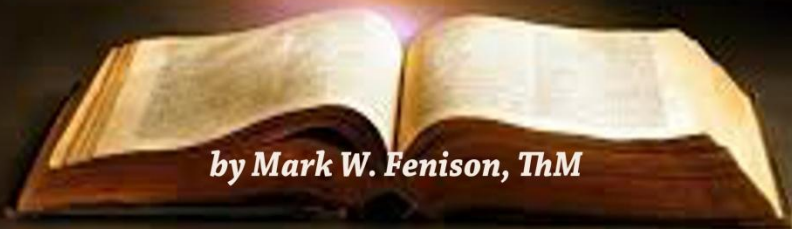


The Completed
BIBLICAL CANON

Isaiah 8:16-20



by Mark W. Fenison, ThM

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Part I

Completed Revelation

*To the law and to the testimony: if they
speak not according to this word, it is
because there is no light in them. – Isa.*

8:20

The Signs of the Prophetic Gifts

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, - Deut. 13:1

We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. - Psa. 74:9

Asaph concluded that the absence of signs meant the absence of prophets (Psa. 74:9). Hence from a Biblical perspective, miracles, signs and wonders are contemporary with the prophet, as they are the divine confirmation/approval of the prophetic office and message.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: - Acts 2:22

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? - Heb. 2:3-4

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. - Mark 16:20

All Scriptures are the product of the prophetic office and revelatory gifts. Indeed, the scriptures are called the “word of prophecy” which has been confirmed by miracles, signs and wonders or by Biblical tests of a prophet, to be the inspired Word from God.

*We have also a more sure **word of prophecy**; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no **prophecy of the scripture** is of any private interpretation. For the **prophecy** came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. 1:20-22*

Therefore, as long as the prophetic office with its revelatory gifts continue to exist, so does the divine means to confirm the oral or written prophetic message that it is from God. To claim to be a prophet and yet be without inspired revelation and/or without divine authentication (by miracles, signs and wonders; or Biblical tests) is foreign to the scriptures.

When the prophet speaks or writes in behalf of God, what he says and writes is inspired. Peter said of Paul's letters:

*As also in **all his epistles**, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the **other scriptures**, unto their own destruction. – 2 Pet. 3:16*

If any other person writes down what is being orally prophesied, it is inspired scripture, as most of those with prophetic gifts in the New Testament did not personally write down their own inspired utterances, but had others write them down. Jesus had the apostles write down his inspired utterances.

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and **bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**.- Jn. 14:26*

Much of the time the Apostles employed common Christians to write down their inspired utterances.

I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. –

Rom. 16:22

Hence, as long as the prophetic office continues, the Biblical canon is not and cannot be completed, because God is still speaking to His people from heaven and providing inspired revelation.

Cessation or Non-Cessation?

The terms “cessationism” and “non-cessationism” have to do with opposing views concerning finished versus ongoing authenticated divine revelation. Those who believe that divine revelation and its means of confirmation (miracles, signs and wonders) have ceased with the completion of the New Testament Scriptures are called “cessationists.” Those who believe that divine revelation is on going along with its means of confirmation are called “non-cessationists.”

Those primary religious groups that believe in on-going revelation with its means of confirmation are as follows:

1. The Roman Catholic Church
2. The 19th century Prophetic Restoration Movement
 - a. The Mormons
 - b. The Seventh Day Adventists
 - c. The Jehovah’s Witnesses
 - d. The Pentecostal movement.

Of course there are many individuals in many denominations who have adopted this position due to the influence of these primary advocates for non-cessationism.

All of the above groups claim to have prophets or apostles with prophetic revelatory gifts with authenticating signs, wonders and miracles. The Roman Catholic Church has their Pope, who at times sits “ex cathedra” and speaks infallibly providing new revelation to the Roman Catholic Church. The Seventh Day Adventists originate with the prophetess Ellen G. White and her writings. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have stated many times that the Watch Tower ruling body is the prophetic voice that speaks in behalf of God. The Pentecostal movement and its subsequent divisions profess to have more prophets and apostles than any other non-cessationist movement combined.

Some Obstacles for Non-Cessationists

For those who claim on-going revelation, there are some obstacles they must overcome.

1. The Bedfellows of this Position:



There are two common threads that bind all non-cessationist groups together.

- (1) All these groups profess to have “prophets” among them.
- (2) All these groups¹ repudiate the “truth of the gospel” or justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone without works. All believe that true born again children of God can lose their salvation. Hence, all preach “another gospel” – Gal. 1:7-9²

Some may object and claim there are some who do not repudiate the truth of the gospel (Southern Baptist Charismatics). However, those who do profess the truth of the gospel among non-cessationists are very few in comparison to the whole group of non-cessationists, and they fellowship with those who do repudiate the truth of the gospel. This can be seen in the picture above where the leaders of the Southern Baptists Charismatics stand shoulder to shoulder with those who oppose the gospel when the scripture command Christians to regard them as “accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9) and to avoid and separate from such (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6).

You are known by the company you keep. If you are an evangelical believer, it should concern you what companions you are partnering with to embrace non-cessationism.

2. The Biblical Tests of a true Prophet

The position of non-cessationism must overcome another Herculean obstacle, and that is the Biblical tests to distinguish true from false prophets, and therefore distinguish between true

¹ There are always true believers among false “groups” – Rev. 18:4

² Of course they would deny they preach “another gospel” but would regard those who preach the eternal security of the believer in Christ as a false gospel.

revelation from false revelation. Both the Old and New Testament command believers not to accept any prophet or their prophecy until they validate such prophets by subjecting them to Biblical tests of a prophet.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. – 1 Jn. 4:1

Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. – 1 Thes. 5:20-21

Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.- 1 Cor. 14:29

These scriptures do not make this optional, but they are commands to be obeyed. Without such tests there is no objective way to discern the true from the false.

Significantly, the first two Biblical tests of a prophet found in Scripture do not allow for mistakes or second chances, but demand immediate death for those who fail any of these tests:

And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death... - Deut. 13:5

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. – Deut. 18:20

Some object by saying, there are no perfect people, everyone makes mistakes. However, not every person claims to be a prophet or an apostle of God. The consequence shows how serious it is to make such a claim. It is true that under the New Covenant administration that Christians have no civil authority to administer death to false prophets. However, that does not mean the tests are

invalid. Instead of death being administered under the New Covenant, the command is to condemn and avoid such (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 3:6; etc.).

There are several other Biblical tests every true prophet must pass and continue to pass without fail to be authenticated as God's mouth piece. Some of these tests of the prophet are found in Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22; 1 Jn. 4:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:29; etc. (See Chapter "The Tests of the Prophet").

God not only calls and sends His prophets but controls their mouth so that they cannot fail these tests:

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.
– Deut. 18:18

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. – Jer. 1:9

Even when God chooses to use a lost person to make prophecies;

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; - Jn. 11:49-51

And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. – Numb. 22:38

Even though Balaam wanted to curse Israel, God would not allow him to do so:

Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. – Deut. 23:5³

However, if revelation is ongoing, as non-cessationist claim, then such tests must be applicable today as well. However, present day prophets deny that such tests are applicable today! Why? Because not one single professed prophet living after the first century has been able to pass these tests. Every single professed prophet within all the current non-cessationist groups has failed these tests. However, these Biblical tests are the only line of defense by God's people to be able to objectively discern true from false prophets! If you are an evangelical Christian this should alarm you.

3. Unfinished Scriptures

Another obstacle they must deal with is the fact that the position of ongoing revelation means that whatever revelation is spoken or written down must be regarded, as equally inspired, as the scriptures. Hence, that position cannot claim the scriptures have been completed. Indeed, that is the consistent position of the Latter Day Saints – the Mormons and their new inspired written revelation to the America's through their prophet Joseph Smith. This is consistent with the non-cessationist position.

The very function of the prophetic office is to provide inspired revelation whether spoken or written.

³ God empowers lost people to make prophecies (Caiaphas, Balaam, Mt. 7:22) to place in office with miracle power (Judas – Jn. 6:64, 70) in order to test His people (Deut. 13:4-5; 1 Cor. 11:19).

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions⁴ which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. – 2 Thes. 2:15

Therefore, anything spoken or written prophetically is equally inspired as “other scriptures.” Peter speaking of the writings of Paul compares them to “other scriptures.”

*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the **other scriptures**, unto their own destruction. – 2 Pet. 3:17*

The prophet is the mouthpiece of whatever spirit is directing and revealing things unto him/her. As long as the prophetic office and the gift of prophecy exist, no one can claim the scriptural canon is closed.

4. First Century Qualifications

The New Testament characterizes the office of prophet with the office of Apostle as foundational ministries along with Christ’s personal ministry on earth (Eph. 2:20). Therefore, they are not characterized as ongoing ministries any more than Christ’s ministry on earth was ongoing:

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; - Eph. 2:20

Christ’s personal ministry upon earth ceased after thirty-three and half years, as did the ministry of the apostles and prophets.

⁴ “Traditions” – Gr. *paradosis* “to hand down” – the Apostolic doctrine and teaching received from Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Their personal ministries were foundational and completed, rather than ongoing ministries.

Furthermore, the qualifications to fill the office of Apostle prove it is foundational and restricted to the first century.

1. It is an office filled by only those who were eyewitnesses of his bodily resurrection – Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:8
2. The twelve were witnesses unto Israel while Paul is a witness unto the Gentiles – Gal. 1:12; 2:9; Acts 26:15; Rom. 15:15-16.
3. Paul said he was the “last” (Gr. *eschatos*) of all the Apostles and the last to see the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:8). The Greek term “*eschatos*” is used three times in 1 Corinthians 15. (a) the last apostle; (b) the last enemy – death; (c) the last trump. The term means “the last” with none to follow.

Isaiah predicts the completion of the Biblical canon, consisting of “the law” (Old Testament scriptures) and “the testimony” (New Testament scriptures) “among my disciples” (Isa. 8:16). Indeed, the office of Apostle was instituted to provide eyewitness “testimony of Jesus” (Acts 1:8, 22; Rev. 1:3, 9, 11). This eyewitness “testimony of Jesus” was first provided orally and then preserved by written scriptures (2 Pet. 3:16).

