two or three years of life were sad; he had lost his previous fame and was a member of a strange new sect.⁵⁹⁸

No one has performed a better job of detailing the spiritual tragedy of *Irvingism* than the pro-charismatic Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), whom we will quote extensively:

This man [Edward Irving] was a brilliant Scot, a one time assistant to the great Dr. Thomas Chalmers, who subsequently came down to London and began to preach in the Scottish Church near Hatton Garden. He became the sensation of London in the 1820s. People flocked to hear him, including society people. He had many things which attracted-his personality, his appearance, eloquence and so on-and he

⁵⁹⁸ Peter Toon, "Edward Irving" in *Who's Who in Christian History*, J. D. Douglas and Philip Comfort, eds. (Tyndale, n.d.).

became one of the most popular men in the whole of London. But the story ended in great tragedy and it all arose from the claim that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were being renewed and were being repeated under his ministry. . . .

Robert Baxter was a barrister who lived in Doncaster. He was an able, godly, spiritually minded man, who for a while became the very centre of the movement round Edward Irving, and their leading prophet. He claimed to be receiving messages direct from God, messages concerning the truth to be delivered, and what he was to do. . . .

All this was reported and was regarded as the leading of the Spirit. Men claimed to be speaking in other tongues and Robert Baxter, who was at the very heart and centre of this, was regarded as an 'oracle', as an unusually spirited man. He testified that his love of the Lord was greater than ever and so was his happiness. Yet this man came to see that all this was not of the Spirit of God.

Exact prophecies had been given to him but they were not verified, and did not happen. And then he began to realize that some of these things he was told to do were not in accord with the plain teaching of Scripture. But he had thought, and he was as honest as the day, that this was all the Spirit of God. Eventually his understanding was restored to him and he continued the rest of his life a godly, saintly man in the church. It was to warn others that he wrote that book long since out of print called *Narrative of Events*. . . .

Irvingism, collapsed, though they did establish what they called the Catholic Apostolic Church. But the whole thing ended in disaster, including the death of poor Irving who was overwrought and even suffered physically, eventually dying a broken man. There were certain prophetesses who even denounced one another while some of them later admitted and confessed that they had invented facts at certain points. . . .

I could recount at length stories about the freak religious sects that arose in the United States in the last century. A book was written once on these called *Group Movements and Experiments in Guidance*. Now the point about them all is that there was no doubt about their sincerity. They all really believed that the things they experienced were the acts of the Spirit of God, but the story ends in disaster. . . .⁵⁹⁹

I could give you many examples. The history of the church is strewn with examples of people who have been misled at

⁵⁹⁹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Sovereign Spirit: Discerning the Gifts* (Harold Shaw, 1985), 63-4.

this very point. Most of the heretics went astray just here; and most of the aberrant, fanatical movements, which have caused such trouble, went astray in exactly the same way. Let me give you just one example—Robert Baxter. I use him again because I have already mentioned him earlier. The same thing was true, of course, of Edward Irving himself and of all the people who used to worship together.

These people were true Christians. You could not wish for a more orthodox Christian than Robert Baxter, whose great desire was to exalt the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no doubt about that. He unquestionably passed the test of I Corinthians 12:3 and of I John 4:1-3. He did confess that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh. He was very much concerned to do that. And yet, as I have already mentioned, poor Robert Baxter made the terrible discovery that the spirit that was in him, which he had thought was the Holy Spirit, was clearly not the Holy Spirit, and he thanked God for delivering him from a possibly terrible fate. . . .

Some of the most genuine people are the ones who have gone most grievously astray, simply because they have not realized that this one test is not enough [that they feel spiritual]. You will find, indeed, in the history of Robert Baxter that when questions did arise in his mind, and especially when his wife expressed her concern about what was happening to him and what he was doing, and reasoned with him out of the Scriptures--the only answer he kept on giving was, 'I don't know, but all I know is that Christ is more real to me and I am more concerned for his glory, and I love him more than I have ever done.' That seemed to answer everything. But it is not enough. We must go on testing and proving and trying the spirits.⁶⁰⁰

We see several things in Irvingism that we observe throughout the history of *prophetism*. So-called "promptings" and prophecies are considered equal in authority to Scripture and expected on a regular basis. Inevitably, Scripture is devalued, which often leads to other heresies. In Irving's case, Dr. Toon writes:

His doctrine of baptism appeared to include baptismal regeneration. His doctrine of Christ attributed to Jesus a fallen human nature. Irving's Christology was the basis for his trial

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 115-16.

for heresy by the Church of Scotland and his removal from its ministry (1833).⁶⁰¹

The failed prophecies in *Irvingism* also exposed them as an unbiblical cult. These included the date of the rapture and the name of the Antichrist, all of which failed. Finally, a prophecy was made that Irving would labor in London as a great Prophet and convert the masses, but in the same year he died of consumption.

