

CENTRAL BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF “THAT WHICH IS PERFECT” (1 Cor 13:10)
WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ORIGIN OF THE “CANON VIEW”

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A History of Interpretation of “That Which Is Perfect” (1 Cor 13:10)

Introduction

The text which this paper addresses is a crucial one in any discussion of the charismata in the contemporary church.¹ “After all else has been said, [1 Corinthians 13:8–10] appears to be the immovable stumbling block for the view that [prophecy and tongues] have ceased.”² Of particular interest is the specific identity of τὸ τέλειον—“that which is perfect.” In the following pages it will become obvious that there are three major clusters of views. Some relate τὸ τέλειον to the parousia, others to the maturity of the church, and some to the completion of the canon of Scripture. It will also become obvious that only the first of these interpretations can claim any significant historical heritage. The others are fairly recent phenomena.

It appears that concerns raised by the contemporary charismatic movement have been the stimulus for the much more concentrated attention paid to this text than has been true historically. Although there have been sporadic manifestations of tongues and prophecy throughout the past history of the church (as charismatics are quick to point out),³ they have in almost every case been very limited in scope and have never had a major impact on the church as a whole or on Christendom in general.⁴ The uniqueness of the twentieth-century phenomena is that the manifestations of tongues and prophecy (along with other miraculous gifts) have become

¹Pettegrew goes so far as to say that “1 Corinthians 13:8–13 is *the* crucial Scriptural passage in regard to the permanency of the gifts, especially in regard to the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues.” Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Continuity and Discontinuity* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1993), 184. Emphasis added. Farnell likewise calls this text “a *crux interpretum* regarding the continuance or cessation of the gift” of prophecy (F. David Farnell, “When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?” *BibSac* 150 [1993]: 191. This is one part of a four-part abridgment of his doctoral dissertation at Dallas in 1992[?].)

²Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost: New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 109. This, however, is a modern phenomena, for “historically 1 Corinthians 13:8, 9 never played a part in the view of the Christian church that tongues ceased in the first centuries” (Joseph Dillow, *Speaking in Tongues: Seven Crucial Questions* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975], 90).

³For example, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., “Irenaeus and ‘Prophetic Gifts,’” in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 104–14; and Donald Lee Barnett and Jeffery P. McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues: A Scholarly Defense* (Seattle: Community Chapel Publications, 1986), 228–79.

⁴Frank Farrell, “Outburst of Tongues: The New Penetration,” *Christianity Today*, 13 Sept. 1963, 5; George W. Dollar, “Church History and the Tongues Movement,” *BibSac* 120 (1963): 316–21; and Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. “The Gift of Tongues in the Post Apostolic Church: A.D. 100–400,” *BibSac* 122 (1965): 134–43.

mainline, infiltrating most of the denominations to one extent or another and spawning a large number of charismatic groups and denominations.⁵

As a result of these developments, noncharismatic scholars have vigorously challenged the purported manifestations of the miraculous gifts. The literature opposing the movement has been nearly as voluminous as that advocating it. The quality and accuracy of this sea of publications has varied wildly on both shores. The unifying theme of the charismatic literature has been a sincere conviction that those who have not experienced the charismata have been shortchanged and lack God's provisions for their spiritual walk and warfare. On the other side, noncharismatics have been united in defending the unique authority and sufficiency of Scripture which they have seen as challenged by the experiential and revelatory claims of tongues and prophecy in particular.⁶ It is for this reason that 1 Corinthians 13:10 has received considerable attention in the last century. If either the canon view or the mature body view can be established on exegetical grounds, then a one-verse proof text against the contemporary manifestations of tongues is available. This neither validates nor invalidates any of the three interpretations, but simply explains the reason for the explosion of interest in the text that will be evident in the following historical survey when the twentieth century is reached.

Not all aspects of the question will be addressed and an exegetical study will not be attempted. Instead this paper will focus on a history of interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:10 and, to a lesser extent, the surrounding context. Of particular interest will be the origins of the "canon view" since that has become so popular in dispensational circles in the twentieth century. Only views that have commanded the support of several scholars will be considered; unique

⁵This has been true from the turn of the century when the traditional Pentecostal groups originated from roots in the holiness movement and also from mid-century when the charismatics sprouted forth in the main line denominations. The Vineyard movement of the past decade rejects the designation *charismatic*, but is heir to this same tradition in many ways.

⁶This emphasis can be seen, for example, in John MacArthur's books, *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) and its revision, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992); and in R. H. Saxe, *The Battle for Your Bible* (Ann Arbor: Grace Bible Publishers), 1975. Carson has observed the same concern. Although his comments are directed primarily at the canon view, it is also true of the mature body view.