5. The Sufficiency of the Scriptures

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. – 2

Tim. 3:16-17

Paul wrote this near the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6-11). Nearly all the New Testament scriptures had been finished and he was anticipating their near completion. As will be shown, the apostles fully realized their mission in providing the final scriptures for the Biblical canon.

The non-cessationist view inherently denies that the scriptures are finished or sufficient for “all good works.” Indeed, the only reason for ongoing revelation is that present scriptural revelation is insufficient “unto all good works. “

The Biblical Purpose for Miracle Workers

Why does God empower persons with miracles, signs and wonders? The primary and repeated reason provided in scriptures is to confirm that the miracle worker speaks in behalf of God. For example, take the very first miracle worker found in the Bible – Moses:

1. Moses:

Ex. 4:1 ¶ And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

3 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

Here is the very first account in the Scriptures of God empowering someone with miracles, signs⁵ and wonders, and it is for the express purpose of confirming what he said originated with

⁵ “sign” – Ex. 4:8 *And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the **first sign**, that they will believe the voice of the latter **sign**. 9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these **two signs**, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land*

God.

2. The Man of God out of Judah

The next miracle worker in Scripture is an unnamed man of God out of Judah.

And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. 5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 1 Kgs. 13:4

3. Elijah & Elisha

Elijah and Elisha are the next miracle, sign and wonder worker found in the Scriptures after the prophet out of Judah. Elijah testifies that God's purpose for empowering him with miracles, signs and wonders was to confirm He spoke for God, thus confirming God was the source of His words as a prophet:

*And Elijah answered and said unto them, **If I be a man of God**, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. – 2 Kgs. 1:12*

*And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and **that I have done all these things at***

thy word.- 1 Kings 18:36

4. Jesus Christ

The next miracle, sign and wonder worker recorded in Scripture occurs in the New Testament with Jesus Christ. Peter says of these miracles of Christ:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:- Acts 2:22

5. The Apostles

The book of Hebrews was one of the later books of the New Testament written around the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Most of the New Testament had already been completed. The writer speaks of the miracles, signs and wonders in the past tense as already completing the confirmation of the apostle's words:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? – Heb. 2:3-4

This is the primary purpose given for every major miracle, sign and wonder worker found in the Scriptures. Miracles, signs and wonders have the primary purpose of confirming a true prophet and that what He says originates with God and is truth.

6. The Last Days Miracle Movement

However, there is a fifth class of miracles, signs and wonder workers predicted in the last days just before the coming of Christ:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. – Mt. 24:24

*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and **lying** wonders – 2 Thes. 2:9*

God's primary purpose of miracle, signs and wonders was to confirm that the word spoken by His prophets is His Word of truth! Satan adopts this confirmation means through miracles, signs and wonders in the last days to deceive the people of God into believing the words of his prophets come from God when they are really coming from Satan and the proof is false doctrine. That is why they are called "lying" wonders because they attempt to confirm lies as truth.

Significantly, Paul provides the one clue that such last day miracle movement as a whole is false. They repudiate "the truth" of the gospel (vv. 10-14). This truth is spelled out in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15. Jesus provides the critical distinction between the gospel preached by the "broad way" false prophets (Mt. 7:13-23) and the true Gospel. The "broad way" gospel is the hope for entrance into heaven due to a combination of faith in Christ ("Lord, Lord") plus their own good works ("have we not done many wonderful works"). Most deny they believe in works for salvation, but the absolute proof they actually do believe that works ultimately justify them is their denial of eternal security of true believers (Jn. 6:37-40).

According to the position of cessationist, miracle, signs and

wonder workers ceased with the completion of the Biblical canon of Scriptures. Thus, the only future miracle, sign and wonder movement will be the last day apostate miracle movement. That movement as a whole, will repudiate justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone without works. It will contain some true Christians (Rev. 18:4).

GOD DOES NOT SPEAK BY PROPHETS TODAY

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake **IN TIME PAST** unto the fathers **BY THE PROPHETS**, 2 Hath in **THESE LAST DAYS** spoken unto us **BY HIS SON**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Heb. 1:1*

Notice that speaking "*by the prophets*" is a thing of "*in time past unto the Fathers*" instead of to us! He does not speak to us "*in these last days*" by prophets but only "*by His Son.*"

The writer does not say Jesus "IS" speaking but "*hath.... spoken*" which represents the Aorist punctiliar completed action. In other words, it is a past tense completed reality rather than an ongoing speaking. He is not presently speaking to us, but already has spoken!

But when, where and how has Christ spoken? Did he write any book of the New Testament? No! When, where and how did he speak to us then?

A. When and Where

When he lived on earth and walked among us. John the Baptist was the final prophet to live before the ultimate Prophet appeared on earth. Moses predicted the coming of the ultimate prophet (Deut. 18:18) or "the prophet" Jesus Christ.

B. How?

Jesus chose 12 men and later a 13th man (Paul) as his official authorized representatives to reveal WHAT HE SAID unto the world:

*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, **WHATSOEVER I HAVE SAID UNTO YOU.** – Jn. 14:26*

***For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.** Joh 17:8*

***I have given them thy word;** and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Joh 17:14*

*¶ **Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me **THROUGH THEIR WORD.**** Jn. 17:20*

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be **SPOKEN BY THE LORD,** and was **CONFIRMED UNTO US BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM.** Heb. 2:3*

The New Testament Scriptures are "*the Testimony of Jesus Christ*" and which are in addition to the scriptures of the Prophets (Old Testament Word of God).

*Who bare record of **the word of God,** and of **THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST,** and of all things that he saw. Re 1:2*

The completion of the Biblical canon of scripture is "*the testimony*" of Jesus Christ (Isa. 8:16-18).

This is why the apostolic writings are the final authority for discerning the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error:

*That which was from the beginning, which **WE HAVE HEARD,** which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of **THE WORD** of life. (For the life was manifested, and we have*

*seen it, and BEAR WITNESS, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested **UNTO US**;) 3 That which we have seen and **HEARD WE DECLARE UNTO YOU**" 1 Jn. 1:1-2*

*1 Jn. 4:6 **We are of God: he that knoweth God HEARETH US, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.***

Jesus through his apostles furnished "*the testimony of Jesus*" in what is called the New Testament (Isa. 8:16-18) which is the last prophetic voice until we come to the final seventieth week of Daniel (Rev. 11:1-15).

All self-proclaimed prophets between the close of the New Testament prophetic Word of Christ and Daniel's 70th week are ALL FALSE PROPHETS – Mt. 24:24-25; 2 Thes. 2:9-12.

Evidence of Completed Biblical Revelation

The Bible clearly predicts the completion of the Biblical canon among the disciples of Christ in the first century. This final complete revelation is the ultimate purpose of the prophetic office with its revelatory gifts and signs of confirmation.

1. The Messianic Prediction

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 ¶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

This passage is found in the middle of a Messianic prophecy that is encapsulated between Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6.

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. - Isa. 7:14

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given: and the government shall be on his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. - Isa. 9:6

Not only is Isaiah 8:13-20 found in the middle of a Messianic Prophecy but it is a Messianic prophecy. Isaiah 8:14-15 is directly quoted and/or alluded to by New Testament writers and applied directly to Christ. Isaiah 8:14-15 says:

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

The New Testament writers directly apply this to Christ:

And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. – Mt. 21:44 (see Isa. 8:14-15)

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. – 1 Pet. 2:8 (see Isa. 8:14-15)

As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not

be ashamed. – Rom. 9:33 (see Isa. 8:14-15)

Isaiah 8:16, 18 are directly quoted and alluded to by the writer of Hebrews and applied directly to Christ and the apostles. Isaiah 8:16, 18 says:

16 ¶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.....18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion

The writer of Hebrews directly applies Isaiah 8:17-18 to Christ and His apostles:

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? – Heb. 2:3-4

And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. – Heb. 2:13

There can be no possible doubt that Isaiah 8:16-20 is a Messianic prophecy.

2. “My Disciples”

¶ Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.- Isa. 8:16

The words “*my disciples*” are clearly messianic, as the term “disciple” or “disciples” cannot be found in the Old Testament except here. The term “disciple” is particularly and especially a

New Testament term. Hence, nothing could be plainer, that this is a Messianic prediction.

The fact that Isaiah 8:18 further identifies “*my disciples*” as those “*the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel*” further confirms this is a Messianic prophecy directly applied to Jesus Christ and the apostles because the writer of Hebrews directly applies the same passage in Isaiah to them (Heb. 2:3-4, 13).

And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. – Heb. 2:13

Furthermore, the fact that all the New Testament books were either directly written by the apostles or under their direction attests to the fulfillment of this prophecy. Luke wrote under the supervision of Paul (Luke, Acts). Paul wrote 14 (including Hebrews) of the 27 books. John the apostle wrote five of the 27 books of the New Testament. Mark wrote under the supervision of Peter. Peter wrote two books. That leaves three books left (Matthew, Jude, and James). Matthew was an apostle and Jude and James were blood brothers of Christ who most likely were chosen to the apostolic office after the death of other apostles, as occurred with the death of Judas in Acts 1:15-25. James died in Acts 12. All of these were known by Christ during his earthly ministry and thus qualified to fill vacated apostolic positions (Acts 1:21-22).

3. The Next Anticipated Revelation

Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. - Isa. 8:16-17

Notice that after “*the testimony*” and “*the law*” are bound up and sealed the only other anticipated revelation from heaven is the coming of Christ.

Significantly, the last living apostle claimed his writing confirmed both “*the word of God*” and “*the testimony of Jesus*” (Rev. 1:2) and then after sealing it, the next anticipated revelation is Christ coming from heaven:

Who bare record of the word of God, [the law or Old Testament] and of the testimony [New Testament] of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. – Rev. 1:2

For I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifies these things said, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. – Rev. 22:18-20

Isaiah understood “*the testimony*” and “*the law*” together to be the completed Word of God and final source of authority, as he then combines the two as “this word” –

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. – Isa. 8:20

Thus, Isaiah did not consider the Word of God as complete until both “*the law*” and “*the testimony*” were sealed and bound together as “*this word*.”