Once again, the Church's response to *Irvingism* is a rebuke to the modern church. Modern *prophetism* is in no way superior or more biblical than their nineteenth century predecessors, and yet instead of denouncing them as the nineteenth century Church universally did, the modern Church applauds contemporary "Irvingites" as leaders of a new wave of the Holy Spirit and recipients of miraculous gifts such as prophecy.

Because the evidence for the gift of prophecy, especially among orthodox Christians, is so rare, modern *prophetists* like Pentecostal theologian C. Samuel Storms, have gone so far as to claim Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) possessed the gift. Dr. Storms relates an excerpt from the autobiography of Charles Spurgeon where the great preacher says that in "as many as a dozen cases . . . the [specific] thoughts of [particular] men have been revealed from the pulpit." Dr. Storms comments:

I believe that this is an example of what the apostle Paul described in I Corinthians 14:24-25. Spurgeon exercised the gift of prophecy (or some might say the word of knowledge, 12:8), but he did not label it as such. Yet that does not alter the reality of what the Holy Spirit accomplished through him. If one were to examine Spurgeon's theology and ministry as well as recorded accounts of it by his contemporaries and subsequent biographers, most would conclude from the absence of explicit reference to miraculous charismata such as prophecy and the word of knowledge that these gifts had been withdrawn from church life [In other words, Spurgeon was a cessationist]. But Spurgeon's own testimony inadvertently says otherwise.⁶⁰²

Several comments are in order. First, perhaps Spurgeon was visited at times with supernatural clairvoyant abilities. However, as we have discussed elsewhere, while this was one attribute of a

⁶⁰¹ Toon.

⁶⁰² C. Samuel Storms *Miraculous Gifts*, 201. (202-203).

biblical Prophet,⁶⁰³ it is insufficient to claim Spurgeon had the gift of prophecy. Secondly, Dr. Storms admits that Spurgeon himself was a *historicist*, believing gifts like prophecy to have ceased. Accordingly, and thirdly, Dr. Storms seems arrogant to make Spurgeon out to be a fool who could not even recognize he had the gift of prophecy. Contrary to Dr. Storms, Mr. Spurgeon did not erroneously interpret what happened, precisely because Spurgeon properly understood the gift.

J) 20th Century Prophecy: *The frauds of Branham & Robertson*

Like the previous century, only heretical men claimed the gift of prophecy through the mid twentieth century. We have already discussed the fraud of two of *prophecy's* most celebrated "prophets," Paul Cain⁶⁰⁴ and Benny Hinn.⁶⁰⁵ In addition, *prophecy's* founder was a fraud too. Charismatic teacher Hank Hanegraaff relates concerning William Branham (1909-1965):

If ever a man was revered by leaders of today's Counterfeit Revival [of which *prophecy* is a part], that man was William Branham. . . . Kenneth Hagin and Jack Deere continue to extol the work that God started through the healing revivals of Branham and his imitators. . . . Paul Cain [a foundational figure in modern *prophecy*] calls him "the greatest prophet that ever lived in any of my generations or any of the generations of revival I've lived through."

The *Dictionary of Christianity in America* acknowledges that "the post-World War II healing revival in Pentecostalism began in the ministry of William Branham" . . . On May 7, 1946, while the prophet Branham was still only a humble, if mystical, game warden, a two-hundred-pound angel . . . appeared to him in a secret cave. . . . The angel . . . advised Branham that he would be able to disclose details about the lives of devotees through the word of knowledge.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ For further discussion of the clairvoyant abilities of biblical Prophets see section 9.12.A.

⁶⁰⁴ Regarding incriminating evidence on Paul Cain see 9.12.A.2 and 9.11.F.3 and 11.8.B.

⁶⁰⁵ On Benny Hinn's failed prophecies and immorality see sections 10.15.A.7 and 11.8.F.

