

## **Evidence for Continuation of the Charismata Through the Witness of the Church Fathers To The Fourth Century**

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**Abstract:** In the continuing discussion on whether the *charismata* are still extant and operative in the modern (post-apostolic) church, those who feel the gifts of the Spirit have disappeared from use often resort to theological arguments drawn from 1 Corinthians 12-14, with those arguments tending to reflect their own theological bias against the continuation of spiritual gifts past the days of the apostles. Such arguments often fail to consider the witness of the fathers of the Church; many wrote either at length or at the very least, in passing, of the continued presence of the gifts of the Spirit in their time. This paper will demonstrate the witness of various of the fathers, some even to the fifth and sixth centuries, who affirmed the active presence of the gifts of the Spirit in their time. While it is not the purpose of this paper to address the many issues involved in the ongoing debate between cessationism and continuationism, the objective will be to show the *charismata* were in active use after the “end” of the apostolic period, continuing through the fourth century, and that theological arguments which seek to demonstrate some nebulous ending of such Spirit-given manifestations around 100 A.D. are biased constructs that fail to accurately represent the witness of the early church.

**Keywords:** cessation, continuation, charismata, fathers

**The witness of history.** One of the prominent arguments employed by cessationists (belief in the termination or removal of the charisms) is the New Testament explicitly demonstrates the gifts of the Spirit were meant to be temporary in the life of the Church. One typical argument against the continuation of spiritual gifts to this present time is that God no longer gives revelation; all the truth necessary is contained in the Scripture. Therefore, the sign gifts are no longer necessary, and were never meant to be extant beyond the “apostolic age”. The gifts were accreditations of the apostles “as channels of New Testament revelation.”<sup>1</sup> Another cessationist argument is that the maturity of the Church would necessitate the end of the gifts, based on an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12.<sup>2</sup> However, such arguments tend to give no paradigm or yardstick to measure by when the Church will be truly “mature”.

Cessationism is not something either new or particular to the modern Church. The Reformation, and particularly the theology of Martin Luther, redefined the “miraculous” as salvation and its “consequent eternal life.” To appeal to some other “miraculous” anything was deemed a lack of faith. Two 17<sup>th</sup> century clerics, John Deacon and John Walker, in response to claims of exorcisms performed by a Puritan, John Darrell, firmly rejected any continuation of miraculous gifts, saying the gifts existed in the apostolic times for the confirmation of the Gospel, but now that the Gospel has been and is being widely proclaimed, the mark of a true church was “the absence of miracles.”<sup>3</sup> In Roman Catholicism, a miracle was deemed the prerequisite for identification as a prophet; a fiery preacher, Girolamo Savonarola, was challenged by Pope Alexander VI to

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<sup>1</sup> Fred Moritz, “A Case for Cessationism”, *Maranatha Baptist Theological Journal* 3.2 (Fall 2013), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Donald G. McDougall, “Cessationism in 1 Corinthians 13:8-12”, *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 14.2 (Fall 2007), 177-213.

<sup>3</sup> Harman Bhogal, “Miracles, Cessationism and Demonic Possession: The Darrell Controversy and the Parameters of Preternature in Early Modern English Demonology”, *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies in the Preternatural* 4:2 (2015), 166.

produce such a miracle to substantiate the basic character of both the former's preaching and the reception by the people. Savonarola replied in a sermon that one should not seek miracles, except as provided by Christ to meet a certain need that might arise.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is said Savonarola "had moved for years in an atmosphere of miracle"; both he and the others in his convent "were in the habit of enforcing their assertions by the statement that their truth would be established by supernatural testimony."<sup>5</sup> Savonarola was eventually excommunicated for his claims and burned at the stake as a heretic. Like the Protestant Reformers, the Roman Catholic Church had apparently taken the position that miracles were no longer extant in the Body of Christ; the Catholics allowed for a miracle to substantiate a divine claim, but apparently not beyond that.

A recent paper from Confidence Bansah in *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* argued the charismata, and particularly, speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) ceased around 155 A.D.; citing Acts 19:1-7, the author insists receiving the gift of tongues required apostolic laying on of hand, and since that is not repeatable today, it is claimed, then speaking in tongues is no longer accessible by the Church.<sup>6</sup> While it is not the purpose here to respond to in any detail to cessationist issues raised in this article, it should be noted that Acts 19 is not the only record of someone receiving the gift of tongues in the Book of the Acts. The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and the believers at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues, and without any apostolic laying on of hands. We would suggest the narrow view taken by Bansah grossly

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<sup>4</sup> E. L. S Horsburgh, *Girolamo Savonarola* (London: Methuen & Co., 1911), 198, 199.

<sup>5</sup> Horsburgh, *Girolamo Savonarola*, 254.

<sup>6</sup> Confidence Worlanyo Bansah, "Is Speaking in Tongues Real Today? An African Christian Perspective", *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 17(13) (March 27, 2016), 5. The author does note a dependence on the work of B. B. Warfield (see following).

understates, perhaps even misrepresents, the New Testament evidence.<sup>7</sup>

If any work could be considered the “flagship” of cessationism, it would be Benjamin B. Warfield’s *Counterfeit Miracles*. Warfield was doggedly against manifestations of the charisms. For example, Warfield claimed God has the ability to effect healing without benefit of miracle.<sup>8</sup> But he gives no theological basis to separate “healing” from “miracle”. For this paper, the contention is when God chooses to bestow healing of bodily ills, it is in itself a miracle.<sup>9</sup>

A critical response to Warfield’s thesis is Jon Ruthven’s *The Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*. He argues Warfield’s view that the gifts of the Spirit have use only in concert with Scriptural revelation, that they were “confined to the time in which it (Scripture) was being revealed”, and indeed his whole thesis of cessationism, “requires a narrowly focused, rationalistic, evidentialist notion of a miracle” from which he establishes his position.<sup>10</sup> Ruthven points to Warfield’s rejection of any “witnesses” to the spiritual gifts, as Warfield believed those within the post-apostolic community were apparently too influenced by pagan culture

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<sup>7</sup> The disciples who received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Ephesus spoke in tongues and prophesied, the only recipients recorded in Acts to manifest both *charisms*. It would be equally disingenuous to build a theology of Spirit-baptism on the need to prophesy since neither the Acts 2 nor the Acts 10 accounts mention such a manifestation.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918), 193.

<sup>9</sup> For a concise explanation of continuationist thinking on divine healing and miracles, written from a Pentecostal viewpoint, see Keith Warrington, “The Path to Wholeness: Beliefs and Practices Relating to Healing in Pentecostalism”, *Evangel* 21.2 (Summer 2003), 45-48.

<sup>10</sup> Jon Ruthven, *On The Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles* (n.c., 1993), 65, 67. My copy of Ruthven’s work is one obtained through a website connected to his work. The book is available as part of the Word and Spirit Monograph Series (2011) from Word and Spirit Press.

and thought.<sup>11</sup> Warfield also championed the view that among the church fathers there was a “vacillating attitude...as to whether or not miracles did in fact occur.”<sup>12</sup> Ruthven counters with a tightly-written analysis which demonstrates the factual basis of the presence of the gifts of the Spirit in post-apostolic times.<sup>13</sup>

It is not the purpose here to reproduce Ruthven’s excellent and thorough work nor his theological arguments. Anyone desiring a well-written case for continuationism would do well to consult Ruthven. The intent here is to demonstrate evidence from the early church which either alludes to or makes definite statements concerning a continuation of spiritual gifts beyond the time of the apostles.