Much of the impetus for this position stems from a profound concern for the finality of biblical truth. If the gift of prophecy, say, is being exercised with the same authority as it had in the hands of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Amos, it is extremely difficult to see how, if the gift of prophecy still operates, one can avoid sliding into the stance of the cults. Why should not such modern prophets write down their prophecies, which in turn should be accepted as 'canon' by the church?

D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 68-69.

interpretations will not be included.⁷ Patristic, medieval, and modern writers will be surveyed and their position summarized.⁸ The arrangement is generally chronological according to the date of publication although that cannot always be determined with precision, particularly patristic and some medieval authors. Prior to the twentieth century dates given for each writer are for the writer's life (if that is known) or, if a single date is given, the date of publication of the work cited.

⁷Nonconservative writers, e.g., sometimes equate τὸ τέλειον with ἀγάπη (Nils Johansson, "I Cor. xiii and I Cor. xiv," *New Testament Studies* 10 [1964]: 388). There is no lack of those who take the wording of the text and create their own message (e.g., Edgar D. Jones, "The Coming of the Perfect" [St. Louis: Bethany, 1946]). Such writers are not included in this study. John R. McRay lists several other minor views, but without documentation ("To Teleion in I Corinthians 13:10," *Restoration Quarterly* 14 [1971]: 168–69).

⁸The modern works included have been largely commentators; in the twentieth century section the controversial literature related to the charismatic movement has also been included where discussion of this passage receives attention. The one area that has not been surveyed is that of systematic theology. It would perhaps be helpful to extend this work by scanning the scripture indices of the major systematic theologies of the past several centuries.

Chapter One: Patristic and Medieval Writers

Patristic Writers

A number of patristic writers have commented on the last portion of 1 Corinthians 13. A few of these are commentaries, but most are passing references used as illustrations. Attention will be focused on verse 10 where possible, though reference will also be made to verses 9 and 11–13 where necessary to represent a particular father’s view of the passage in general if he does not comment on verse 10. The following section notes all references to 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 found in the Scripture indexes to the standard English edition of the Fathers. They are arranged in chronological order.⁹

Irenaeus, A.D. 120–202

Irenaeus quotes 1 Corinthians 13:9 and follows that quotation with an allusion to verse ten. “We, while upon the earth, as Paul declares, ‘Know in part, and prophecy in part.’”¹⁰ Two paragraphs later, after repeating the statement just cited, he rebukes various heretics (by name) and argues that “if those who are *perfect* do not yet understand the very things in their hands, and at their feet, and before their eyes, and on the earth..., how can we believe them regarding things spiritual?”¹¹

This statement is probably sarcastic, referring to the named heretics as *perfect*, yet charging that even these *perfected ones* could not understand earthly things, let alone spiritual matters. Another reference suggests that Irenaeus understood τὸ τέλειον to refer to seeing God, though it is also possible to take this as a reference to final maturity at the time the believer reaches heaven.

For one and the same Lord...confers gifts upon men, that is, His own presence, and the resurrection of the dead; but He does not change God, nor proclaim another Father, but that

⁹A note regarding the reference format that has been used is in order: the reference numbers immediately following the citation of one of the church fathers refers to the divisions of that work (book, chapter, paragraph, etc.); the numbers that follow this, separated from the first set of numbers by a semicolon, and from each other by a colon, refer to the vol. and page number of the English edition. If all that father’s writings are contained in a single volume of the set, only the page number is given, in this instance a “p.” is prefixed.

¹⁰Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1:309–567 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 2.28.7; p. 401.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 2.28.9; p. 402; emphasis in the translation.

very same one, who always has more to measure out to those of His household. And as their love towards God increases, He bestows more and greater [gifts]; as also the Lord said to His disciples: ‘Ye shall see greater things than these.’ And Paul declares: ‘Not that I have already attained, or that I am already perfect. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect has come, the things which are in part shall be done away.’ As therefore, when that which is perfect is come, we shall not see another Father, but Him whom we now desire to see.¹²

Tertullian, A.D. 145–220

Tertullian takes *face to face* to refer to the visible manifestation of Jesus. The similar phrase in Numbers 12:6–8 (*mouth to mouth*) is distinguished from face-to-face knowledge, which was (for Moses) fulfilled in the Transfiguration when Moses saw Jesus visibly. His explanation would imply, though it does not explicitly state this, that the face-to-face knowledge is yet future for the believer.¹³ He does not specifically refer to verse ten, so his exact understanding of the phrase “the perfect” is not known.

In another text Tertullian says, “No one blushes at his own improvement.” He then cites verse eleven as an illustration of growth in Christian maturity and knowledge in the case of the apostle Paul himself.¹⁴

Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 153–217

Clement’s view of the passage is quite clear. He first cites verses eight and thirteen and then alludes to verse ten in his explanation. τὸ τέλειον is the believer’s state when he sees God.