4. The Testimony of Jesus

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God:

for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Re
19:10

In a very real sense all of Scripture, both the Law (Old Testament) and New Testament is the “*testimony of Jesus*” through the prophetic ministry. Paul says concerning the Law and the prophets:

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being **witnessed by the law and the prophets**; Even the righteousness of God which is **by faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: - Rom. 3:21-22*

The righteousness of God has been manifested in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. However, prior to that manifestation the Person and work of Jesus Christ was “*witnessed*” (Gr. mature – “witness” “testimony”) by the Old Testament Scriptures (Law and the prophets). However, the apostolic office was instituted by God the Father as a special office to bear witness of the manifest righteousness of God in the Person and ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained **to be a witness⁶ with us of his resurrection.** – Acts 1:21-22*

*And ye **also shall bear witness**, because ye have been with me from the beginning. – Jn. 15:27*

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye **shall be witnesses unto me both***

⁶ The same Greek term translated “witness” in all of the passages is the same Greek word translated “testimony” by John consistently in Revelation.

in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. – Acts 1:8

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; - Acts 26:16

The purpose of the apostolic office was to provide an oral and written “*testimony of Jesus*” as they were the authorized witnesses of the life, ministry, doctrine and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Hence, the “*spirit of prophecy*” or the spirit providing prophecy is to give testimony unto Jesus. The whole New Testament scriptures are given by the spirit of prophecy, and they are “*the testimony of Jesus Christ.*”

5. Confirmed by Christ

Did Jesus understand that the Isaiah 8 prophecy referred to himself and his apostles? Yes! Christ alluded to this text in regard to his own mission (Mt. 21:44).

Did Jesus understand that his apostles were to complete the Biblical revelation? Yes! In the upper room discourse he explicitly told them:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. - Jn. 16:13

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which

proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me - Jn. 15:26

....and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. - Jn. 14:36

He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. - Jn. 16:13,14

Hence, the words “*all truth*” and “*all things*” are comprehensive, as it included, not merely what Jesus said in the past, but “*things to come.*” More significantly, the Holy Spirit would “*testify of me*” through their words (apostles) to future generations in keeping with the description of the New Testament scriptures in Isaiah 8:16 as “*the testimony.*”

In addition to the above, in Christ’s high priestly prayer where he asked the Father to sanctify all those in the future that should come to him, he claimed they would come through the words of the Apostles:

17 ¶ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 ¶ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; - Jn. 17

The means of sanctification is the truth and “*thy word is truth.*” It is “*through their word*” or the word of the apostles that future generations would sanctify them. Hence, such a prophetic statement demands the preservation of apostolic testimony – the inspired written New Testament scriptures. Here is a direct prediction that the Apostles words would be preserved as “*thy word*” or the truth used for the sanctification of future believers.

6. Acknowledged by Apostles

Did the Apostles realize they were furnishing and completing the Scriptures? Did they understand that the Holy Spirit was using them to write inspired scriptures with the ultimate aim of binding it up and sealing it among themselves?

Peter certainly viewed the writings of Paul as inspired scriptures, as he explicitly compared Paul's writings to "*other scriptures*."

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **other scriptures** unto their own destruction - 2 Pet. 3:15-16*

Paul certainly understood he was writing inspired scriptures as he told the church at Thessalonica:

*For this cause also thank we God with ceasing, because, when ye **received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.** - 1 Thes. 2:13*

In the conference at the Jerusalem church in which all the apostles participated, James said,

*For it seemed good **to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things** - Acts 15:28*

The Apostle John when speaking of all of the apostles who

personally saw Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:1-3) said:

We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. - 1 Jn. 4;6

John, as the last living apostle, fully realized their predicted responsibility of finalizing a written testimony of Jesus Christ and sealing it:

Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. - Rev. 1:2

He then finished the last book of the scriptures with a seal (Rev. 22:18-19).

Twenty two of the twenty seven books of the New Testament were written by apostles. Three of the five not written by apostles were written by those directly under the direction of apostles (Mark, Luke, and Acts). The remaining two were written by the Lord's brothers (James, Jude), who most likely filled the vacated positions of apostle by the death of other apostles (James in Acts 12; etc.). All were written by "*my disciples*" (Isa. 8:16) or those alive during the Lord's own earthly ministry.

7. The Period of Fulfillment

The Isaiah prophecy divides the scriptures into two parts "*the law and the testimony.*"

The Old Testament Scriptures are often referred to as merely "the law" because all prophetic scriptures after Moses merely expounded the books given to Moses by God.

The "*law*" part of scripture was finished by Malachi, and the

Jews believe it was canonized by Ezra the prophet scribe who lived at the time of Malachi.

The “testimony” aspect of New Testament was completed between 44 A.D. and 96 A.D. With the exception of the writings of the last living apostle (John) all the rest of the New Testament was completed prior to A.D. 70. It was around that very time (67 A.D.) that Paul wrote 2 Timothy 3:16 which anticipated the completion of the Biblical canon:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect**, throughly furnished unto all good works.* 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Between Pentecost and 40 A.D. the churches had no written revelation for church doctrine and policy. Most of the New Testament was written between 40 A.D. and 67 A.D. Only the writings of the last living apostle (John) occurred after 67 A.D.

During this period completion, God spoke to the churches through revelatory gifts confirmed by signs and wonders. As the Lord provided more scriptures confirmed by signs and wonders, the revelatory gifts with their confirmation signs and wonders decreased until by the time the book of Hebrews was written in about 66 A.D. the writer could speak of the confirming signs and wonders as something largely in the past:

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which **at the first** began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; **God also bearing them witness**, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? - Heb. 2:3-4*

Significantly, the writer of Hebrews directly associates this

confirming work by the apostles with Isaiah 8:16-20 as he quotes Isaiah 8:18 in regard to these confirming signs and wonders:

*And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, **Behold I and the children which God has given me.** - Heb. 2:13*

***Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.** - Isa. 8:18*

By the time the gospel of Mark had been completed, Mark regarded the promise of confirming miracles, signs and wonders as having been largely already completed, as he speaks of it in the past tense:

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. - Mark 16:20

Notice that the purpose of miracles, signs and wonders is “*confirming the word.*” As before shown, the primary Biblical purpose of miracles, signs and wonders is to authenticate that the word spoken or written by prophets and apostles is the inspired of God. Moreover, it is the purpose of the prophetic office to provide that inspired revelation.

The Bible Reads as a Finished Revelation

Not only does the Bible predict its own completion “among my disciples” prior to Christ’s return, but it reads as you would expect a finished book to read.

Halley’s Handbook of the Bible presents the case that the Bible reads as a finished book as follows:

“The Bible is all one story. The last part of the last book of the Bible reads like the close of the story begun in the first part of the first book of the Bible.

The First word in Genesis: “*in the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” - Gen. 1:1

Almost the last word in Revelation: “*I saw a new heaven and a new earth*” - Rev. 21:1

‘*The gather together of waters He called the sea*’ - Gen. 1:10

‘*And the sea is no more*’ - Rev. 21:1

‘*The darkness He called night*’ - Gen. 1:5

‘*There shall be no night there*’ - Rev. 21:25

‘God *made the two great lights* [sun and the moon]’ - Gen. 1:16

‘*The city had no need of the sun or the moon*’ - Rev. 21:23

‘*In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die*’ - Gen. 2:17

‘*Death shall be no more*’ - Rev. 21:4

‘*I will greatly multiply your pain*’ - Gen. 3:16

“There shall be pain no more” - Rev. 21:4

‘Cursed is the ground for your sake’ - Gen. 3:17

‘There shall be no more curse’ - Rev. 22:3

Satan appears as deceiver of mankind - Gen. 3:1, 4

Satan disappears forever - Rev. 20:10

They were driven from the tree of life - Gen. 3:22-24

The tree of life reappears - Rev. 22:2

They were driven from God’s presence - Gen. 3:24

‘They shall see his face’ - Rev. 22:4

Man’s primeval home was by a river - Gen. 2:10

Man’s eternal home is by a river - Rev. 22:2”

(Quoted from Halley’s Handbook, p. 740)

Genesis tells us how everything began and Revelation tells us how everything will end. In Genesis we see the beginning of sin and in Revelation we see the full and final development of sin in the Great Harlot, the false prophet, the beast and the dragon.

In Genesis physical death is introduced but in Revelation it is completed in the Second death (Rev. 20:14-15).

In Genesis we have the promise of a coming Savior (Gen. 3:15) but in Revelation His final coming is realized in glorious fulfillment.

The Bible reads as a finished book because it is a finished book. If prophetic scriptures are finished, then so is the divine purpose for the prophetic office and its revelatory gifts. If the prophetic office and its revelatory gifts continue then scriptures cannot be completed as the scriptures are nothing more or less than prophetic revelation in written form, and any prophetic utterances written down are scripture.

The Testimony of Tertullian

Obviously all the writings of the apostles were completed prior to their death. As late as 250 A.D. the originals of the apostolic writings were still found with the congregations they had been addressed unto.

“Come now, you who would indulge a better curiosity, if you would apply it to the business of your salvation, run over the apostolic churches, in which the very thrones of the apostles are still pre-eminent in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them severally.” – Tertullian, **On Prescription Against Heretics**, Chapter xxxvi. p. 260

Tertullian argues that the churches had received their rule of faith from the apostles, and the apostles received it from Christ, and that this rule of faith is the “entire volume” of scriptures. He speaks of the scriptures as a completed or “entire volume”

*“One man perverts the Scriptures with his hand, another their meaning by his exposition. For although Valentinus seems to use **the entire volume**, he has none the less laid violent hands on the truth only with amore cunning mind and skill than Marcion.”* – Tertullian, *Ibid.*, chapter xxxviii, p. 260

Marcion did not use “the entire volume” but cut out what did not harmonize with his Gnostic beliefs. Hence, Marcion produced an edited version of the New Testament.