**The value of the fathers on the Holy Spirit.** Harold Mare’s 1972 paper on the Holy Spirit in the writings of the apostolic fathers demonstrates the important place of the Spirit in the early church. He points to approximately 255 uses or references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament; in his control group of apostolic writings, he identifies 75 such uses or references. Two

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<sup>11</sup> Ruthven, *On The Cessation of the Charismata*, 70. It seems disingenuous to claim the apostolic fathers, regarding *charismata*, were too influenced by pagan elements of their time but then accept some of their teaching on such as justification/atonement, grace, mercy or the authority of the Word of God. It seems Warfield was content to “cherry pick” that which advanced his thesis. There is literature available which demonstrates the thinking of the fathers of the church on many of the doctrinal positions which are part of Protestant theology, and much of what the fathers taught would have Warfield’s (and other cessationists) agreement; for example, see Peter Ensor, “Clement of Alexandria and Penal Substitutionary Atonement”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 85.1 (January 2013), 19-35; idem, “Tertullian and Penal Substitutionary Atonement”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 86.2 (April 2014), 130-142; idem., “Penal substitutionary Atonement in the Later Ante-Nicene Period”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 87.4 (October 2015), 331-346; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996); Jeff Vogel, “The Haste of Sin, the Slowness of Salvation”, *Anglican Theological Review* 89.3 (2007), 443-459.

<sup>12</sup> Ruthven, *On The Cessation of the Charismata*, 71.

<sup>13</sup> Another such work, but much shorter than Ruthven’s book, is Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984).

documents, *1 Clement* and *The Shepherd of Hermas* have 52 of those references.<sup>14</sup> Later writings show the same importance of the Spirit in the life of the Church. For example, Gregory of Nyssa followed the apostle Paul in declaring the Scripture came through the agency of the Holy Spirit, while Theodore of Mopsuestia, a fifth century leader of the Antiochian school of theology,<sup>15</sup> believed that “all the authors of both Testaments wrote under the influence of the one and the same Spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

It is apparent the early church held to the deity of the Holy Spirit, even if in the writings of some, there was a hierarchy within the Trinity without denying the consubstantiality of all three persons.<sup>17</sup> The importance of the Holy Spirit to the early church is well-attested in the writings.<sup>18</sup> It would follow to examine the views of the early fathers as to the place of the *charismata* in the church, since Scripture clearly says the Spirit is the One who distributes the enablements of power (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:11).

**Clement of Rome.** Clement (30-100), a Gentile and probably a Roman, is thought to have accompanied the apostle Paul (cf. Philippians 4:3),<sup>19</sup> but others do not think such an assertion

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<sup>14</sup> W. Harold Mare, “The Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Fathers”, *Grace Journal* 13.2 (Spring 1972), 4.

<sup>15</sup> W. Müller, “Theodore of Mopsuestia”, in Philip Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopaedia or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal and Practical Theology* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) (Toronto, New York, and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), IV:2325.

<sup>16</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2003), 61.

<sup>17</sup> David Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 345.

<sup>18</sup> Athanasius (c. 296-373), for example, held to the full deity of the Holy Spirit and to the work of the Spirit in the inspiration of the prophets. See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 257. Kelly’s work explores the view of several of the fathers on the Spirit, including Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Hilary, Novatian and Origen, as well as less than orthodox views from such as Arius, the Monarchians and the Sabellians.

<sup>19</sup> A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians”, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds.,

has sufficient historical support.<sup>20</sup> Some historians think Clement may have been the successor to Peter as bishop of Rome.<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus thought him to be the third successor to Paul and Peter, after Linus and Cletus, and believed Clement had in fact heard the original apostles preach.<sup>22</sup> Another early writing, *The Clementines*, has a different order, but the church historian Eusebius follows Irenaeus.<sup>23</sup> However, there is some thought that the layers of mythic accretion about Clement's life makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know what has been written about him is genuine fact.<sup>24</sup> The letter to the Corinthians which bears Clement of Rome's name was probably written towards the end of his life.<sup>25</sup> If he died c. 100 A.D. (the letter was written close to that time; Bercot suggests 95 A.D.<sup>26</sup>), references to the

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*Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), I:1. Subsequent references to this series will be abbreviated as "ANF".

<sup>20</sup> Jacques J. Müller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 139fn7. "Clement" was a popular Roman name at the time; for Paul to give only the name and not any further clarifying information give the idea that this Clement was another Philippian Christian but not the Clement of Rome who later became the bishop there. See Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43) (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 181.

<sup>21</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1999), 242. Gonzalez holds to the idea that the early use of "pope" in the Church simply was as an honorific as "father", and that until the election of Leo the Great (440 A.D.) it seemed the bishops oversaw church affairs in Rome more as a committee than as a singular ruling bishop referred to as the "pope". It was Leo who rejected *Canon 28* of the Council of Chalcedon, which had the see of Constantinople as equal with that of Rome, establishing him as the first of the bishops of Rome to "have a strong sense of Roman primacy" (Bronwen Neil, *Leo the Great* [London, U.K. and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009], 39).

<sup>22</sup> Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", III:3:3, in ANF I:416.

<sup>23</sup> John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (n.c., Harper and Brothers, 1867-1887; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), II:315.

<sup>24</sup> G. Uhlhorn, "Clemens Romanus", in Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopaedia*, I:492. See also Charles Bigg, *The Origins of Christianity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 63-71, for a brief, non-technical commentary on Clement's life.

<sup>25</sup> Coxe, "Introductory Note", ANF I:1.

<sup>26</sup> Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, xvi. Mare gives a wider window, dating the letter between 75 and 110 A.D. ("The Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Fathers", 3).

charismatic gifts would give evidence such were in operation at the so-called “close” of the apostolic age.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the English translation says, “let everyone be subject to his neighbor, according to the special gift bestowed upon him.”<sup>27</sup> The marginal note reads “according as he has been placed in his charism.” Here I would deduce two points. The first is the charisms were active in the church during the last decade of the first century. The second draws on the first; not only were they active, but Clement’s mention of them in his letter gives the impression these “charisms” were normative at that time for the whole of the Body of Christ.

Ronald Kydd’s analysis of Clement’s letter demonstrates that which Paul described in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 as “spiritual gifts” is the same meaning utilized by Clement. Kydd offers two arguments in favor of his conclusion.

First, he asserts Clement builds “a case for unity and mutual concern” in the Body of Christ (*1 Clement* 37:5-38:1a) and “places the spiritual gifts right in the middle of it”; the operation of those gifts were deemed as “important” in believers being able to “function as a body.” Kydd thinks Clement’s words follow Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, which stands in the middle of the apostle’s “extended treatment” on the gifts of the Spirit. Second, Clement expresses a strong concern that the gifts of the Spirit be used in ministry to others.<sup>28</sup> This is Paul’s concern as well; the diversity of the gifts of the Spirit and the diversity of the Body of Christ are meant to seek “the good of others before one’s self.”<sup>29</sup> Kydd concludes that Clement is writing about the same thing as Paul – the function of spiritual gifts – and their vital role in the life of the Body of Christ.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Clement, “First Clement”, Ch. 38, *ANF*, I:15.

<sup>28</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 625.

<sup>30</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, 12-13.