⁶⁰⁶ Hank Hanegraaff, *Counterfeit Revival* (Word, 1997), 134-137.

And indeed, thousands claimed that Branham accurately gave detailed information about them that he had no natural means of knowing, thus convincing them that he was a great Prophet of God. And the folklore of *prophetism* furthered his fame. Accordingly, we read:

In its February 1961 issue, the *Full Gospel Men's Voice* (now the Full Gospel Businessmen's Voice) wrote: "In Bible Days, there were men of God who were Prophets and Seers. But in all the Sacred Records, none of these had a greater ministry than that of William Branham Branham has been used by God, in the Name of Jesus, to raise the dead!" Branham's teachings and notoriety had a profound influence on the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Though Branham has been dead since 1965, there are hundreds of thousands around the world who regard him as a prophet, and the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6.⁶⁰⁷

Branham claimed to possess the gift of prophecy based on two things. First, his remarkable ability to know things about people. One researcher writes:

The second [attraction to Branham's meetings] was Branham's "gift of discernment": "You all know that this gift in my life is supernatural. It is a gift whereby the Holy Spirit is able to discern diseases, and thoughts of men's hearts, and other hidden things that only God could know and then reveal to me." . . .

He insisted that he had nothing to do with what happened when the gift was in operation. People would come before him one by one. Suddenly things relating to them would appear to him above them. He would simply tell them what he saw, unaware of what he was saying. . . .

[Walter] Hollenweger, an expert on Pentecostal history, comments, "The author [Hollenweger], who knew Branham personally and interpreted for him in Zurich, is not aware of any case in which he was mistaken in the often detailed statements he made."⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ "William M. Branham," online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Branham. This is an excellent article containing exceptional research. Many of the references here come from this article.

⁶⁰⁸ Ronald Kydd, *Healing Through the Centuries: Models for Understanding* (Hendrickson, 1998), 177-8.

William Branham is by far the most supernatural “prophet” that modern *prophetism* can muster. However, just as surely as Branham’s clairvoyant abilities were supernatural, they were also demonic.⁶⁰⁹ This opinion is based on several facts. First, like many demonic frauds, Branham’s childhood was spooky:

From his early childhood William Branham had supernatural experiences including prophetic visions. He recalled that in his early childhood, while walking home from getting water from the creek, he heard the voice of the Angel of the Lord who told him 'never to drink, smoke or defile his body, for there would be a work for him when he got older.'⁶¹⁰

On one occasion during his teenage years, he remembered being approached by an astrologer telling him that he was 'born under a special sign' and that they predicted an important religious calling for him.⁶¹¹

In an experience very reminiscent of Joseph Smith and the founding of Mormonism, Branham claims that in 1933, a bright light descended on him and he heard a voice say, “As John the Baptist was sent to fore-run the first coming of Jesus Christ, so your message will fore-run His second coming.”⁶¹²

The second reason we believe Branham was a false prophet was that he grossly lied about his healing abilities, which we discuss elsewhere.⁶¹³ Thirdly, like all false prophets, none of his predictions came true. While demons empowered Branham to know people’s past, he failed miserably in predicting the future. One researcher notes:

Branham regarded his series of sermons on the Seven Seals (Rev 6:1-17 and Rev 8:1) in 1963 as a highlight of his ministry. He said a cluster of seven angels [privately, of course] met him on Sunset Mountain in Arizona to commission

⁶⁰⁹ For further discussion of the demonic nature of contemporary clairvoyancy see section 9.12.A.2.

⁶¹⁰ W. M. Branham, *My Life Story* (Voice of God Recordings, 1959).

⁶¹¹ W. M. Branham, *How the Gift Came to Me*, (The Voice of Healing, 1948), 8.

⁶¹² L. Vayle, *Twentieth Century Prophet* (1965), 37; online *Twentieth Century Prophet*, ch 3, *Pillar of Fire Appears*.