However, Tertullian claimed that right from “*the beginning*” of the second century the churches possessed “*the entire volume*” that they never added unto or subtracted from:

*“Now, what is there in our Scriptures which is contrary to us? What of our own have we introduced, that we should have to take away again, or else add to it, or alter it, in order to restore to its natural soundness anything which is contrary to it, and contained in the Scriptures? What we are ourselves, **that also the Scriptures are, (and have been) from the beginning.**”* – Tertullian, *Ibid.*, chapter xxxviii, p. 261 – emphasis mine

Without question early Christians read other Christian writings, but did not include them within “the entire volume” of the Scriptures. It is true that the authenticity of a few books of the New Testament were being challenged in the second and third centuries by a few. However, it cannot be proven that the same books were not accepted by the majority of New Testament congregations. Moreover, “the entire volume” of scripture was confirmed right from the beginning of the second century after the death of the last living apostle, as translations of the New Testament into old Syriac and old Latin had occurred as early as 150 A.D.

Roman Catholic Sacred Tradition

The Roman Catholic Church does not accept the Biblical Scriptures as final authority for faith and practice. Instead, they believe that final authority for faith and practice is based upon Sacred Tradition with Sacred Scriptures as interpreted by Church Counsels and Papal “Excathreda” declarations. Hence, their final authority ultimately resides in the counsels and Papal office.

They attempt to prove that the oral traditions of the Apostles mentioned throughout the New Testament (2 Thes. 2:13; 3:6) were promised preservation equally with the Scriptures.

However, this is simply not true. The Bible nowhere promises preservation of the oral traditions of the Old Testament prophets or New Testament apostles and prophets except for what is preserved in the written scriptures. Indeed, if the oral traditions were promised preservation, then why bother writing scriptures?

Even when the Old Testament Scriptures were still being written, it was not the oral traditions that are said to be final authority for faith and practice but the written Word of God:

*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to **this word**, it is because there is no light in them.* – Isa. 8:20

Jesus Christ never appealed to oral traditions to establish faith or practice. Instead, he always appealed to the written Scriptures (“It is written”) while repudiating much of the oral traditions that had been preserved. Although God had promised to preserve the scriptures, no such promise was given in regard to oral traditions.

Of course the oral teaching of the Apostles was inspired and was to be kept by those who actually heard it (2 Thes. 3:6). However, the written Scriptures were the means to preserve the oral teachings of Christ and the apostles beyond their life time, and were the final authority and sufficient rule for faith and practice:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God **may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*** – 2

Tim. 3:16-17

The words “*perfect*” means “mature” and the term “thoroughly” means *wholly sufficient* “unto all” good works.

Indeed, the incorporation of “Sacred Tradition” and “church counsels” has been the means to pervert and deny the Scriptures as final authority. Rome vehemently denies that the Scriptures are the final authority for faith and practice. Hence, the words of men are used to supplant the “Word of God” exactly as the Pharisees did in Matthew 15.

1 Cor. 13 and Cessation

1 Cor. 13:8 ¶ *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

9 *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

10 *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

11 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

LOVE IS:

1. **ESSENTIAL** - 1 Cor. 13:1-3 because without it, NOTHING is of value.

2. **SPIRITUAL** - 1 Cor. 3:4-7 - The characteristics of love is the same characteristics given to describe the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Corinthians had all the spiritual gifts but were NOT SPIRITUAL (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

3. **SUPERIOR** - 1 Cor. 3:8 - Love NEVER FAILS but in contrast to revelatory and sign gifts they do fail. Love is greater than either faith and hope because when that which is hoped for is realized, and what is received by faith is realized then there is no need for faith and hope but love NEVER fails but continues on and on.

4. **ABIDING** - 1 Cor. 13:9-13 - Love, faith and hope ABIDETH NOW but revelatory gifts and signs ABIDETH NOT NOW, as Paul expressly states that tongues ceases of itself (v. 8) in the period identified as "now." Paul did not say "NOW ABIDETH Love, faith, hope, revelatory gifts and signs" but only "NOW ABIDETH faith and hope and love." The contrast is between what is STOPPED versus what ABIDETH now. Because tongues cease of itself can only mean that this occurs during the "now" before the coming of Christ. Hence, "tongues" ABIDETH NOT even in this present age. Revelatory gifts CEASE NOW (v. 10) as they are completed now (v. 10) and grow from immaturity to maturity now (v. 11) and replaced with superior revelation now (v. 12) and thus "ABIDETH" not. The contrast is between what is STOPPED now versus what ABIDETH now. Faith and hope are classified with love as those things that ABIDETH NOW, but knowledge and prophecies are classified with tongues which are STOPPED NOW and ABIDETH NOT!

What causes sign gifts to cease now so they do not continue to abide is when what they signify is completed (1 Cor. 14:20-22; Isa. 28:11-17).

What causes revelatory gifts to be stopped now, is when what is designed by God to complete (v. 10) mature (v. 11) and replace with greater clarity (v. 12) arrives - the finished revealed written Word of God (Isa. 8:16; Rev. 1:3; 22:18-19).

COMPLETE VERSUS INCOMPLETE

The contrast presented here is the complete and permanent abiding character of love in direct contrast to three particular things that will vanish away, cease to exist.

Paul selects "tongues...knowledge...and prophecies" to contrast with the abiding complete character of love.

The cessation of these things is indicated by the terms “fail....cease...vanish away. The grammatical voice used in reference to these things indicate how they will cease. The middle voice is used with tongues and translated “they shall cease.” The middle voice tells us how they will cease. They will cease of themselves. Nothing outside of this gift will cause it to cease. In contrast both knowledge and prophecy and the terms for their cessation are found in the passive voice. The passive voice demands that something outside of themselves will cause their cessation. The point to make here is that these things unlike love, will cease or be caused to cease.

In verse 9 tongues is dropped altogether and only knowledge and prophecies are continued. The inference is that tongues ceases of itself prior to either knowledge or prophecies being caused by something to cease. Both are described as “in part.” Anything “in part” is not yet completed or it would not be described as “in part.”

Verses 10-12 describe how and when these “in part” things will cease or be caused to vanish away. Significantly, Paul provides three axioms (self-evident truths) that describe this cessation of revelatory gifts.

In verse 10 the first axiom is anything that is “in part” will cease to be “in part” when it is completed (perfect). The term “perfect” is to be understood as “complete” as that is the only possible alternative to anything described as “in part.” It is a self-evident truth that anything incomplete (“in part”) ceases to be incomplete when it is completed.

In verse 11 the second axiom is anything that is immature ceases to be immature when it is matured. This is a self-evident truth (axiom).

In verse 12 the third axiom is anything that is an imprecise means of revelation (mirror darkly) ceases to be imprecise when the revelation is “face to face.”

All three of these axioms provide a developmental process of something “now” (at the time of writing) which must be brought from “in part” or incomplete or from an immature state or an imprecise condition to a complete, mature imprecise means of revelation.

What is it that accomplishes this process and brings these “in part” and immature and imprecise things to a state of complete, mature and precise means of revelation?

Some believe it is the coming of Christ. Others believe it is the perfect state. Still others believe it is mature love. However, many believe it is the completion of the Biblical Canon of Scripture as final revelation.

In order to provide a correct contextual answer there are three contextual facts that must be recognized.

- (1) Whatever it may be, it causes knowledge to cease.
- (2) Whatever it may be, it is a thing and not a person as the neuter gender is used to describe it (“perfect” Gr. neuter gender).
- (3) Whatever it may be, it is a developmental process of something presently “in part” immature and imprecise that is brought to completion, maturity and precise revelation.

For example, neither the coming of Christ, or the future perfect state or love causes knowledge to cease, if “knowledge” is understood as mere intake of intellectual data. Rather, those things only increase knowledge rather than causing it to vanish away or cease.

However, if “knowledge” is understood as supernatural direct revelation from God to men through such means as visions, dreams or part of the prophetic revelatory process then a finished

completed written revelation will cause that to cease. If “prophecies” refer to the product of revelatory gifts then a completed finished written revelation will cause it to cease, as these are the very things that characterize the prophetic gift. Therefore, if “knowledge” and “prophesy” refer to the instrumental means used for providing the goal of written revelation, then they are naturally brought to completion, maturity and clarity in the finished product – the completed Biblical canon.

Moreover, neither the coming of Christ nor the future perfect state are present nor in a developmental process. Indeed, this present earth is destroyed before the perfected future state can occur. However, verse 11 and the axiom of maturing is presented or described in a present developmental process. These “in part” revelatory things were present and in process when Paul wrote (“now”) and continued to be in process until the Biblical canon was completed, matured as a final precise written revelation.

Finally, the third axiom demands that Paul is referring to the present imprecise means of revelation. The very term “mirror” is a means of revelation. The term “darkly” shows the present “in part” revelatory things did not provide a precise and complete revelation. Indeed, only select members had these revelatory gifts, which made other members dependent upon them. Furthermore, they had to be tested to make sure the revelation came from the Spirit of God (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Cor. 14:29). Last, they provided only “in part” or partial revelations and could never give a clear and full revelation for church doctrine, policy and practice. However, the finished Old Testament Scriptures had predicted the completion of the New Testament or “testimony” of Jesus (Isa. 8:16-20). At what time (“then”) the New Testament was completed would provide a more clear revelation for New Testament doctrine and policy and would cause “in part” revelatory means to cease “then.”

However, that time was not “now.” Moreover, the super apostles and foes of Paul had challenged the authenticity of his apostolic office, (1 Cor. 4; 2 Cor. 12) and did so everywhere he went. Thus

they challenged his prophetic office to speak and write authoritatively by inspiration from God. This is why Paul took the principle of love, which is complete in and of itself and expanded its axiomatic characteristics as the basis to correct and instruct them in the proper use of spiritual gifts (14:1). In so doing, he established his prophetic office (1 Cor. 14:37-38) and at the same time advanced the completion of the Biblical canon of Scripture.