Some cessationists would not quarrel with the *charismata* active in the last part of the first century; that time frame would keep the spiritual gift within the time of the apostles. But what of the time after the first century? Through the historical record I will show the *charismata* did continue beyond the end of the first century. In this present paper, evidence will be presented for such continuation through the fourth century.

**Quadratus of Athens.** According to Eusebius, Quadratus was an apologist who defended Christians before the Emperor Hadrian (124 A.D.) and was later appointed as bishop of Athens.<sup>31</sup> As part of his defense before the emperor, Quadratus noted that some of the persons who had received healing from the Savior were still alive at that time.<sup>32</sup>

**Ignatius of Antioch.** Ignatius served as the second bishop of Antioch, succeeding Euodias,<sup>33</sup> and died a martyr (either 108 A.D. [Eusebius] or 135-140 A.D.<sup>34</sup>, although the historical records of the details of his life are very thin and apparently, in some cases, unreliable. His accession to bishop apparently

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<sup>31</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (Trans. C. F. Cruse) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) (Book IV:3), 110.

<sup>32</sup> B. J. Kidd, ed. *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church* (New York: Macmillan and London: S.P.C.K.. 1920), 50. It may be a matter of interpretation whether Quadratus referred to those who, nearly a century before, had received healing directly from Christ or to those who had been made well through a gift of healing ostensibly after Pentecost who were still alive. Terris Neumann, "Healing in the Patristic Period", *Paraclete* 18.1 (Winter 1984), 14, understands the apology itself demonstrating divine healing had continued past the time of the apostles into the times of the church fathers

<sup>33</sup> Eusebius, "The Church History of Eusebius", in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers* (Second Series) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), I:149. Hereafter, this series will be noted as *NPNF* (2). But as to Eusebius' accuracy, G. Uhlhorn thinks the history has problems, since the only source about Ignatius available to Eusebius were the few genuine epistles, and some statements by Origen, which are "doubtful with respect to its chronology" ("Ignatius of Antioch", in Schaff, ed. *A Religious Encyclopaedia*, 2:1058.

<sup>34</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *The Making of Paul: Construction of the Apostle in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010), 134-135.

occurred in 69 A.D., but beyond that, little is actually known.<sup>35</sup> Some of the details of his life come from a document detailing his martyrdom in 107 or 108 B. C.,<sup>36</sup> and whatever else is known about him comes from letters he wrote on his way to martyrdom.<sup>37</sup> Theodoret, a fifth century historian, refers to him as “St. Ignatius”, indicating the high esteem with which he was held in the Church.<sup>38</sup> Of his early life, it is said that he was a student of the apostle John,<sup>39</sup> and as bishop of Antioch, composed several epistles; of the fifteen traditionally ascribed to him, eight are considered to be later works, written after his death.<sup>40</sup> In two of the genuine epistles, Ignatius was critical of Docetism,<sup>41</sup> a form of Gnosticism.<sup>42</sup> He defended a strong orthodox expression of the Christian faith, exhorting against “the poison of heretics.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, IV:490.491.

<sup>36</sup> Coxe, “Introductory Note”, *ANF*, I:48.

<sup>37</sup> Issa A. Saliba, “The Bishop of Antioch and the Heretics: A Study of Primitive Christianity”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 54.2 (April-June 1982), 65.

<sup>38</sup> Theodoret, “Dialogues I” in *NPNF* (2), III:175f.

<sup>39</sup> T. W. Crafer, ed., *The Epistles of St. Ignatius* (London: SPCK and New York: Macmillan, 1919), vii.

<sup>40</sup> Coxe, “Introductory Note”, *ANF* I:46.

<sup>41</sup> Docetism was an early heresy in the church which held that Jesus, while on earth, only seemed to be human. Under Apollinarius of Laodicea, Docetism became known as “Apollinarianism”, denying Jesus had a human mind or a human soul. Docetism and Apollinarianism were condemned by the Church in 381 A.D. See John Sweet, “Docetism: Is Jesus Christ Human or Did He Only Appear to Be So?”, in Ben Quash and Michael Ward, ed., *Heresies and How to Avoid Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 24-25. Ignatius, “To the Smyrnaeans”, condemned such teaching in both the shorter and the longer versions of the letter. In the shorter version, Ignatius claims it is blasphemous to deny the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (see *ANF* I: 88).

<sup>42</sup> Ignatius strongly defended the humanity of Christ as well as the reality of all of “Christ’s human experiences”, including His death on the cross, against the claims that His suffering was illusory or that someone else died in His place. See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 141-142.

<sup>43</sup> Ignatius, “To the Philadelphians”, Ch. 4, *ANF* I:68.

Within his genuine epistles<sup>44</sup> are two remarks that appear to support the presence and practice of the *charismata* after the close of the so-called “apostolic age”. In his letter to the Philadelphians, Ignatius mentions loving “the prophets, because they too have proclaimed the Gospel.”<sup>45</sup> He does not clarify which prophets he meant; did he mean the Old Testament prophets or is this a reference to the prophets who were active in the first-century church? That aside, Ignatius apparently believed those who proclaimed the Gospel before him were operating in a prophetic manner.

The other reference is in his letter to Polycarp, who was martyred in 156 A. D. Ignatius encouraged Polycarp to live in such a manner that he would “abound in all the gifts.”<sup>46</sup>

Harold Hunter, former assistant bishop for The Church of God of Prophecy (Alabama) has argued that Ignatius, more than once, “referred to the contemporary significance of the *charismata*”,<sup>47</sup> beyond the two examples above. For example, Ignatius writes of the “gift of reason”,<sup>48</sup> and refers to the “gift which the Lord has truly sent”.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> The genuine works are believed to be his epistles to the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Trallians, the Romans, the Philadelphians, the Smyrnans, and to Polycarp. See McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, IV:91.

<sup>45</sup> Ignatius, “To the Philadelphians”, Ch. 5, *ANF* I:82.

<sup>46</sup> Ignatius, “To Polycarp”, Ch. 2, *ANF* I:99.

<sup>47</sup> Harold Hunter, “Tongues-Speech: A Patristic Analysis”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23.2 (June 1980), 125.

<sup>48</sup> Ignatius, “To the Ephesians”, *ANF* I:57.

<sup>49</sup> Ignatius, “To the Ephesians” 17.2, in Kirsopp Lake, trans., *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925), 191. Ignatius used *charisma*, which typically in New Testament use refers to “gift” or spiritual endowment (see William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006], 284) but is not restricted to “gifts of the Spirit” (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:11). Apparently Hunter sees the use of *charisma* as referring to “spiritual gifts”. It could be argued from the context of Ignatius’ remarks that the “gift” of which he writes is Jesus, not endowments of the Spirit.

Since Clement's letter is thought to have been written c. 95<sup>50</sup> and Ignatius' comments to Polycarp had to be written prior to 107 A. D., since that is the year of the former's death, there is a time-frame established for the earliest post-apostolic witnesses to continuationism. In these two witnesses alone is an indication the charisms did not disappear at the "end" of the "apostolic" age, but at minimum in the portions of the Church familiar to Ignatius and Clement, the manifestation of spiritual gifts continued.