⁶¹³ For further discussion of Branham’s “healing” ministry see section 11.7.B.9.b

the opening of the Seals, which he believed was in fulfillment of a vision he had told his church several months earlier.⁶¹⁴

Accordingly, Branham said he had received seven major prophecies in 1933 regarding events unfolding in the world. He predicted "that 1977 ought to terminate the world systems and usher in the millennium."⁶¹⁵ In addition, Branham's prophecies included a rather famous one that "the city of Los Angeles would 'sink beneath the ocean'" and that a tidal wave would sweep inland as far as the Salton Sea."⁶¹⁶

When we are reminded that Jesus said we would know a false prophet by their moral fruit (cf. Matt 7:15-23) we take note that one sympathetic researcher admits: "At times he could be . . . remarkably bitter and angry."⁶¹⁷

The final reason we believe Branham's supernatural clairvoyant abilities were demonic is that his doctrine was heretical. Mr. Hanegraaff reports:

Branham's failed prophecies were only exceeded by his false doctrines. His dogmatic "serpent's seed doctrine" held that Eve had sexual intercourse with the serpent and conceived Cain. . . . Branham was adamant in his denial of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. . . . He began to insist that "believers baptized by a Trinitarian formula must be rebaptized in the name of Jesus only.

To expose himself even more, Branham claimed his unbiblical doctrines were a result of direct divine revelation as a Prophet of God.⁶¹⁸ In addition, as one researcher notes:

Criticism of Branham's ministry has focused not only on doctrinal differences, but on his belief in divine revelation through astronomical constellations and aspects of pyramidology. This is based on his comment that "God wrote

⁶¹⁴ W. M. Branham, *Is This the Time?*, (Voice of God Recordings, December 1962); online at www.branham.org.

⁶¹⁵ W. M. Branham, *An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages* (WBEA, 1965), 321-322.

⁶¹⁶ W. M. Branham, *The Choosing of a Bride & Works Is Faith Expressed* (Voice of God Recordings, 1965).

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ C. D. Weaver, *The Healer-Prophet: William Marrion Branham: A Study of the Prophetic in American Pentecostalism* (Mercer University Press, 2000), 98.

three Bibles." He said these were the zodiac, the great pyramid [in Egypt] and the Holy Bible.⁶¹⁹

Considering Branham's doctrines and character, his "angel" immediately reminds one of the Apostle Paul's warning about "**satan [who] masquerades as an angel of light.**" (2 Co. 11:14). This guy is one of the celebrated founding fathers of modern *prophetism* and its promoters still want us to take them seriously?

Indeed, The Pentecostal Ronald Kydd, Research Professor of Church History at Tyndale Seminary, in an effort to find historical evidence for legitimate and biblical prophetic ministries, suggests that William Branham is an example. Dr. Kydd writes, "It is certain that he thought he was the divinely appointed prophet for his generation."⁶²⁰ So. He was wrong, and *prophetism* is wrong to continue to laud him as a hero, let alone a Prophet from God.

As another researcher writes:

Branham demonstrated one thing conclusively: that restoration movements like the Latter Rain so lust for Prophets who can do signs and wonders that they will accept nearly any heresy or outrageous claim as long as it is accompanied by signs and miracles.⁶²¹

But the prophetic, doctrinal, and moral failures of Branham and Cain seemed to have taught *prophetism* nothing. A more modern "prophet" of *prophetism* with an equally dismal record of prediction is Pat Robertson. One chronicler of these failures documents the following:

Several times near New Year Robertson has announced that God told him several truths or events that would happen in the following year. "I have a relatively good track record," he said. "Sometimes I miss."

In late 1976, Robertson predicted that the end of the world was coming in November or October 1982. In a May 1980 broadcast of *The 700 Club* he stated, "I guarantee you by the end of 1982 there is going to be a judgment on the world."

In May 2006, Robertson declared that storms and possibly a tsunami would hit America's coastline sometime in 2006. Robertson supposedly received this revelation from God during

⁶¹⁹ E. Pement, "William Branham: An American Legend," *Cornerstone* magazine, 1986, Vol. 15, No. 81.

⁶²⁰ Kydd, 174.

⁶²¹ Bob Dewaay, CIC, #103, 5.

an annual personal prayer retreat in January. The claim was repeated four times on *The 700 Club*.

On May 8, 2006, Robertson said, "If I heard the Lord right about 2006, the coasts of America will be lashed by storms." On May 17, 2006, he elaborated, "There well may be something as bad as a tsunami in the Pacific Northwest." While this claim didn't garner the same level of controversy as some of his other statements, it was generally received with mild amusement by the Pacific Northwest media. The History Channel's initial airing of its new series, *Mega Disasters: West Coast Tsunami*, was broadcast the first week of May.

