

Reformed Cessationism

- **Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)**, “It pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church . . . to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God’s revealing His will unto His people being now ceased.” [Ch. 1, Sect. 1]
- **Second Book of Discipline (1578)**, “Some of the ecclesiastical functions are ordinary, and some extraordinary or temporary. There are three extraordinary functions: the office of apostle, of the evangelist, and of the prophet, which are not perpetual, and now have ceased in the kirk of God, except when he pleased extraordinarily for a time to stir some of them up again.”
- **Resources for Further Study**
 - *The WCF and the Cessation of Special Revelation*, by G.H. Milne [Wipf & Stock]
 - *A Reformation Discussion of Extraordinary Predictive Prophecy Subsequent to the Closing of the Canon of Scripture* [ReformedPresbytery.Org/books/prophecy/prophecy.htm]
 - *The Charismatics and the Word of God*, by Victor Budgen [Evangelical Press]
 - John MacArthur’s *Strange Fire* Conference Messages [tmstrangefire.org]
 - Prophecy Debate: Wayne Grudem vs. Ian Hamilton [vimeo.com/37169587]
 - Misc Resources [monergism.com/directory/link_category/Spiritual-Gifts/Cessationists-View-Articles/]
- **Cessationism does not deny that the HS communicates directly to believers today.**
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That the HS illuminates us to rightly understand the Bible (Ps. 119:18).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That the HS testifies w/ our Spirit that we’re children of God (Rom. 8:16).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That the HS internally calls men to church ministry & office (1 Tim. 3:1).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That the HS (to greater or lesser extents) anoints gospel preaching (1 Thes. 1:5).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That the HS gives believers wisdom to ‘understand the times’ (1 Chron. 12:32).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That God sovereignly uses our non-revelatory thoughts, dreams, memories, premonitions, prayers, experiences, & biblical knowledge to direct our steps (Job 33:12-30).*
 - **Doesn’t Deny:** *That God can (if He so chooses, at extraordinary times) perform a miracle, grant supernatural healing, or mysteriously forewarn a believer of danger (Ps. 115:3).*
 - **DOES Deny:** *That the miraculous, revelatory, NT gifts & offices continue today (1 Cor. 13:8-13).*
- **Continuationism takes a variety of forms.**
 - **Some** view **NT prophecy** as *fallible brotherly counsel*; **others** as a form of *special revelation*.
 - **Some** view **NT healing** as merely *answers to prayer*; **others** as *equivalent to apostolic miracles*.
 - **Some** view **NT tongues** as a *private prayer language*; **others** seek to *interpret* them.
 - *If you had 15 minutes to email a continuationist friend about your view, what could you say?*

1. The primary purpose of miracles was to confirm new outpourings of divine revelation.

- Three main periods of miracles: (1) Moses/Joshua, Ex. 4:1f; 6:28f; Dt. 13:1-5; (2) Elijah/Elisha, 1 Kings 18:36f; (3) Christ/Apostles, John 5:36; 6:14; 7:31; 10:24, 37; 2:2-4.
- **Objection:** This prevents new generations of Christians from coming to know the mighty works of God.
 - God’s character is shown in all His works, not merely in miracles (Ps. 103:22; 145:9, 17).
 - God calls us to teach our children God’s past miracles as recorded in Scripture (Ps. 78).
- **Objection:** This prevents us from boldly asking God to deliver us from seemingly insurmountable trials?
 - A sovereign God does not need miracles to accomplish His purposes or to meet our needs!

2. NT prophecy was part of the apostolic foundation of the church, which is now complete.

- Apostleship was a spiritual gift, given by Christ to His church (1 Cor. 12:28-31; Eph. 4:7-11).
- Apostles had two chief qualifications:
 - Personal Witnesses of the Risen Christ (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:3-9)
 - Appointed by Christ as His miracle-working spokesmen (Mt. 10:1-8; 2 Cor. 12:12; Gal. 1:1).
- The gift of apostleship was foundational to the church's establishment and has now ceased (Eph. 2:19f).
- The gift of prophecy was part of this apostolic foundation and has ceased as well (Eph. 2:19f; 2 Cor. 13).

3. The miraculous, revelatory gifts (as defined by the NT) are nowhere practiced today.

- There were five revelatory gifts,¹ reducible to three: **(1)** prophecy, **(2)** miracles, and **(3)** tongues.
 - **Prophecy:** The ability to speak divine revelation (Acts 21:10-13; 30-33; 28:17-19).
 - **Miracles:** The ability to perform supernatural acts of divine revelation (Mt. 10:1; Acts 3:1-11).
 - **Tongues:** The ability to speak God's truth in an unlearned human language (Acts 2:7-8; Acts 10:46; 11:15) for the purpose of evangelizing Gentiles and warning Jews (1 Cor. 14:12-28).
 - **Criticism of Dr. Wayne Grudem:** *Equates distinct gifts with what all believers possess.*

4. The NT reinforces the transition from the Apostolic Church to Post-Apostolic Church.

- The gift of tongues was designed as a sign for first-century, unbelieving Jews, testifying of the universality of Messiah's kingdom (1 Cor. 14:21-22; Isa. 28:10-13).
 - **Acts 2:** *Jewish Feast of Pentecost*
 - **Acts 10:** *To prove to Peter & the Jews that believing Gentiles were welcome*
 - **Acts 19:** *To disciples of John the Baptist, during Paul's ministry to unbelieving Jews*
 - **Corinth (Acts 18):** *During the early years of opposition from the Jewish community*
- The final books of the NT confirm that inspired prophecy was only a temporary gift.
 - Paul defines the Post-Apostolic prophet as one who exposites the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14-17).
 - Peter speaks of the gospel accounts as "more sure" than his own experience (2 Pet. 1:16-21; 2:1).
 - Jude speaks of defending "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).
 - John ends his Apocalypse with a warning against adding to Scripture (Rev. 22:18-19).

5. The "continuationist" movement includes heretical churches and involves a major step toward Rome.

- The "Oneness Pentecostalism" movement denies the Trinity, yet practices all the "charismatic" gifts.
- Striking similarities to Roman Catholicism (in certain "continuationist" circles)
 - Continuing, extra-scriptural revelation (turning the focus away from Scripture)
 - Hierarchical authority structure
 - Elaborate, extra-scriptural worship
 - Shameless profiteering
 - Vain credulity / Superstitious Irrationalism
 - Heretical doctrine.

¹ Per 1 Cor. 12:8-10, the five revelatory gifts were: (1) words of wisdom and knowledge; (2) healing and faith; (3) Miracles; (4) Prophecy and Interpretation; and (5) Tongues and Interpretation.