**The Didache.** Written sometime between 90 and 100 A.D., the *Didache* was apparently authored by someone "who wished to preserve the charismatic influence in the Church" as well as providing guidelines for the "teachings and practices of charismatic leaders."<sup>51</sup> It is apparent the writer of *The Didache* was "concerned genuine prophets be allowed legitimate areas of responsibility within the Early Church."<sup>52</sup> This comports with what James Bradley of Fuller Seminary has argued, that prophets "were clearly active in the period of the Apostolic Fathers (A.D. 95-150)" with their ministry being more one of "gifts of utterance rather than miracles of healing."<sup>53</sup>

*The Didache* carries a very Pauline/Johannine "flavor", for not only does it advocate for the present presence of prophecy, it also encourages its readers to be wary of "deviating from the truth", being careful to weigh and to test (cf. 1 John 4:1) every prophetic word (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:29) to avoid false (counterfeit) words.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> J. H. Bernard, "Bishops and Presbyters in The Epistle of St. Clement of Rome", *Expositor* (Series 6) 4.1 (July 1901), 39.

<sup>51</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. "The Prophet in the *Didache*", *Paraclete* 18:1 (Winter 1984), 16.

<sup>52</sup> Robeck, "The Prophet in the *Didache*", 19.

<sup>53</sup> James E. Bradley, "Miracles and Martyrdom in the Early Church: Some Theological and Ethical Implications", *Pneuma* 13:1 (Spring 1991), 66.

<sup>54</sup> Robeck, "The Prophet in the *Didache*", 19.

**Justin Martyr.** This church father (100-163/5) was an ardent defender of the Christian faith, so much so he is said to have been the “most significant Christian apologist of the second century” whose writings brought Christianity into “competition with philosophies that appealed to persons of higher education and culture.”<sup>55</sup> Although he cannot be described as a “theological giant”, as his arguments sometimes “wobbled and tottered”, and despite his apparent affinity for what is known as “Middle Platonism”,<sup>56</sup> he nonetheless staunchly defended the faith in the presence of the Roman authorities against charges such as “atheism, immorality, treason, social aloofness and theological absurdity.”<sup>57</sup> Jared Secord of the University of Calgary has argued Justin continued to identify with the pagan intellectuals after his conversion to Christ, which historically connects him with the whole of the second century “Roman intellectual culture”. Justin is thus “the earliest detailed evidence of a Christian intellectual” directly involved in “the competitive world of Roman intellectual culture.”<sup>58</sup>

Bradley writes that Justin is the first of the early fathers who plainly avowed the continuation of the gifts of the Spirit in the post-apostolic church.<sup>59</sup> In his “Dialogue with Trypho”, Justin points out how some Jews are converting to Christ, and receive

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<sup>55</sup> E. Glenn Hinson, “Justin Martyr”, in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (second edition) (Detroit: Macmillan/Thomson Gale, 2005), VII:5043.

<sup>56</sup> “Middle Platonism” originated c. 138 B.C. through Antiochus of Ascalon. He rejected “fate” as the “efficient cause” of things, leaving much to human initiative. Through the work of the Jewish historian Philo of Alexandria, much of the evolved concept of God within later Judaism found its roots in the idea of the “Logos”, which apparently is itself derived from the “Demiurge”, the deity over the cosmos. It is from Middle Platonism that Gnosticism developed; Jesus was identified as “the earthly manifestation of the Divine Intellect.” See Edward Moore, “Middle Platonism”, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<https://iep.utm.edu/midplato>, accessed June 4, 2023).

<sup>57</sup> Hinson, “Justin Martyr”, VII:5043, 5044.

<sup>58</sup> Jared Secord, *Christian Intellectuals and the Roman Empire: From Justin Martyr to Origen* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), 46-47.

<sup>59</sup> Bradley, “Miracles and Martyrdom”, 66.

spiritual gifts, such as understanding, counsel, strength, healing, foreknowledge, teaching and the fear of God.<sup>60</sup> In a later chapter, Justin bluntly declared, "...the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time."<sup>61</sup> He also made reference to the practice of exorcism as a "frequent occurrence" but mostly of unbelievers, which, in some cases, "led to conversion."<sup>62</sup>

**Irenaeus.** Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 200) served as bishop of Gaul (France) and had the opportunity to hear Polycarp teach on the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> It is thought Irenaeus' ability to keep a sharp focus and attention to the Scriptures – especially in the Pauline literature -- came from his tutelage under Polycarp.<sup>64</sup> In Book 5 of his treatise, *Against Heresies*, the title to chapter 8 begins, "The gifts of the Holy Spirit which we receive prepare us for incorruption, render us spiritual and separate us from carnal men."<sup>65</sup>

Irenaeus also argued for the manifestation of resurrection power such as was at that time seen in the Church. He noted the raising of the dead "on account of some necessity" as an answer to the earnest prayers of the local church.<sup>66</sup> He further declared that some in his time had performed miracles, exorcised (driven out) demons, seen visions and uttered prophesies, were healing the sick through the laying on of

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<sup>60</sup> Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho (ch. 39)", *ANF I*:214.

<sup>61</sup> Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho (ch. 82)", *ANF I*:240. Justin often used the term "the prophetic Spirit" in his writings. See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> Nigel Scotland, "Signs and Wonders in the Early Catholic Church 90-451 and Their Implications for the Twenty-First Century", *European Journal of Theology* 10.2 (2001), 157.

<sup>63</sup> Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, xvii.

<sup>64</sup> E. Glenn Hinson, "Irenaeus" in Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, VII:4538, 4539.

<sup>65</sup> Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" (5.8.1), *ANF I*:533.

<sup>66</sup> Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" (2.31.2), *ANF I*:407.

hands, and repeated the part about the dead being raised, all of which came as a gift from God through the agency of Christ.<sup>67</sup>

For they (i.e., heretics) can neither confer sight on the blind nor hearing on the deaf, nor chase away all sorts of demons.... And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them (and the Apostles did by means of prayer, as had been done frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity – the entire church in that particular locality entreating with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned and he has been bestowed in answers to the prayers of the saints) that they do not believe this can possibly be done.<sup>68</sup>

In his *Proof of Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus concludes those who “do not admit the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and reject themselves from the charism of prophecy”, were unbelievers.<sup>69</sup>

**Hermas.** The *Shepherd of Hermas*, a second century document, was early considered Scripture; it enjoyed great popularity among the Greek churches. Irenaeus, the pre-Montanist Tertullian and Pseudo-Cyprian esteemed the document as the Word of God, as did Clement of Alexandria and Origen; it is included in *Codex Sinaiticus*.<sup>70</sup> *The Shepherd* is

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<sup>67</sup> Irenaeus, “Against Heresies” (2:32.4), *ANF* I:409.

<sup>68</sup> Irenaeus, “Against Heresies” (2.31.2), as cited in Neumann, “Healing in the Patristic Period”, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Irenaeus, “Proof of Apostolic Preaching” in Bradley, “Miracles and Martyrdom”, 66.