“Love never faileth. Prophecies are done away, tongues cease, gifts of healing fail on the earth. But these three abide, Faith, Hope, Love. But the greatest of these is Love.” And rightly. For Faith departs when we are convinced by vision, by seeing God. And Hope vanishes when the things hoped for come. But Love comes to completion, and grows more when that which is perfect has been bestowed.¹⁵

This conclusion is substantiated by Clement’s comments on the same text in another passage in which he is discussing how man might know God through philosophy by

¹²Ibid., 4.9.2; p. 472.

¹³Tertullian, “Against Praxeas,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 3:597–627 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 14; p. 609.

¹⁴Ibid., “On Modesty.”

¹⁵Clement of Alexandria, “Salvation of the Rich Man,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 2:591–604 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 38; p. 602.

contemplating his own being and contrasts this with face-to-face knowledge that will be ours when we “lay aside the flesh”—presumably at death or the return of Christ.

The divine apostle writes accordingly respecting us: “For now we see as through a glass;” knowing ourselves in it by reflection, and simultaneously contemplating, as we can, the efficient cause, from that, which, in us, is divine. . . . But after the laying aside of the flesh, “face to face,”—then definitely and comprehensively, when the heart becomes pure.¹⁶

The phrase *final perfection* is used to define this more precisely a bit later in the same writing. Most of these comments relate to verse twelve (*face to face*), but the last phrase cited seems to indicate that he understands τὸ τέλειον in verse ten to relate to the same time as the face-to-face condition of verse twelve.

Bound in this earthly body, we apprehend the objects of sense by means of the body; but we grasp intellectual objects by means of the logical faculty itself. But if one expects to apprehend all things by the senses, he has fallen far from the truth. Spiritually, therefore, the apostle writes respecting the knowledge of God, “For now we see as through a glass, but then face to face.” . . . For it is evident that no one during the period of life has been able to apprehend God clearly. But “the pure in heart shall see God,” when they arrive at the final perfection.¹⁷

Origen, A.D. 185–254

Origen cites both verse twelve (“face to face”) and verse ten (“that which is perfect”) by way of contrasting limited, earthly knowledge of God through general revelation (“through the things which He hath made from the creation of the world”) with that knowledge that will be the Christian’s when he reaches “the highest heavens.”¹⁸ In a later passage he argues that true knowledge of God can only be apprehended by means of “the intelligence which is formed in His image.” This is true even though we are now limited to seeing in a glass darkly. The face-to-face knowledge is still future.¹⁹ He speaks also of “the different life of the soul here and hereafter” in terms of seeing in a glass obscurely but then face to face. He parallels this description with 2 Corinthians 5:6–8, “at home in the body but away from the Lord.”²⁰

¹⁶Ibid., “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” 1.19; p. 322.

¹⁷Ibid., 5.1.; p. 446.

¹⁸Origen. *Origen Against Celsus*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 4:395–669 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 6.20; p. 582.

¹⁹Ibid., 7.38; p. 626.

²⁰Ibid., 7.50; p. 631.

Cyprian, A.D. 200–258

Cyprian cites 1 Corinthians 13:12 (“seeing through a glass”) as proof of his statement that “the secrets of God cannot be seen through, and therefore that our faith ought to be simple.” This would imply that he views the glass analogy to be still valid even after the completion of the canon, though he does not explicitly refer to τὸ τέλειον in verse ten.²¹

Eusebius, A.D. 260–340

Eusebius does not quote from 1 Corinthians thirteen, but does make a rather obscure comment in a dispute with the Montanists that may be relevant: “The apostle thought it necessary that the prophetic gift should continue in all the Church until the final coming.”²² (“The apostle” usually refers to Paul in Eusebius.)

Archelaus (Bishop of Carrha), A.D. 277

The record of this third century debate between Archelaus and the Manichaean dualist Manes has been evaluated differently; some contend for a historical account, others that it is a fictional record. Its antiquity is not disputed and it provides the opinions and teachings of some ancient believer, whether that of Archelaus or another. In that regard it is interesting to note the use of 1 Corinthians 13:10, for it is the earliest work discovered (by this writer) who specifically identifies “the perfect” as Jesus. The statement is made in the context of a question from the debate judges requesting Archelaus to clarify his understanding of “the perfect” in light of Manes’ claim that it referred to the Paraclete—which happens to be Manes himself in the Manichaean system. Manes had asserted that

I, in sooth [truth], am the Paraclete, whose mission was announced of old time by Jesus, and who was to come to “convince the world of sin and unrighteousness.” And even as Paul, who was sent before me, said of himself, that “he knew in part, and prophesied in part,” so I reserve the perfect for myself, in order that I may do away with that which is in part. Therefore receive ye this third testimony, that I am an elect apostle of Christ; and if ye

²¹Cyprian, *The Treatises of Cyprian*, “Treatise 12: Three Books of Testimonies Against the Jews,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 5:421–557 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 3.53; p. 547.