However, “now” in lieu of no clear direct written revelation concerning the proper use of spiritual gifts in the assembly, love provides a mature principle to guide them in this matter. Love is complete and is greater than faith or hope because it is inclusive of both (“believeth all things” “hopeth all things”). Hence, love provides a mature principle to define the proper use of spiritual gifts “now” (14:1) that none could dispute until “in part” revelatory gifts are done away by a more direct completed and final revelation – the finished word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Near the end of his ministry when facing death, when most of the New Testament revelation had been written and confirmed by miracles, signs and wonders to be the prophetic word of God he anticipated the near completion of the Biblical canon and said:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Isaiah anticipated the sealing up and binding of the Old (the law) and New (the testimony) Testament Scriptures and said in view of its completion:

To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no light in them. – Isa. 8:20

Isaiah said this in direct response to those who would speak in unknown tongues and see visions and claim additional revelation (Isa. 8:19).

"FACE TO FACE" - 1 Cor. 13:12

*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into **the perfect** law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

James 1:23-25

People don't like God's word because when you look into it, it is like a glass where you behold your face exactly as it looks or "face to face" revelation. Revelation that shows you exactly as God and others really see you. It reveals all your faults and all the dirt on your face. Indeed, nothing is hid from it:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb. 4:12

Indeed, this is exactly the meaning of the phrase "face to face" in the Old Testament. It refers to a more direct and clearer revelation OF WORDS from God more than received by prophets through visions and dreams. Revelation through visions and dreams are revelatory vehicles of expression which are described as "dark" means of revelation ("darkly" 1 Cor. 13:12):

*And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a **VISION**, and will speak unto him in a **DREAM**. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, **EVEN APPARENTLY** , and not in **DARK SPEECHES**; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*

Numb. 12:6-8

Dreams and visions as vehicles of expressing revelation are called "*dark speeches*." Whereas, God spoke to Moses "*mouth to mouth*" or "*face to face*" although God never allowed Moses to literally look upon His face. "*Face to face*" meant that God's words were communicated more direct and apparent to Moses than God's revelation to prophets through revelatory vehicles of expression. Likewise, in 1 Cor. 13:8-13 when the "*perfect*" or completed expression of God's word in written form occurs, then, revelatory vehicles and gifts for imparting revelation by the prophetic gift "*in part*" will no longer be needed, as we have something better, clearer and more enduring.

Why Does Paul select "knowledge, tongues and prophecies" in 1 Cor. 13:8? Because these three are representative of the rest of revelatory and sign gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

The "sign" gifts cease when what they signified occurred. The revelatory gifts are "in part" and cease when what they provide in "part" is finished, perfected, completed, matured. What is "in part" and what is "perfect" speaks of the same thing - REVELATION. The completed written revelation is MORE DIRECT revelation to each child of God than the INDIRECT revelatory gifts which is like a "glass DARKLY" in contrast to the more direct and completed/perfected/matured finished written revelation.

“now” versus “then”

In this passage the contrast between “now” versus “then” is the contrast between the literal “now” of the apostolic age versus “then” or that time when the apostolic age would bring to completion – the finished testimony of Jesus Christ. That was prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 8:16-20) and by Christ (Jn. 14-17) and by the apostles (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is “now” that the Biblical revelation was incomplete and the New Testament congregations had no other means of revelation for church policy and doctrine than through “in part” revelatory gifts. Hence, in lieu of the absence of any written scriptures to define the proper use of spiritual gifts, Paul is claiming that the abiding principles of faith, hope and love provide the foundation principles to formulate the proper and improper use of spiritual gifts in the assembly. “Now” there is no completed revelation to deal with such matters, but there is “now” abiding principles (love, faith, and hope) that can indisputably serve to formulate the right and wrong use of spiritual gifts in the assembly. Those principles are laid out in 1 Cor. 13:1-7 and applied in 1 Cor. 14:1-41.

Moreover, in setting forth these abiding principles as the basis for providing a written formulation for right and wrong use of spiritual gifts in the congregation, Paul provides one more inspired written book in the process of completing “the testimony of Jesus” as he tells them:

If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you

are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. – 1 Cor. 14:37-38

Hence, his assertion that “now abideth” is an assertion that in lieu of no written revelation dealing with this issue right “now” we have these abiding principles that can be used as the basis for such an inspired written revelation toward the completion of the Biblical canon.

in providing a written revelation for the proper use of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:37-38). He is not suggesting the cessation of love when “that which is perfect” has arrived, any more than he is suggesting that faith and hope cease when that which is perfect arrives because abiding love is inclusive of both faith and hope (1 Cor. 13:7) as charity believeth all things and hopeth all things within the boundaries of truth (1 Cor. 13:6). He is only claiming that “now” during this period of incomplete revelation that abiding love furnishes the very principles to provide another step toward that completion in regard or inspired written revelation to define the proper use of spiritual gifts.

Part II

Cessation of Confirming Signs

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. – Isa. 8:20

The Signs of the Apostolic Office

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. – 2

Cor. 12:12

If these things were common to all Christians during the apostolic age, then they could hardly be appealed to by Paul, as proof of his apostolic office. Hence, in some sense they must be unique to the apostolic office.

However, we have already seen they characterize the office of Prophet in both the Old and New Testaments. Also, they characterized individual believers in 1 Cor. 12-14. How then, are they unique signs of the apostolic office?

The answer is very simple. It is through the laying on of apostolic hands that such signs are conveyed to the common believer. The prophet could not convey these signs to others. Neither could the common believer convey these signs to others. The uniqueness of the apostolic office was that the Holy Spirit conveyed such sign gifts to the common believer through the laying on of the apostolic hands.

1. Acts 1-6:6 – The only ones performing miracles, signs and wonders in the first six chapters of Acts are the apostles:

*And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were **done by the apostles**. Ac 2:43*

*And **by the hands of the apostles** were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. Ac 5:12*

All who spoke in tongues on the day of Pentecost were only “Galileans” (Acts 2:7 “*all these which speak Galilaeans?*”).

2. Acts 6:6-19:6: Not until the Apostles laid hands upon the seven men chosen as deacons in Acts 6 do we have miracles signs and wonders being performed by anyone other than the twelve:

Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. – Acts 6:6

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. – Acts 6:8

Acts 6:8 is the first verse in the book of Acts where someone other than the apostles performed miracles, signs and wonders.

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. Acts 8:17-19

These Samaritans already had believed the gospel and submitted to water baptism. They had the indwelling Holy Spirit. What they did not have were the gifts of the Spirit. The words “the Holy Ghost” do not properly reflect the Greek text, which does not have the definite article. The anarthous construction conveys the characteristics, power or gifts of the Spirit.

Furthermore, we know it was the gifts of the Spirit because what was given could be visibly seen, as Simeon “saw” the “power” or the visible manifestations of that power. Luke states that the Holy Spirit had not “come upon” them. The very same consequences are later seen when Paul laid his hands on some disciples:

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. – Acts 19:6

3. The Epistles: Paul told Timothy that through the laying on of apostolic hands had been conveyed spiritual gifts necessary to conduct his ministry:

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. – 1 Tim. 1:6

The churches at Rome have no sign, wonder and miracle gifts listed among them in Romans 12. Paul writes them and tells them he wants to physically come to them in order to convey such gifts to them:

For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; - Rom. 1:11

However, in regard to churches founded by Paul they lacked no such sign gifts:

So that ye come behind in no gift... - 1 Cor. 1:6

Indeed, the Corinthians, and those churches personally established by Paul were witnesses of the signs of the apostles as they were direct beneficiaries of that gift:

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. – 2 Cor. 12:12

4. The dying out of apostolic sign gifts: Both Mark and the writer of Hebrews (Paul through Apollos) were written late near the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and view the apostles and miracles signs and wonders as something primarily in the past and completed:

*So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And **they went** forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word** with signs following. Amen.* – Mk. 16:19-20

Mark uses the future tense right up to verse 19, but with verse 19 changes to the past tense completed action. Notice that the purpose of such “signs” is explicitly stated “**confirming the word with signs.**”

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and **was confirmed unto us** by them that heard him; God also **bearing them witness**, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?* – Heb. 2:3-4

The writer of Hebrews view such signs in the past tense and connected with the Apostles as means of “bearing them witness” or confirming the word they provided in oral and written form.

Conclusion: Therefore, the apostolic office had the special power to convey sign gifts to other Christians. The Holy Spirit did not directly communicate such sign gifts to the common Christian. The Holy Spirit only directly communicated such sign gifts to the office of prophet and apostle. However, the prophetic office had no power to convey such gifts to the common Christian. Only the

Apostolic office had this ability to convey sign gifts through the laying on of their hands. As such, when the apostolic office and the prophetic office ceased, so did the presence of such sign gifts cease from among common Christians, as soon as the last of those who benefited from the laying on of apostolic hands died. The apostolic and prophetic office ceased with the completion of inspired written revelation.

The Command to Test Prophets

Many think that miracles, signs and wonders are proof that a person is of God. However, God commands His people to test such prophets. If God provides specific tests for His people to distinguish between true and false prophets, wouldn't it be reasonable that God expects his people to apply those tests to all who claim prophetic capabilities?

The Clear Biblical Command

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world - 1 Jn. 4:1

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good - 1 Thes. 5:21

Both texts above are found in the context of prophesying, as that is what prophets do - they prophesy. Both texts use the imperative mode of command, and therefore these texts don't give advice or provide options but are commandments to be obeyed.

Both texts use the same Greek word “*dokimazo*” translated “test” (1 Jn. 4:1) and “prove” (1 Thes. 5:21). Strong's concordance gives the following meaning for “*dokimazo*.”

1) To test, examine, prove scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals. 2) To recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy, means to examine with intent to verify authenticity. - Strong's Concordance.

Therefore, to “try” does not mean to experiment with, or try in the sense of taking a taste, but put to the test, to validate or prove

to be genuine.

Some Unbiblical Tests

How are we then to prove a prophet is speaking by the Spirit of truth? There are some unbiblical tests that many use in the place of Biblical tests that we should first consider before looking at the tests provided by the Scriptures:

1. Pray about it: Some come to your door and ask you to pray about whether a certain prophet (Joseph Smith) is from God. They attempt to use James 1:5 to validate this as a Biblical test.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. - James 1:5

However, James 1:5 is not given as a test to authenticate a prophet. It refers to things that God's word does not explicitly address. We are never instructed to pray about what God's word explicitly teaches. We are commanded to obey what God's Word teaches. You don't need to pray about what God's word commands - you need to do it! God's word provides explicit tests for prophets and prayer is not such a test.