<sup>70</sup> Joseph M.-J. Marique, trans., “The Shepherd of Hermas”, *The Apostolic Fathers (The Fathers of the Church, Volume 1)* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 230. Marique also notes that Tertullian, after identifying with the Montanists, changed his position on *Hermas*; another church father, Athanasius, also rejected the work as Scripture, and it was not included in the Muratorian Canon. For a detailed history of *Hermas* and its inclusion in *Sinaiticus*, see James Bentley, *Secrets of Mt. Sinai: The Story of Finding the World’s Oldest Bible*

considered to be a Christian writing, despite never using “Jesus” or “Christ”, making no reference to the gospel, to water baptism, the incarnation, Jesus’ baptism, His death, His resurrection, and does not quote from the Gospels or from any of the Old or New Testament books.<sup>71</sup>

Two statements in *The Shepherd of Hermas* seem to indicate the continuation of spiritual gifts within the church into the second century. In “Commandment 2”, he writes: “For God wishes His gifts to be shared amongst all. They who receive will render account unto God with and for what they have received.” Then, in “Commandment 11”, the text refers to the “anger of the prophetic spirit”.<sup>72</sup>

Some textual difficulties have arisen with the text of *Hermas*, but despite these the document “demonstrates the continuing importance of ecstatic prophecy at some time during the first half of the second century.”<sup>73</sup>

**Tertullian.** A prolific writer, Tertullian (c. 160-230) was a North African known for his strong defenses of the Christian faith, refutations of heretics and many words of encouragement to believers in Christ. Although born a pagan, an unknown event in his mid-life persuaded him to convert to Christ and have a deep regret about his days as an unbeliever (see his *On Repentance* 1.1 and *Flight from Persecution* 6.2). He was married, had little interest in fathering children, and admitted to having been an adulterer (*On the Resurrection from the Dead* 59.3). There are apparently no details as to how long he was married or when his wife died.<sup>74</sup> According to the church

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– *Codex Sinaiticus* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), particularly pages 171-184. The author includes a translation of *Hermas* in the appendix.

<sup>71</sup> Kerr D. Macmillan, “The Shepherd of Hermas: Apocalypse or Allegory?”, *Princeton Theological Review* 9.1 (1911), 61.

<sup>72</sup> “Shepherd of Hermas”, *ANF* I:20, 28.

<sup>73</sup> James L. Ash, Jr., “The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church”, *Theological Studies* 37.2 (1976), 233.

<sup>74</sup> Geoffrey D. Dunn, *Tertullian* (London, UK and New York: Routledge, 2004), 3.



historian Eusebius, Tertullian was well versed in Roman law and enjoyed some notice among “the eminent men of Rome.”<sup>75</sup> For whatever criticisms might come about him, history has shown Tertullian was a true intellectual, a thinker who used paradox and wit and humor but maintained a conviction the Gospel was living, that it still spoke to people, and for him, was that which “carried him along.”<sup>76</sup>

In his “Treatise on the Soul” he declared, “For, seeing that we acknowledge spiritual *charismata* or gifts, we too have merited the attainment of the prophetic gift, although coming after John (the Baptist).” He also understood the apostle Paul having “assuredly foretold” of the continuing presence of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church.<sup>77</sup> The material in which those statements were made is said to be part of a letter he had written to a Montanist sister. Montanism, or as they preferred, “The Prophecy”, has been pilloried as heretical<sup>78</sup> as well as thought to be worthy of study for an understanding of second century Christianity in North Africa. While some of the teachings attached to Montanism could well be understood as outside mainstream Christian thought, Tertullian, even as a Montanist, stayed closer to orthodoxy than whatever theological innovations may have developed within the Montanist sect.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (tr. C. F. Cruse) (Book 2:2:4) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 38.

<sup>76</sup> Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv.

<sup>77</sup> Tertullian, “A Treatise on the Soul” (ch. 39), *ANF*, III:188.

<sup>78</sup>For example, Hugh J. Lawlor, “The Heresy of the Phrygians”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (36) (July 1908), 481-499.

<sup>79</sup> The form of the theological differences between Montanism and orthodoxy of that time are beyond the scope of this paper. For that, see e.g., the works by Dunn and Osborn previously cited. Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75ff, details how Tertullian tended to eschew the theological aberrations coming from the sect’s founders (Montanus, Maximilla, Priscilla). Trevett documents Montanism’s final condemnation as a heretical sect and the destruction of its shrine under the emperor Justinian I (see pp. 227-230). Tertullian’s views are

Yet even in criticisms of Montanism comes testimony to the continuation of the *charismata*. Epiphanius of Salamis (315-403) affirmed the Church accepts the gifts of the Spirit, but the “veritable” *charismata*, not that which he charged came from the Montanists’ “doctrine of demons.”<sup>80</sup>

In the concluding remarks in his treatise *On Baptism*, Tertullian exhorted his readers to “ask from the Father, ask from the Lord, that His own specialties of grace and distributions of gifts may be supplied you.”<sup>81</sup>

**Hippolytus.** A disciple of Irenaeus, Hippolytus (170-236) served for a time as bishop of Lyons. His learning and his demeanor was such that some apparently thought him to be Irenaeus come to life again.<sup>82</sup> In “The Canons of Hippolytus 8”, his direction for ordination explicitly requires the candidate to confess having the gift of healing and to manifest it as a proof.<sup>83</sup>

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., an Assemblies of God scholar and historian, in a short monograph, demonstrates from Hippolytus’ writings the continuation of *charismata* in the second and into the third centuries.

...insofar as Hippolytus is representative of the Church at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, there seems to have been a continued recognition of the immediate authority of

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included here on the strength of his being regarded as a theologian and apologist. His views on the *charismata* are cited as further evidence of continuationism in the second century. See also H. M. Evans, “Pentecostalism in Early Church History”, *Paraclete* 9.3 (Summer 1975), 21-28 for a concise but fair (and mostly favorable) examination of Montanism.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew T. Floris, “Didymus, Epiphanius and the Charismata”, *Paraclete* 7.4 (Winter 1972), 30.

<sup>81</sup> Tertullian, “On Baptism’ (ch. 20), *ANF* III:679.

<sup>82</sup> A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Notice to Hippolytus”, *ANF* V:3.

<sup>83</sup> Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary* (Hermeneia) (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 81.

the Spirit through persons dynamically empowered by the reception of the fullness of grace, or gifts.<sup>84</sup>

**Origen.** Among the early church fathers, the first to write about “discernment of spirits” (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10) was Origen (c. 185-255). He was born in Alexandria and according to some sources, displayed early in his life demonstrated a behavior which led others to lionize the man as “a scholar and a saint.” The church historian Eusebius apparently had access to Origen’s writings in Caesarea; one of Origen’s students, Gregory Thaumaturgus, composed an address documenting much concerning the man’s life.<sup>85</sup> Origen was, for most of his life, a layman, despite his deep knowledge and command of the Scriptures. He was given the honor of being named a presbyter around 228 A.D., taught powerfully in Rome, but was dismissed as a presbyter by an angry Bishop Demetrius, who apparently was jealous of Origen’s skills.<sup>86</sup>

Origen’s lengthy polemic, “Against Celsus”, sought to answer charges made by a Roman intellectual, Celsus, whose work *The True Word* was an attempted refutation of the whole of Christianity, including the claims that Jesus was sired by a Roman soldier who had relations with Mary, and that Jesus could not be the Son of God because He allowed Himself to be crucified.<sup>87</sup> In Book I, Chapter 2 of Origen’s reply, he spoke of the “signs and wonders” known in the early church, and that “traces of them are still preserved among those who regulate their lives by the precepts of the Gospel.”<sup>88</sup>

For they (i.e., the apostles) could not without the help of miracles and wonders have prevailed on those who

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<sup>84</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Hippolytus on the Gift of Prophecy”, *Paraclete* 17.3 (Summer 1983), 25.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 3.

<sup>86</sup> Coxe, “Introductory Note”, *ANF* IV:227-229.

<sup>87</sup> Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, I:50-51.

