

## Patristic quotes concerning Spiritual Gifts Continuing

One of the greatest objections to modern day spiritual gifts (charismata) such as speaking in tongues and prophecy (amongst others) is that they vanished once the apostles died.

According to this theory no-one should expect to be endowed by spectacular gifts of the Spirit given that they belong entirely to the past. This view, however, is rapidly losing credence in our days. Thanks to the great revival of Patristic Studies throughout the last century. - Will Graham Patristic Historian

He starts chapter 82 of his apologetic book declaring, *“For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time.”* He continues the same line of reasoning in chapter 87 arguing that the Spirit continues to impart gifts of grace *“to those who believe in Him, according as He deems each man worthy thereof.”* The following chapter, 88, is also explicitly affirmative of the presence of spiritual gifts: *“Now, it is possible to see among us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God.”* Justin believed the charismata were plainly at work during his lifetime. - Will Graham Patristic Historian on Justin Martyr (100-160AD)

“Those who are in truth Jesus’ disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform miracles, so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe in Christ, and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years” - Irenaus (130-202)

In like manner we do hear many brethren in the Church who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God, whom also the apostle terms “spiritual”, they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit, and not because their flesh has been stripped off and taken away. Irenaus (130-202)

“Let these false leaders then exhibit, the gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer only let it be by the Spirit, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him; let him especially show to me also, that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from among those specially holy sisters of his. Now all these signs are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty. Therefore without doubt the Christ, and the Spirit, and the apostle belong solely to my God. - Tertullian (AD 150-220)

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“Those who hold to Jewish tradition no longer have prophets or miracles. Yet, those things are still found among Christians to a considerable extent. Some of those miracles are more remarkable than any that ever existed among the Jews. I have witnessed these myself.”- Origen (AD 185-254)

“This is He (Jesus) who places prophets among us in the Church, instructs the teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, often discrimination of spirits, affords powers of Elders in government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts there are of charismata; and thus makes the Lord’s Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed.” - Novatian - (AD 200-258)

If you believe, you shall not only receive remission of sins, but also do things which pass man’s power. And pray especially that you be worthy of the gift of prophecy! All your life long will your Guardian the Comforter abide with you; He will care for you, as for His own soldier; for your goings out, and your comings in, and your plotting foes. And He will give you gifts of grace of every kind, if you grieve Him not by sin, Be ready to receive such gifts of grace, and when you have received it, cast it not away.” - Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 313-386)

And concerning the Apostles and Prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in a spirit. Rather from his behaviour, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known. And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet. And every prophet who teaches the truth, if he does not what he teaches, is a false prophet. But whosoever shall say in a spirit ‘Give me money, or something else,’ you shall not listen to him; but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him. But every true prophet who wishes to settle among you is "worthy of his food." Likewise a true teacher is himself worthy, like the workman, of his food. Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you through the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Therefore do not despise them, for they are your honourable men together with the prophets and teachers. - Didache (Roughly AD 300)

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The gift of the apostle and prophet disappears during the inception of the official organized church not because it has ceased but because it is not wanted. It is not wanted for two reasons. First, there is very real danger of false apostles and prophets, who are legion and wreak great damage upon the church. Second, true apostles and prophets are even more dangerous. They constitute another center of power that is independent from and potentially rival to the officially constituted authority. The gift is not elected by anyone or accountable to anyone except God. These gifts may rebuke a king, a bishop or priest, or a General Conference president. They provide a check and balance to all these and even to officially chosen councils. They are by definition inconvenient persons, and we try to get them out of the way by whatever method is available and appropriate: kill them, reject them, ignore them, marginalize them, co-opt them, or dispatch them to Australia. So repeatedly in history apostles and prophets have been suppressed and replaced by scholars and administrators. The writings of dead apostles and prophets can be dealt with and domesticated—they hold no more surprises. But the living gift is a loose cannon that cannot be controlled. Jesus said: “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and consent to the deeds of your fathers; for they killed them, and you build their tombs” (Luke 11:47, 48). We honor dead ones but fear and silence live ones. There have always been well-meaning leaders who want to restrict the exercise of the gift. All this is probably inevitable and to be expected, but nonetheless to be lamented. - Robert M. Johnston  
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