2. Feelings about it: The very same false teachers that come to your door requesting to pray about their false prophet also tell you that if you feel a "burning in your bosom" that is the answer to your prayer and evidence their prophet is from God.

However, God's word never provides such a test for the validity of a prophet. God's word never instructs you to follow your feelings as validation of a true prophet.

Feelings change from moment to moment. One day you might

feel lost and the next day feel saved. Feelings are usually based upon changing circumstances or your own physical condition at the moment. What might be a “burning in your bosom” may be due to heart burn or gas.

3. *Sincerity*: Some people trust a person if they believe that person is sincere or good. They think that if a person is sincere and good; then that is sufficient to accept the prophecies and miracles as proof he is of God.

You can be sincerely wrong! I am sure those who followed the false prophet Jim Jones that committed mass suicide were very sincere and accepted Jim Jones as a sincere and good person.

Moreover, Paul warns that those sent and empowered by Satan have transformed themselves into “angels of light” and ministers of righteousness:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; - 2 Cor.

11:13-15

God has provided specific tests in His word to validate a true prophet and no Christian has the authority to replace them with his own subjective sense of sincerity or perceived goodness.

4. *God like miracles*: Many accept a prophet or prophetic predictions, sayings, visions as authentic based upon their miraculous nature and likeness to apostolic signs and wonders. However, here is the very crux of their deception. God’s word never denies that false prophets can do the miraculous. God’s

word never denies their prophecies may come to pass. Indeed, the scriptures clearly teach that false prophets in the last days will do apostolic like miracles signs and wonders (Deut. 13:1-2; 2 Thes. 2:9; Mt. 24:24-25).

Remember, John the Baptist was pronounced by Christ as the greatest prophet of God born of women, and yet there is not one instance recorded in scripture where he performed one miracle, or spoke in tongues, or got slain in the spirit, or healed anyone or performed any miracle whatsoever.

None of the above methods are provided as the scriptural tests to distinguish a true from a false prophet.

Seven Biblical Prophetical Tests

The Old and New Testament provide a total of seven clear tests to distinguish true from false prophets. They are:

1. The Test of Lying Wonders - Deut. 13:1-5
2. The Test of Fulfillment - Deut. 18:21-22
3. The Test of Prophetic Visions - Jer. 23:32
4. The Test of Plagiarism - Jer. 23:25, 30
5. The Test of Good Fruit - Mt. 7:15, 20
6. The Test of Confusion - 1 Cor. 14:33-37
7. The Test of Christ's Person - 1 Jn. 4:1-6

1. The Test of Lying Wonders: The very terms used to describe the power, signs and wonders of Jesus and the apostles are attributed to a last day's miracle movement empowered by Satan. However, there is one significant difference and that difference is found in the word "lying."

They are not called "lying" because they are not true miracles, but because they confirm lies or false doctrine. Remember, Moses told God's people that a prophet may come and do authentic miracles and what they predict may come to pass (Deut. 13:1-2) but what they teach are lies or false doctrine (Deut. 13:3-5). God's purpose for miracles, signs and wonders was to confirm the message of his prophets (Exodus 3:1-3; Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4-5). Satan counterfeits this method of confirmation so that God's people will embrace false doctrine:

*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and **lying** wonders - 2 Thes. 2:9*

Remember, the ultimate distinction between a true and false prophet is not the miraculous but the difference is between truth and error (1 Jn. 4:6).

If a prophet's message is contrary to God's Word then his miracles, signs and wonders are validating a "lying" message.

Deut. 13:1 ¶ *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,
2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;
3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.*

God allows such false prophets to arise and come among his people to prove you, "*to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*" Love for God is manifested in obedience to His commandments.

God can speak through false prophets such as the high Priest who prophesied correctly about Christ:

And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; Jn. 11:51

Yet this same man disobeyed God and led others to crucify Christ.

Remember the false prophet Balaam could not speak his own mind and admitted this repeatedly to King Balak that he could not speak anything other than what God placed in his mouth:

And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? The word

that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.....Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. - Num. 22:38; 23:20

Yet this same prophet intentionally led Israel to disobey God's commandments.

The Church at Ephesus tried some who claimed to be Apostles and found them to be liars:

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: - Rev. 2:2

So the final proof that a person speaks in behalf of God is not miracles, signs and wonders but if their message conforms to God's Word:

To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. - Isa. 8:20

2. The Test of Fulfillment: *And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. - Deut. 18:21-22*

False prophets not only preach false doctrine but many times predict false things.

True prophets of God preach the truth and what they predict always comes to pass. Why? Because it is God who places his

message in their mouth and ordains to come to pass what is predicted:

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. - Deut. 18:18

When God uses false prophets to prophesy (e.g. Caiaphas the High Priest, Balaam) they cannot say but what God puts in their mouth.

Now compare this to a leading prophet within the Pentecostal movement:

*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 - **Benny Hinn**, Orlando Christian Center, December 31, 1989*

Of course this was a false prophecy and even until this very day Fidel Castro is still alive and God has not visited Cuba in any kind of revival.

3. The Test of Prophetic Visions *Behold, I am against them that prophecy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all saith the Lord.* - Jer. 23:32

Prophetic dreams and visions of future events that do not come to pass or are used as a basis for revealing what they claim is God's word to his people but contradict the Scriptures are false prophets.

For example, Ellen G. White claims by dreams and visions that some of the people then present in her conference were to be alive at the coming of Christ while others present would be objects of destruction due to the last plagues.

*I was shown the company present at the conference. Said the angel: "Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus." - Ellen G. White, **Testimonies**, Vol. 1, p. 131*

This is but one of her many false prophecies proving her to be a false prophet of Satan. However, many in the present day Pentecostal/charismatic movement have false visions that could be quoted right along with her.

4. The Test of Plagiarism: *I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.....Therefore, behold I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words everyone from his neighbor..... Jer. 23:25, 30*

God places His own words in the mouth of His own prophets. Their prophecies come directly from God rather than from other prophets or men.

However, there is indisputable documentation that Ellen G. White, Kenneth Hagin, Joseph Smith and other self-proclaimed prophets have plagiarized from others, and that most of their written works (which they claim they received directly from God), were stolen from other human sources

Even SDA scholars now admit that as much as 90% of Ellen G White's writings (that she claimed to have received directly from God), were in fact stolen from other writings:

Much has been written on Mrs. White's extensive plagiarism of the writings of others. Prior to the publication of Walter Rea's the White lie in 1983, Adventists maintained that 8% to 10% of Mrs. White's work was copied. The SDA church hired Adventist scholar Dr. Fred Veltman to examine the Desire of the Ages and he found 30% or more, depending upon the chapter examined. After great expense and almost eight years of research, that depending upon the material examined, the copy work could be as much as 90% Dr. Veltman noted - Ministry, Dec. 1990, p. 11

Those who have researched Kenneth Hagin's writings in regard to the "Word of Faith" doctrine (which he claimed to receive directly from God), verify that most of his writing on this subject has been directly copied from the writings of E.W. Kenyon.

In many instances, Hagin has, indeed copied word-for-word without documentation from Kenyon's writings. The following excerpts of plagiarism from no less than eight books by E.W. Kenyon are presented as evidence of this charge. - D.R. McConnell, A Different Gospel, updated Edition, p. 8

Anyone can read the book of Mormon (which Joseph Smith claimed was given to him under the direction of angels inscribed on golden plates in Egyptian hieroglyphics), can see that whole chapters are copied word for word from the book of Isaiah in 1611 King James English. Some believe the vast majority of his books were stolen from an unpublished manuscript called the "Spalding" manuscript which was a fiction novel about the new world.

Only false prophets plagiarize others.

5. The Test of Good Fruit - Beware of false prophets...Ye shall know them by their fruits - Mt. 7:15, 16

The fruit of a prophet includes both the fruit of his lips (his teaching) and the fruit of his spirit (moral values) as manifested in his life. God's prophets are godly in both their teachings and life. To even qualify as a Bishop/Pastor, one must meet a moral standard and have a good testimony from those within and without (1 Tim. 3; 1-13; Tit. 1:5-13).

Some ways that a false prophet is recognized is by lying, immorality and/or dishonest business practices. They are greedy for money, self-advancement and preeminence.

For example, there is clear documented evidence that such self-proclaimed prophets as Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Amee Sempleton McPherson, Benny Hinn, Jimmy Swaggert, among many others, were all morally deficient in character.

Jesus characterized himself as a poor man who had no place to lay his head and had to send Peter to fetch money from the mouth of a fish just to pay his taxes. God's prophets were not rich and wealthy, and were more interesting in giving than receiving.

However, these ravenous wolves devour the pennies of widows while promising them the demonic doctrine of "health and wealth." The Trinity Broadcasting Network is literally characterized by such ravenous wolves who bask in the wealth of others under the false doctrine of "name it and claim it." Paul taught the very reverse:

1 Tim. 6:6 ¶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.
7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain
we can carry nothing out.*

*8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith
content.*

*9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a
snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which
drown men in destruction and perdition.*

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which

*while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith,
and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
{erred: or, been seduced}
11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow
after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience,
meekness.*

6. The Test of Confusion – *God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches..... If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord - 1 Cor. 14:33,37*

This is found in the very context of apostolic instruction concerning the order and use of spiritual gifts in the assemblies. Both the office of prophet and the gift of prophecy, as well as, speaking in tongues are directly addressed by Paul.

The Holy Spirit does not inspire prophets to write scriptures and then lead other prophets or Christians to violate those scriptures. That is confusion. The Holy Spirit does not confirm prophets to say conflicting things. That is confusion.

The Holy Spirit was not leading and empowering the Corinthians in their use of gifts to disobey Pauline instructions, as Paul spoke and wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit.

Paul claims that those who are prophets or spiritual will acknowledge that his instructions were not based upon cultural conditions but that he is writing under the inspiration of God and these are the commandments of God.