<sup>88</sup> Origen, “Against Celsus”, *ANF* IV:398-399.

heard their new doctrines and new teachings to abandon their national usages, and to accept their instructions at the danger to themselves even of death. And there are still preserved among Christians traces of that Holy Spirit which appeared in the form of a dove. They expel evil spirits, and perform many cures, and foresee certain events, according to the will of the Logos.<sup>89</sup>

Origen believed prophecy was certainly in operation in the Church in his day; he divided all prophetic utterances into two kinds: plain and obscure. The former were given to regulate conduct within the congregation while the latter was marked by “enigma, allegory, dark sayings, parables or similitudes.”<sup>90</sup>

**Novatian.** This father of the Church (210-280 A.D.) served as a Roman presbyter, but apparently had committed some lapses of faith during times of persecution and was thus not permitted to be named as a bishop. His orthodoxy is considered beyond reproach.<sup>91</sup> In his “Treatise Regarding the Trinity”, Novatian describes the Holy Spirit as:

...He 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

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<sup>89</sup> Origen, “Against Celsus”, *ANF* IV:415.

<sup>90</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. “Origen, Celsus and Prophetic Utterance”, *Paraclete* 11.1 (Winter 1977), 22-23.

<sup>91</sup> Coxe, “Introductory Note”, *ANF* V:607. Novatian is considered a “rigorist” in his doctrine of repentance. He was against allowing those who had turned from the faith in times of persecution to be reaccepted into the Church. When his views were repudiated through the election of a moderate pope, Cornelius, Novatian chose to engage in a schism, opposing Cornelius. Novatian was eventually excommunicated and dropped out of sight. He has been described as being a “puritan”, with much of what he taught showing a strong influence from Tertullian. See C. B. Daly, “Novatian and Tertullian”, *Irish Theological Quarterly* 19.1 (January 1952), 33-43.

gifts there are of *charismata*; and thus make the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed.<sup>92</sup>

Kydd argues Novatian specifically refers to "charismatic gifts", in harmony with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Further, Novatian believed the *charismata* were of such importance he "appears to attribute the perfection and completion of the Church to them."<sup>93</sup> Novatian, in writing about the Spirit as the one who "appoints" prophets, "instructs" teachers, and "directs" tongues, used present tense verbs, which on the face, indicates his understanding of the presence of the *charisms* in his time; Kydd notes the verbs could be taken as "extended present" which "does not refer exclusively to present time." He argues, however, "it would seem to be unwise to rule out the possibility that Novatian is commenting on the church of his time."<sup>94</sup> This is apparent when Novatian referred to the Holy Spirit in Christ enabling the drawing of "streams of gifts and works."<sup>95</sup>

**Cyprian.** The Early Church took very seriously the Gospel teaching concerning the demonic and the need for exorcisms. Jesus often confronted the demonic world (cf. Luke 4:31-37, 6:18, 7:21). He delegated divine authority to His disciples to similarly confront and disarm demonic forces (cf. Luke 9:1, Mark 16:17)<sup>96</sup>. Cyprian (200-258), regarded as the "Ignatius of

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<sup>92</sup> Novatian, "Treatise Concerning the Trinity", *ANF* V:641.

<sup>93</sup> Ronald A. N. Kydd, "Novatian's *De Trinitate* 29: Evidence of the Charismatic?", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30.4 (August 1977), 315.

<sup>94</sup> Kydd, "Novatian's *De Trinitate* 29", 315.

<sup>95</sup> Novatian, "Treatise Concerning the Trinity", *ANF* IV:641.

<sup>96</sup> I am aware Mark 16:17 appears in the so-called "longer ending" of Mark's Gospel, of which there is much academic discussion. Some outright reject Mark 16:9-20 as unbiblical and never part of the original Markan text; others conditionally accept it and still others thinking it might be genuine, having unrecorded "logia" of Jesus gathered into one collection. Whether or not it is genuine is beyond the inquiry of this paper; the literature on the "longer ending" is copious. Listing this passage here aims to show the writer was apparently aware of the canonical instructions concerning

the West”, and a student of Tertullian,<sup>97</sup> believed in the importance of taking “the demonic world seriously.”<sup>98</sup> In his “Treatise VI: On the Vanity of Idols”, Cyprian roundly denounced demonic spirits as that which are “deceived and they deceive”, causing all manner of physical and mental anguish in those in whom the exercise power. For all the damage demons cause, Cyprian claimed their prime goal is “to call men away from God.” But their authority is not absolute: “These, however, when adjured by us through the true God, at once yield and confess, and are constrained to go out from the bodies they possess.”<sup>99</sup>

Cyprian taught of the “free flowing” of the Spirit in the Church, never constrained but always “flow(ing) perpetually.” This flow of the Spirit brought, among others benefits, a “quench(ing) (of) the virus of poisons for the healing of the sick.”<sup>100</sup> Cyprian’s service as bishop of Carthage (248-258) was “punctuated from beginning to end by manifestations of the Spirit.”<sup>101</sup>

Kydd has argued Cyprian was not the only person in North Africa experiencing the *charismata*; evidence in his material shows he was aware of many others similarly being used of the Spirit in the spiritual gifts.<sup>102</sup> As persecution for the faith spread through his area, Cyprian wrote of the various prophetic words which had been received, words of comfort and encouragement

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demons. If this is the case, then Mark 16:17 may be a restated command concerning casting out demons and perhaps is a genuine “logia” of the Savior. For a careful analysis of the “longer ending” and its relationship to Pentecostal theology, see Marius Nel, “Pentecostal Hermeneutical Reconsideration of the Longer Ending of Mark 16:9-20”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 41.1 (online) (<https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2089>, accessed January 10, 2023).

<sup>97</sup> A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note to Cyprian”, *ANF* V:263).

<sup>98</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Cyprian, Demons and Exorcism”, *Paraclete* 17.1 (Winter 1983), 18.

<sup>99</sup> Cyprian, “Treatise VI”, *ANF* V:467.

<sup>100</sup> Cyprian, “Epistle 1”, *ANF* V:277.

<sup>101</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Visions and Prophecy in the Writings of Cyprian”, *Paraclete* 16.3 (Summer, 1982), 22.

<sup>102</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts and the Early Church*, 74.

in the face of trials and tribulations.<sup>103</sup> His “Epistle IX”, written to clergy as persecution mounted, reminded them of the Holy Spirit granting visions, often in the night, as vehicles of warning and instruction.<sup>104</sup> Robeck’s analysis of Cyprian’s work concludes “prophetic gifts were present in full measure during the life and ministry of Cyprian.”<sup>105</sup>

**Gregory Thaumaturgus.** Ordained as a bishop probably before he was fifty years old (which was the usual bottom threshold for bishops),<sup>106</sup> Gregory (c. 210 - c. 275) was a student of Origen in Caesarea. Known as “The Wonder Worker”, Gregory, as bishop of New Caesarea, had “power to heal”, which, according to his biographer, Gregory of Nyssa, he shared much with those who were afflicted with disease.<sup>107</sup> Basil the Great, one of the Cappadocian fathers<sup>108</sup> reports Gregory was used often in exorcisms as well as a plethora of other spiritual gifts.

Moreover his predictions of things to come were such as in no wise to fall short of those of the great prophets. To recount all of his wonderful works in detail would be too long a task. By the superabundance of gifts, wrought in him by the Spirit in all power and in signs and marvels, he was styled a second Moses by the very enemies of his Church.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts and the Early Church*, 77.