On the January 2, 2007, broadcast of *The 700 Club*, Robertson said that God spoke to him and told him that "mass killings" were to come during 2007, due to a terrorist attack on the United States. He added, "The Lord didn't say nuclear. But I do believe it will be something like that." When a terrorist attack failed to happen in 2007, Robertson said, in January 2008, "All I can think is that somehow the people of God prayed and God in his mercy spared us."

In October 2008 Robertson posted a press release on the Georgian Conflict speculating that the conflict is a Russian ploy to enter the Middle East, and that instability caused by a predicted pre-emptive strike [predicted by Robertson] by Israel on Iran would result in Syria's and Iran's launching nuclear strikes on other targets. He also said that if the United States were to oppose Russia's expansion, nuclear strikes on American soil are also pending. "We will suffer grave economic damage, but will not engage in military action to stop the conflict. However, we may not be spared nuclear strikes against coastal cities. In conclusion, it is my opinion that we have between 75 and 120 days before the Middle East starts spinning out of control."

On his New Years broadcast, 2009, Robertson said, "If I'm hearing [God] right, gold will go to about \$1900 dollars an ounce and oil to \$300 a barrel."⁶²²

Accordingly, Robertson's claim to the gift of prophecy doesn't even deserve further comment.

It is no surprise, then, that mainstream Evangelicalism through the majority of the twentieth century denied that God has currently granted anyone the biblical gift of prophecy. J. Vernon McGee

⁶²² Mike Scheifler at <http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/tbn.htm>

(1904-1988) the highly respected and influential radio Bible teacher said:

We have seen the importance of sign gifts at the beginning of the transitional period [between the OT and NT]. But these gifts disappeared. You may say to me, "Are you sure they disappeared?" I want to say to you categorically, and emphatically, that the sign gifts disappeared and the Scriptures said they would [citing 1 Cor 13:8-13].⁶²³

More recently, the equally respected and influential radio Bible teacher Charles Swindoll has written: "God no longer speaks through prophets. I don't care what they tell you on television."⁶²⁴

K) End-time Restoration: Moses & Elijah

While we believe that Scripture (cf. 1 Cor 13:8-13), Church history, and present experience all point to the fact that the gift of prophecy has not been operating since the recording and wide-spread distribution of the NT revelation in the fourth century, we do believe that Scripture indicates the gift will be restored at the consummation of the Church Age. Jesus said:

And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy for ", clothed in sackcloth. . . . These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the Earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.
(Rev 11:3, 6)

We believe these two End-time Prophets are Moses and Elijah.⁶²⁵ Regardless, it would seem that during God's End-time judgments on the Earth, at least two "**men**" will possess the biblical gift of prophecy. It would seem the biggest reason this is occurring is because yet another age and stage of divine revelation is being inaugurated. This is again, one reason we do not believe the gift of prophecy is operating today. We did not enter a new age of divine revelation in the 1980's when *prophetism* became so popular. And if and when God does reinstate the gift of prophecy, those

⁶²³ Quebedeaux, 170-01.

⁶²⁴ Charles Swindoll, *The Mystery of God's Will* (Word, 1999), 32.

⁶²⁵ See endnote in section 10.5.A.3.

possessing it will be able to supernaturally authenticate themselves as the two Prophets described above, and as all the Prophets in Scripture. If you really want more proof that the gift of prophecy has not been restored to the Church, simply compare the attributes of these real End Time Prophets with the pathetic counterfeits operating today.

Extras & Endnotes

Gauging Your Grasp

- 1) When did the operation of the gift of prophecy essentially cease?
- 2) What were some testimonies previous to that that it was drastically decreasing?
- 3) Why do we suggest the gift of prophecy ceased? Do you agree or disagree and why?
- 4) What are other reasons for concluding that the gift of prophecy has never been restored, including to this day?
- 5) What are the similarities and differences between 2nd century *Montanism* and modern *prophetism*?
- 6) What did Origen testify too regarding the gift of prophecy about 220 A. D?
- 7) What did Bishop Chrysostom (c. 347-407) testify to regarding the meaning of 1 Corinthians chapter 14?
- 8) Why do modern *prophetists* claim the gift of prophecy was removed in the early Church? Do you agree or disagree?
- 9) Why do modern *prophetists* claim the gift of prophecy was been restored to them? Do you agree or disagree?

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- Book 7: *God's Revelation*
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- Book 9: *God's Prophets*
- Book 10: *God's Miracles- Works & Words*
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