26 ¶ How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

34 ¶ Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

36 ¶ What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. - 1 Cor. 14

Here Paul lists specific guidelines for the use of Biblical tongues in the assembly:

1. No more than three in a single service
2. No more than one speaking at a time
3. None speaking if there is no interpreter
4. No women speaking in this manner in the assembly

The Pentecostal/charismatic movement as a whole violate every

single one of these Pauline commands proving they are neither spiritual or have prophets among them. They actually believe the positional order God commands in the home (Eph. 5:22-25) is reversed when a woman enters the assembly.

The position of men and women in the home and in the churches is established upon the pre-cultural order God established in creation (1 Cor. 11:3, 9; 1 Tim. 2:13-15; Eph. 5:31-33). This has nothing to do with inequality of “persons” as the same kind of order in regard to “position” of authority is found within the Godhead (1 Cor. 11:3). Hence, it is no more demeaning to women than it is to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit to be inferior in the sense of position. Without such order and positional authority there is only chaos, confusion and anarchy.

Pentecostalism reverses this creational order. If the Pentecostal view is true of the positional order of the woman, then why is it not also true for the positional order of children? Why not have both women and children in positions of authority in both the home, and in the congregation???? Both secularism (Hollywood, the media) and Pentecostalism scorn the Biblical position of the man in the home and in the congregations.

*As for my people, **children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.** O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. –*

Isa. 3:12

7. The Test of Christ's Person - *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world. - 1 Jn. 4:1-3*

In the historical context, John is dealing with professed prophets who had embraced Jewish Gnosticism. Gnosticism denied that Jesus was the human Christ born of a woman. Instead they believed that Jesus was one of the eon's or spirit beings sent into the world to represent God, and who empowered and directed Christ, but was not the Christ. According to their views, spirits must not be contaminated by material or flesh. Hence, they denied that Christ actually existed in a human body.

In essence, John is asserting that the spirit of the antichrist perverts and/or denies the true Person and character of Jesus Christ. Those who pervert his humanity also pervert his deity as He is both fully God and fully man. John asserts his preexistence by claiming that God the Son took upon himself the nature of man.:

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.....and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... - 1 Jn. 1:1,14

The prophets in Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, United Pentecostalism and Word of Faith movement all pervert the nature of Christ. Kenneth Hagin, the founder of the Word of Faith movement said,

*In the new birth, god imparts His very nature, substance, and being to our human spirits.....every born again man is an incarnation....the believer is as much an incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth....That's who we are; we're Christ. - D.R. McConnell, **A Different Gospel**, Updated Edition, Hendrickson Publishers, 1988, p. 120*

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary the mother of Jesus is "the Mother of God" rather than the means to provide the human nature of Christ. Their true teaching is reflected by how they venerate Mary on an equal level with God and give her titles that make her at the very least equal to God, if not superior to God, as she is more preeminent among Catholic worship than any of the

Godhead.

Conclusion

Here are seven explicit and clear tests to determine whether a person is a true prophet of God. True prophets pass all these tests. False prophets **always** fail at least one or more of these tests.

What is the Biblical Definition of Failure?

*But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even **that prophet shall die.** - Deut. 18:20*

*And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, **shall be put to death.** - Deut. 13:4*

Death was the penalty for failing one test of a prophet. There were no second chances. Of course that was the penalty administered under a theocratic government. However, it is clear that one failure exposes and condemns such to be a false prophet.

Often when a self-proclaimed prophet fails one of these tests they dismiss it with the argument that no one is perfect and everybody makes mistakes. This is true, but it begs the question. Not everyone claims to speak in behalf of God. Not everyone claims to be a prophet of God. True prophets always speak and write the truth, simply because they are called and guided by God's power instead of their own power:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah Lord God! Behold I cannot speak; for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak - Jer. 1:5-7

It is God's choice of men and God's power that makes them a true prophet. God worked through imperfect prophets to provide His perfect word. Thus, Paul could say:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God.... - 2 Tim. 3;

This is why Peter could say,

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. - 2 Pet. 1:20

This is why the apostle John could say,

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. - 1 Jn. 4:6

God makes sure by his own power that His chosen prophets pass all these tests.

False prophets are revealed by their failure to pass these tests. It is a very serious matter to claim that God spoke to you through a dream, or vision, or to claim that God told you to say something, or showed you something.

It is one thing to claim leadership by the Lord in a matter and quite another thing to claim God is speaking through you. The former is personal opinion subject to error while the latter is claiming inspiration which is not subject to error, and places you under the tests of a prophet.

If you do not want to be made subject to these tests then don't make these claims. If you make these claims then you are subject to these tests.

Post-Apostolic Groups

Between the first century and the nineteenth century there have been a few scattered groups that have claimed apostolic signs and wonders. However, there has always been groups both before, during, and after the first century that claimed visions, ecstatic utterances, healings totally unrelated to God's people and who embraced absolute heresies (Isa. 8:19 "peep" = visions "mutter" ecstatic utterances).

Montanus and his two prophetesses are often cited in the second century as such an instance. However, such practices are limited to just these three persons, as no such practices have been cited among those that Rome called "Montanists." Tertullian is the most famous Montanus and yet none of these things are cited concerning him. The only historical citation is in reference to just these three persons. The same historians cite that Montanus claimed to be the Holy Spirit incarnate as well.

It is significant that every citation of such examples existing between the first and nineteenth century are of groups that embrace radically false doctrines, thus all failing the Biblical tests of a prophet.

This is equally true of all such groups beginning in 1901 to the present day. There has not risen a prophet within the Restoration movement of the nineteenth century that has not failed the Biblical tests of a prophet. This is not only true among the Mormon, SDA and Jehovah's Witnesses prophets, but is equally true among all forms of Pentecostalism.

Even the most universally acclaimed prophets by all segments of the Pentecostal movement have violated the Biblical tests of the

prophet repeatedly and obviously. There was no more universally recognized Pentecostal prophets than Oral Roberts and Benny Hinn who have documented false prophecies. Others that followed equally are characterized by false prophecies and absolute heresies such as Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, John Wimber, and the list goes on and on.

The current “prophets” of today’s Pentecostalism are mere disciples of the previous proven false prophets, who followed them and are now repeating the same heresies espoused by those previous proven false prophets.

How to Identify a False Religion

All spiritual power and religious teaching originate with one of two sources “the Spirit of truth” or “the spirit of error” (1 Jn. 4:6). The previous tests have been provided to discern between true and false prophets. Behind all false prophets there are demonic spirits manifested by false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1). Thus any religious denomination that has a false prophet as its human originator is a product of demonic origin. The steps to identify a false religion or denomination are as follows:

1. The Spirit behind this Prophet is demonic

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world - 1 Jn. 4:1

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. 1 Jn. 4:6

Behind every prophet there is either the Spirit of truth - The Holy Spirit or the spirit of error - demonic spirits. It is this spirit that is responsible for what the prophet teaches and it is God's Word that determines whether that spirit is teaching truth or error.

2. False Prophets teach false doctrine

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils - 1 Tim. 4:1

Any prophet teaching false doctrine is energized by demons. False doctrine originates with seducing spirits/demons.

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. - 2 Pet. 2:1

3. The Origin of Denominations by False Prophets are Demonic

When people follow that false prophet and form a church/denomination that is how false churches/denominations come into existence:

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. - Acts 20:30

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? Not one. - Job 14:4

The spirit behind the prophet is the spirit behind his doctrine and it is this same spirit behind any denomination or group of people following that prophet and his teachings. The Holy Spirit does not lead anyone to form a church or denomination through false prophets.

4. The Miracles and Signs of that denomination are Demonic

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass....thou shalt not hearken unto that prophet...And that prophet or dreamer of dreams shall be put to death. - Deut. 13:1-3,6

The same spirit behind the false prophet and his doctrine is the same spirit behind the power of that prophet and the

denomination/church he originates.

If its doctrine is false, its miracles, signs and wonders have the same source of power - demons.

Remember God's ultimate purpose behind miracle and wonder workers is to confirm that their message comes from God and is truth. This is the stated purpose behind every miracle worker in the Scriptures from the very first miracle worker (Moses) to the Apostles:

*And Moses answered and said, **But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.***

2 And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.

3 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

5 That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. - Exodus 4

*And call you on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and **the God that answers by fire, let him be God.** And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken..... And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, **let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.** - 1 Kings 18:24, 36*

We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet:

neither is there among us any that knows how long. - Psa. 74:9

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: - Acts 2:22

*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; **God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*** - Heb. 2:3-4

Satan has duplicated this miracle confirmation method to seduce men into believing his false doctrine is from God. That is why Paul calls his confirmation method “lying” as it confirms lies.

*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with **all power and signs and lying wonders,*** - 2 Thes. 2:9

The spirit behind Catholicism is the same spirit behind its premier prophet - the Pope! The spirit behind Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventism is the same spirit behind their originating prophets whose doctrines they still follow.

Every division within Pentecostalism/Charismatic’s has originated by false prophets and there are proven false prophets throughout its history and scores of them today.

Any and all religious movements that claim to originate with a prophet(s) sent from God can be easily tested by applying the seven Biblical tests of a prophet. If their prophet(s) fail one or more of these tests they are demonic empowered and led false prophets, teaching demonic false doctrine and any denomination formed under the leadership and manifesting miracles, signs and

wonders is demonically empowered, as the Spirit of God does not confirm false prophets or their doctrine and denominations who follow or teach their doctrine..

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. - 2 Cor. 11

Are Saved People in False Religions?

The short answer is yes! Genuine children of God can be deceived and led astray.

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. - Rev. 18:4

In the above text it is God speaking. God knows the difference between “my people” and “tares” or lost religious people. God has children within false religion that need to be recovered from the snare of the devil:

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at (Gr. eis - for) his will. - 2 Tim. 2:26

True children of God can be deceived and led astray by false prophets:

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ,

*but their own belly; [desires] and by **good** words and **fair** speeches **deceive the hearts of the simple** - Rom. 16:18*

Understand that all false prophets and false denominations possess some truths or they could never keep true children of God within their ranks. It is this mixture of truth and error that provides the basis for deception.

However, possessing some truth does not change the false prophet into a true prophet or a false denomination into a true denomination.