<sup>104</sup> Cyprian, “Epistle IX”, *ANF V*:290.

<sup>105</sup> Robeck, Jr., “Visions and Prophecy”, 25.

<sup>106</sup> A. Cleveland Coxe, “Introductory Note for Gregory Thaumaturgus”, *ANF VI*:3.

<sup>107</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders in the Early Catholic Church”, 158.

<sup>108</sup> The Cappadocian fathers included Basil, his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus. They were early champions of Nicene orthodoxy against the heresies of the fourth century Arians. See T. A. Noble, “Basil of Caesarea” in Martin Davie, et al. eds. *New Dictionary of Theology* (London: and Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 107-108.

<sup>109</sup> Basil, “On The Spirit”, *NPNF* (2), VIII:47.

**Athanasius.** One of the great theologians of the early church and one who endured much suffering for the sake of the Gospel, Athanasius (296-373) was an ardent opponent of Arianism,<sup>110</sup> leading to his being remembered as “the father of orthodoxy.” In a letter to the bishops of Egypt, Athanasius exhorted them to “pray for the reception of the gift of discerning of spirits.”<sup>111</sup> In the same letter, Athanasius wrote: “We know bishops who work miracles and monks who do not.”<sup>112</sup>

**Fourth Century Witnesses.** To this point, the evidence after the close of the “apostolic age” has overwhelmingly shown the continuation of the *charismata*, less on glossolalia and more on prophecy, visions, healing and exorcisms. This would follow the preferences of the apostle Paul, who exhorted for a greater manifestation of prophecy in the Church than speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1-4, 18-19). One treatment of speaking in tongues outside the New Testament evidence concludes an inability to find a parallel with the Corinthian experience and the modern-day practice of “speaking in tongues”. The study further pointed to the relative lack of extra-biblical material to indicate a continuation of *glossolalia* in the post-apostolic Church.<sup>113</sup>

The lack of extra-biblical evidence on *glossolalia* may simply be an indication the Church, as it faced new challenges, such as opposition from Imperial Rome, of necessity chose to expend its energy confronting those situations rather than go over the

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<sup>110</sup> The Arian heresy, named after its founder, a presbyter of Antioch, Arius, held that Christ was not of the same essence as the Father; instead, “Christ” was the first and greatest creation from God. See “Arius” in Schaff, ed., *A Religious Encyclopaedia*, 139.

<sup>111</sup> Athanasius, “Letter XLIX.9”, as cited in Andrew T. Floris, “The Charismata in the Post-Apostolic Church”, *Paraclete* 3.4 (Fall 1969), 9.

<sup>112</sup> Floris, “The Charismata in the Post-Apostolic Church”, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Stuart D. Currie, “Speaking in Tongues: Early Evidence Outside the New Testament Bearing on ‘Glössais Lalein’”, *Interpretation* 19.3 (July 1965), 294. For another view, see Harold Hunter, “Tongues-Speech: A Patristic Analysis”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23.2 (June 1980), 125-137.



same theological ground covered in First Corinthians. But whether *glossolalia* continued to manifest or did not continue in the post-apostolic Church in no way diminishes the evidence of the continuation of the *charismata* in succeeding generations of believers. Research on the issue of spiritual gifts in the writings of the fathers of the Church showed a greater weight of material documenting continuationism recorded in the Ante-Nicene Fathers. For the most part, those fathers wrote more on prophecy, healing, visions, and exorcisms. In the Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers, accounts are provided which tell of raising three young boys from the dead (Jerome), healing from a deadly accident and from disease (Gregory Nazianzen), and a plethora of miraculous events, from a raising from the dead to exorcisms through the ministry of Martin of Tours (Sulpitius Severus). But the issues of defending orthodox teaching on the nature of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, for example, brought those topics to the fore while continuationism faded from apologetic view.

Harold Hunter's analysis of *glossolalia* in the post-apostolic period argues the lack of extra-biblical evidence could well be attributed to:

- The lack of documentation cannot be an *a priori* justification to argue for absence. If speaking in tongues was considered a normative aspect of the Spirit-filled believer's life, there would not be sufficient reason to keep a detailed history.
- Some of the fathers may have used other words to denote speaking in tongues and did not necessarily provide an explanation of their word choice.
- Some cessationists, particularly those with dispensational leanings or those who subscribe to Warfield's thesis "begin with an unwarranted

suspicion that any post-apostolic activity of this kind is of dubious credibility.”<sup>114</sup>

Fourth century witnesses to the active presence of the *charismata* are several; here I will briefly touch on a few.

**Ephraim the Syrian.** Described as a father of the Syrian Church, Ephraim (306-373) was a prolific writer, with a large number of sermons, commentaries and hymns surviving over time.<sup>115</sup> Testimonies of the presence of *charismata*/miracles in Ephraim’s experience have been criticized as “medieval amplifications”. It has been argued the attribution of miraculous events to Ephraim belongs to “the category of the impossible”, either hagiography or simply as myth.<sup>116</sup>

However, some of what is found in Ephraim’s accounts does fit in with the *charismata* from the New Testament and from experiential events in the post-apostolic church. When Ephraim visited Palestine, hearing Basil the Great preach, he saw a vision of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove (or as a tongue of fire, from another version) coming from Basil to hover near Ephraim’s ear, translating the bishop’s words, since Ephraim did not speak Greek, the language in which Basil preached.<sup>117</sup> A subsequent account claims Ephraim asked Basil for prayer, for God to grant the knowledge of Greek to the desert father. Basil prayed and the request was granted.<sup>118</sup>

One miracle is regarded as genuine, if the account itself is true. Ephraim was in Edessa, Turkey, when he saw a paralytic begging for alms by the door of a church. In words reminiscent of Acts 3:1-10, Ephraim asks the man if he wanted to be healed;

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<sup>114</sup> Hunter, “Tongues Speech”, 136.

<sup>115</sup> John Gwynn, “Ephraim the Syrian”, *NPNF* (2), XIII:120.

<sup>116</sup> Gwynn, “Ephraim”, *NPNF* (2), XIII:138.

<sup>117</sup> Gwynn, “Ephraim”, *NPNF* (2), XIII:127-128.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas H. Bestful, “Ephraim the Syrian and Old English Poetry”, *Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 99 (1981), 2.

when the man assented, Ephraim said, “In the name of Christ, rise and walk.” The paralytic was instantly healed.<sup>119</sup>

As with any of the accounts from the writings of the fathers, there is dependence upon what material is available; there is no good way to determine the veracity of any manifestation of the *charismata*. We cannot say for absolute certain that which manifested in Ephraim’s life was either probable or impossible. But it is possible to believe the possibility of the manifestation of the miraculous, given the weight of testimony of the extraordinary ways in which the Holy Spirit worked through the first four centuries of the Church’s existence.

**Didymus the Blind.** He led the catechetical school in Alexandria for over fifty years, even though he lost his eyesight at the age of four. Didymus (313-398). In his work on the Trinity, he wrote of the Holy Spirit as “the fountain of the uninterrupted flow of the *charismata*.”<sup>120</sup>

**Cyril of Jerusalem** (315-387), as bishop of Jerusalem, wrote a series of catechetical letters to as yet unbaptized new converts. He believed that all Christians, whether bishops or hermits, could operate in the gifts of the Spirit, and urged Christians to seek out the gift of prophecy.<sup>121</sup>

If thou believe, thou shalt not only receive remission of sins, but also do things which surpass man’s power. And mayest thou be worthy of the gift of prophecy also!<sup>122</sup>

**Basil of Caesarea** (330-379) and **Gregory Nazianzus** (329-389), both bishops of some standing in Asia Minor, believed the charismatic gifts would manifest in new believers after water

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<sup>119</sup> Gwynn, “Ephraim”, *NPNF* (2), XIII:131.

<sup>120</sup> Floris, “Didymus, Epiphanius and the Charismata”, 27.

<sup>121</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders in the Early Catholic Church”, 158.

<sup>122</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, “Lecture XVII”, *NPNF* (2), VII:133.

baptism and having had hands laid on them to receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>123</sup>

Gregory relates the story of his sister, Gorgonia, who was in the throes of a terrible disease when she went to prayer to seek deliverance from her condition. Immediately after she prayed for healing, the illness disappeared.

Great though these things be, they are not untrue. Believe them all of you, whether sick or sound, that ye may either keep or regain your health. And that my story is no mere boastfulness is plain from the silence which she kept, while alive, what I have revealed.<sup>124</sup>

Basil, in his treatise “On the Spirit”, wrote the Spirit still works, “as need requires, in prophecies, or in healings, or in some other actual carrying into effect of His potential action.”<sup>125</sup>

**The Decline of the Use of Spiritual Gifts in the Church.** As the Church grew and its influence spread across the Roman world, certain sociological and institutional factors worked against the continuation of the manifestation of spiritual gifts in the Church, particular that of prophecy. The rise of the monarchical bishops, in agreement with Tertullian, worked to “expel” prophecy from the Church.<sup>126</sup> The process towards this development may well have had its roots as early as the second century; in “The Martyrdom of Polycarp”, prophecy apparently had become the privilege of highly esteemed bishops, of whom

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<sup>123</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders in the Early Catholic Church”, 158.

<sup>124</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, “On His Sister Gorgonia”, *NPNF* (2), VII:243.

<sup>125</sup> Basil, “On The Spirit”, *NPNF* (2), VIII:38. In an earlier portion of this work, Basil indicated that one of the “boons” coming from the Holy Spirit is prophecy (*NPNF* [2], VIII:24).

<sup>126</sup> Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy”, 228.

Polycarp was one, and who was referred to in that work as “a prophetic man.”<sup>127</sup>

Nigel Scotland believes the decline of prophecy came with the “Edict of Toleration” from the Emperor Constantine and the Church becoming the “official” faith of the Roman Empire. Once believers moved away from the close, small, intimate gatherings of the house churches and into the more formal, structured worship of the cathedral, with the development of a structured liturgy, the practice of prophecy within the Body of Christ tended to fade away.<sup>128</sup> He agrees with Ash by noting the rise of the power of the bishops, especially through Constantine’s shrewdness (who thought the Church rather than the Roman Legions would better hold the Empire together), tended to move prophecy out of the local body (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:5) and into the prerogative of the bishopric.<sup>129</sup>

Kydd concludes the evidence from the Western church is far more definitive than the material from the Eastern church; apparently by the middle of the third century, the place of the *charismata* in the local church had begun to decline.<sup>130</sup> But I would agree with Scotland’s overall assessment of the presence of the *charismata* in the post-apostolic Church.

...the practice of spiritual gifts clearly did not end with the passing of the Apostles or even within a generation as some Fundamentalists and Protestant evangelicals have asserted. Clearly, cessationists do not have the evidence of history on their side.<sup>131</sup>

Another analysis of the *charismata* and continuance concludes the “sensational sign gifts”, which necessitated the interaction

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<sup>127</sup> Ash, “Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy”, 235.

<sup>128</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders”, 166.

<sup>129</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders”, 166.

<sup>130</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, 89.

<sup>131</sup> Scotland, “Signs and Wonders”, 166.

of an apostle, have ceased, but that is not an *a priori* reason to assume all the *charismata* have ended. Stuart Fowler, an Australian Baptist minister, argues “the *charismata* are the essential equipment of the Church in every age to the end of the world.”<sup>132</sup>

Kydd’s conclusion the *charismata* “vanished” in the Church around 260<sup>133</sup> simply does not fit the historical evidence. While this examination of the place of spiritual gifts in the Church covered only into the fourth century, extant material on later Church history shows the *charismata* did not “vanish”; they may have fallen into disuse in the majority of the Church, but they did not fade away to the point of cessationism. Omer Jaye Sharp points out the gradual “*disuse* of divine power (in) the

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<sup>132</sup> Stuart Fowler, “The Continuance of the Charismata”, *Evangelical Quarterly* 45.3 (July-September 1973), 183. Fowler’s contention, that certain “sensational” *charismata* were associated with revelation, and that since there is no more divine revelation to the Church, these gifts, such as prophecy, tongues and interpretation, are no longer in use, and that since those “sensational” gifts came only through apostolic intervention, no one is able to receive them now, overstates the Biblical evidence. No apostle “intervened” in the coming of the Spirit and the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). Paul never says to the Corinthians they can speak in tongues only after he or one of the other apostles lays hands on them. Fowler concludes on the basis of Romans 1:11 that the “sensational” *charismata* could not be received any other way than through direct apostolic action of laying on of hands (179); he cites Acts 19:6 as further support for his position. Ruthven, *On The Cessation of the Charismata*, 199-204 argues *contra* Fowler’s assertion, demonstrating (a) Paul was not the very last apostle; (b) that early church tradition recognized apostles other than the original twelve (cf. Irenaeus, “Against Heresies” ANF I:389; Eusebius, “Church History” 1.12.4 (28), who wrote, “many others were called apostles in imitation of the Twelve, as was Paul himself”); (c) that Reformation theology, seeking to reduce the authority of the Roman Pope, developed a denial of apostolic succession. As Ruthven argued, “Since the notion of apostle is so historically conditioned with ultimate religious authority, that anyone now claiming apostleship would justifiably be regarded with suspicion. Nevertheless it is possible that no real biblical impediment exists to someone *functioning* or even being *gifted* as an apostle. But to label one as such would be to provoke rejection” (204). If Fowler wants to hold up Acts 19:6 as “proof” of the need for apostolic involvement in the reception of such as tongues and prophecy, then we would counter with Acts 10 and with 1 Corinthians 12, 14, where no such prerequisite is made a necessity.

<sup>133</sup> Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, 92.

organized church soon opened the door for *abuse* by sects outside the organized church”.<sup>134</sup> God causing the gifts of the Spirit to outright cease, whether of the “sensational” kind or the more “mundane” variety, cannot be supported in the witness of church history, and any attempts at exegesis of the Pauline literature concerning *charismata* which concludes the gifts of the Spirit (most often, the verbal gifts – prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and sometimes, divine healing) are no longer available to the Body of Christ<sup>135</sup> but ignore the patristic evidence will ultimately fail.

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<sup>134</sup> Omer Jaye Sharp, “Did Charismata Cease With The Apostles’ Death?” *Paraclete* 10.2 (Spring 1976), 19. (Italics original).

<sup>135</sup> As did Moritz’ and Bansah’s papers, cited above; those two monographs are but a very, very small sampling of the literature seeking to “disprove” continuationism through a usually biased exegesis (which at times might have smatterings of eisegesis) that more often than not, does not consider the plethora of evidence coming from the fathers of the Church.

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