Every single denomination today that claims progressive revelation or non-cessation has been originated by a prophet(s) who has failed one or more of the seven Biblical tests of a prophet. Every single self-proclaimed current prophet today has failed one or more of these seven Biblical tests.

Are you saved but deceived? Apply the seven Biblical tests of a prophet and see if you have been deceived into joining a denomination that originated by a false prophet and has embraced his false teachings.

Part III

The Value of Inspired Originals?

The Value of Inspired Originals

Revelation, inspiration and illumination should never be confused with each other.

Revelation is God conveying His Word to the prophet through various means (dreams, visions, verbally, etc.). Inspiration is God conveying His Word through the prophet to His people in written form without error. Illumination is God conveying understanding of His Word to His people.

The Bible clearly teaches the original autographs were “given” by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16). However, we do not possess any of these original autographs. We only possess copies and translations of such copies. Moreover, the copies and translations we possess do not harmonize word for word with each other. What is the value of inspired original autographs if none exist today?

This question has bothered laymen and scholars alike. This very question has given rise to the science of higher criticism which has led some into complete agnosticism in regard to any present day “inspired” Word of God. Although the most liberal higher critic does not doubt that we possess between 98.33 to 99.8% of the original words, they point out that this small percentage of differences in copies are reflected by variations in the copies of originals, and thus accounts for the variations in translations. Many ask, if some words are in doubt, then who determines which are correct or incorrect, and does not this uncertainty make the scholars to be the final authority instead of the scriptures?

Others react to higher criticism by assuming that only the KJV is the inspired word of God. They say every word in the KJV is the infallible Word of God, and there is no other Bible today for man. However, what about people in other countries that don't speak English, and never have since the first century? What about those who lived before the King James Version was printed?

What about our Baptist forefathers between the second century until 1611? They were living in non-English speaking countries

with non-English translations and copies of the Scriptures as their Bible? What about the various editions of the KJV? Which edition is the infallibly inspired word for word Bible since they are not all the same in wording? We do not possess the originals that the translators of the KJV handed the printers. The original KJV edition contained the Old Testament apocrypha but present editions do not. If the KJV is considered an infallible translation then should we not be using the Old Testament Apocrypha found in the original 1611 printing? However, all these books have been removed from later editions of the KJV. Our present edition does not even read like the first edition, as the language has been greatly updated and changed in the 33 plus editions since it was originally printed.

Is there another solution to this problem? I believe there is! I believe the value of inspiration was to provide an infallible self-defining contextual pattern.

For example, take a look at an afghan where a clear and discernible pattern is repeated throughout. Through the years this afghan may suffer abuse where minor holes and gaps might occur. However, anyone studying the contextual pattern could easily fill in any gaps or holes because the pattern makes clear what should fill those gaps. The only thing required to fill the holes is a careful study of the overall and immediate pattern.

God anticipated the continuing change in meaning of words, as well as, errors by copyists and translators, but remedied it by providing a self-defining pattern that “cannot be broken” (Jn. 10:35). The Greek term translated “broken” is used for the wrappings around a corpse that are bound together in cohesion. Minor tears or holes do not unravel the bindings.

Every word in Scripture is the word of God. However, not a single word in Scripture can be properly interpreted apart from the immediate and overall context in which it has been placed. Proper thoughts must be expressed by proper choice of words placed in a proper grammatical relationship with other words. Grammarians call this proper relationship between words syntax. Hence, every

word in the Scripture(s) is God's Word as properly defined and interpreted by its immediate and overall context. Scripture can only be properly interpreted and understood by comparing scripture with scripture, and allowing scripture to define and interpret itself (1 Cor.2:13).

Divine providence placed the Scriptures in the hands of God's people who carefully preserved them. Divine providence did not prevent minor copyist and translator errors by the divinely chosen custodians of the scriptures (Rom. 3:1-2; 1 Tim. 3:15). Yet, such minor errors do not destroy the self-defining context of scripture. A copyist may write the wrong word or skip a word, but the self-defining contextual pattern redefines terms or provides what is needed to fill in the gap. Translators may choose inappropriate words but still the self-defining contextual pattern gives the proper definition. Therefore, what is claimed to be an "error" is defined by a self-defining contextual pattern.

For example, take the word "baptize" in the KJV which is not a translation of the Greek term *baptizo*, but rather a transliteration of that term. Instead of giving an equivalent meaning of the term "*baptizo*" into English (translation) they gave an equivalent pronunciation (transliteration) or English sounds of the Greek term "*baptizo*." However, if we study the overall context of the scripture by comparing scripture with scripture, the context provides the proper meaning. For example, in Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 it is an act whereby one is "buried" in water.

The same is true with the term "church" which is not a translation of the Greek term *ekklesia* but rather is derived from a completely different Greek term (*kuriakos*). However, if you study the immediate context of a passage like Matthew 18:14-17, it is clear that "church" is a congregation or body of baptized believers that habitually meet together in a geographic locality. These are examples where translation errors are self-corrected or self-defined by the contextual pattern of scripture.

This is equally true with copyist errors between various Hebrew and Greek copies. Where there are variant readings between

different copies, the careful study of the immediate and overall context of the scriptures will decide that issue. However, each manuscript stands alone and is still self-defined by its own contextual pattern, just as a translation would be.

This is equally true in regard to translations of the Scriptures into other languages. The contextual self-defining pattern is transferred into the other language. This is true with various translations into the same language.

There are two primary lines of textual transmission in our possession. These two different lines of transmission are represented by the Critical Text and the Traditional Text. The Critical Text represents a group of source materials that contain far more textual variations than the source materials represented by the Traditional Text. The Traditional Text is the best preserved text as it has a continuous history among the people of God. For example, the Biblical text of the Waldenses represents the Traditional Text. On the other hand, the Critical Text chiefly comes from either Alexandria Egypt or from Roman Catholic sources. Ancient Alexandria was dominated by those who held an allegorical interpretation of scriptures, and therefore they were more concerned about what they believed were the correct thoughts being expressed by scriptures than preservation of the correct words. Rome subjugated the Scriptures to traditions, counsels, and Papal decrees rather than treating it as the final authority for their faith and practice. Furthermore, there is a vast period of time when this text disappears in history (between the 4th and 18th centuries). The Traditional Text is far more unified with far less variants, and consistently used from the apostolic period to the present among those who cherished it and took greater pains to preserve it, because they esteemed it as their final authority for faith and practice.

The contextual pattern for self-definition has not been “broken” or destroyed in either line of transmission. However, the Critical Text and its translations require far more work by the Bible student to arrive at the same conclusions than if they had chosen the Traditional Text and one of its translations. This is one reason why the people of God have chosen the KJV over other English versions, because it is based upon Greek copies that have far less copyist variances.

This brings me to the methodology required to rightly interpret the scriptures. Studying scripture by comparing scripture with scripture (1 Cor. 2:13) and allowing the Bible to self-define is exhaustive work. Paul describes such a person as a “workman” (1 Tim. 2:15). The better the workman is equipped, the easier the work. For example, a person who speaks and understands very little English would have a very rough time reading and understanding the KJV or any other English version. However, the better you are able to read, and the more capable you are in English grammar, the easier the work. In addition, if knowledge about the geography, customs and archeology in connection with the Bible lands and people, is added to competency in English grammar, then the job gets easier. If you select a translation that is based upon copies that have fewer holes, the job gets easier. The more knowledge the bible student acquires in connection with issues relative to the Scriptures, the easier his work.

This is not to discount dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is the only One who can penetrate our hearts and minds and reveal the truth to us (1 Jn. 2:29). However, it is equally clear the Holy Spirit uses means (preachers, teachers, study, etc.) in our spiritual growth and understanding of His Word. We are held responsible to “study” and “rightly divide the Word of truth.” Hence, the better equipped you are in this endeavor the more tools the Holy Spirit has at His disposal to teach you His word.

The bottom line is simply this –“the scripture(s) cannot be broken.” The scriptures are bound together by a self-defining contextual pattern. God did not permit sufficient translation or copyist errors that would destroy the contextual pattern produced by inspiration.

This means that the poor English reader who has only the KJV can apply himself to the work of comparing scripture with scripture. He has the verbally inspired infallible Word of God in the KJV. Every word is the inspired word of God, but not one word can be interpreted apart from the immediate and overall context, as the Bible is a contextually self-defining book. Each word stands in relationship to the context of words that accompany it, and ultimately must be defined in and by that contextual framework. He has the inspired Word of God, and only hard work, with dependency upon the Holy Spirit, comparing scripture with scripture will provide for its proper interpretation. The more knowledge he acquires the less work required.

The self-defining contextual pattern does not discourage the study of the Greek or Hebrew texts behind the translation you use. Indeed, Greek and Hebrew students simply have one more additional tool in their attempt to “rightly divide the Word of truth.” Remember, without the Greek and Hebrew copies there would be no translations possible. Hence, the Greek and Hebrew copies take priority as they are the original sources for any translation into any language.

The value of inspiration is that it provided a self-defining contextual framework for every word of scripture. The role of the exegete is to simply study the Scriptures and provide an interpretation that is contextually based. Any interpretation that is contrary to the historical/grammatical/cultural context of scripture is a false interpretation as God is not the author of confusion. Scripture harmonizes with Scripture and that is always made manifest by a proper interpretation of any word or text, chapter or book in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

The prophetic and apostolic offices were foundational offices designed for the very purpose to supply a completed finished written revelation as the final authority for faith and practice. The New Testament Scriptures are “the Testimony of Jesus” in its fullness, as it records His ministry, teachings, death, burial and resurrection.

With the completion of the Biblical canon the prophetic and apostolic offices ceased, as well as, signs, miracles and wonders used to confirm their word. The Bible has been fully confirmed (Heb. 2:3-4) unto us. It stands as the final authority and is fully sufficient.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. – Isa. 8:20

The value of inspired originals was to produce a self-defining contextual pattern or framework that preserves the truth of God’s Word regardless of minor errors by copyist or translators. God’s providence prevented such copyist and translation errors that would destroy that contextual pattern. Therefore, in every generation, regardless if the man of God possessed a copy in the original languages or a translation of the original languages into another language, the only necessity was to -

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. – 2 Tim. 2:15