²²Eusebius, *Church History*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 1:73–403 (1890; Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 5.17.4; p. 234.

choose to accept my words, ye will find salvation; but if ye refuse them, eternal fire will have you to consume you.²³

Archelaus replies:

Those sayings which are put forth by the blessed Paul were not uttered without the direction of God, and therefore it is certain that what he has declared to us is that we are to look for our Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect one, who is the only one who knows the Father... But let it be observed, that it is said that when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now this man (Manes) asserts that he is the perfect one. Let him show us, then, what he has done away with; for what is to be done away with is the ignorance which is in us. Let him therefore tell us what he has done away with, and what he has brought into the *sphere of our* knowledge.²⁴

Methodius, A.D. 260–312

Methodius uses τὸ τέλειον in reference to the return of Christ and the events associated with it.

For now we know “in part,” and as it were “through a glass,” since that which is perfect has not yet come to us; namely the kingdom of heaven and the resurrection, when “that which is in part shall be done away.” For then will all our tabernacles be firmly set up, when again the body shall rise, with bones again joined and compacted with flesh.²⁵

Athanasius, A.D. 296–373

Athanasius’ Easter letter for the year 339 begins by speaking very highly of the apostle Paul’s holy manner of life and implies that it was this holiness that resulted in his being caught up to heaven. Athanasius suggests that it was after this heavenly visit that Paul spoke of earthly and heavenly things in the terms of partial and complete knowledge.

When he descended, he preached to every man; “We know in part; here I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” For in truth, he was known to those saints who are in heaven, as their fellow-citizen. And in relation to all that is future and perfect, the things known by him here were in part; but with respect to those things which were committed and entrusted to him by the Lord, he was perfect.²⁶

²³Archelaus, “The Acts of the Disputation with the Heresiarch Manes,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 6:179–235 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 13; p. 187.

²⁴Ibid., 37; p. 211.

²⁵Methodius, “The Banquet of the Ten Virgins; or, Concerning Chastity,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 6:309–55 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 9.2; p. 345.

²⁶Athanasius, “Letter 11, Easter A.D. 339,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 4 (1891; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 4:552.

The use of 1 Corinthians 13:9ff in this passage assumes that Paul refers to our present earthly knowledge as “in part,” but heavenly knowledge as “perfect.” Paul had perfect knowledge (i.e., full and complete understanding) of some things, but only because he had been graced with the privilege of a heavenly visit.

Basil, A.D. 329–379

The reference of τὸ τέλειον in Basil relates to complete (as opposed to partial) knowledge of the truth in heaven.

If [the mind] has yielded to the aid of the Spirit, it will have understanding of the truth, and will know God. But it will know Him, as the Apostle says, in part; and in the life to come more perfectly. For “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”²⁷

Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 330–391.

Gregory cites 1 Corinthians 13 (though he does not refer directly to τὸ τέλειον) in conjunction with his explanation of Paul’s heavenly visit. He contrasts that which Paul saw and learned there with what others know on earth. Since Paul was content with not attempting to elucidate that place, we too, says Gregory, “will honour it by silence.” In contrast to heavenly knowledge, Paul “estimates all knowledge on earth only as through a glass darkly, as taking its stand upon little images of the truth.” There are things that man is simply unable to know now, “but which should be borne and cleared up hereafter.”²⁸

Gregory of Nyssa, A.D. 330–394.

Gregory of Nyssa makes only a passing reference to this passage. In his apologetic work, “Against Eunomius,” he has endeavored to refute two works by Arius’ student, Eunomius (d. ca. 395). His writings are best known for their discussion of an orthodox view of the trinity. This doctrine, he says, was not clearly known in the Old Testament but has, through the ministry of both Jesus and the apostles, been explained. In his own words, “The teaching concerning the

²⁷Basil, “Letter to Amphilochius,” *Letters and Select Works*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 8 (1894; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 233; p. 273.

²⁸Gregory Nazianzen, “Oration 28: The Second Theological Oration,” *Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 7 (1893; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 20; pp. 295–96.

transcendent nature of the Deity which is given to us, as it were, ‘through a glass darkly’ from the older Scriptures...as an evidence of the truth fully revealed to us.” The OT revelation is contrasted with the full knowledge of the NT as a dark glass is compared with clear vision. This is the only reference in the patristic writers that connects this passage with Scripture. It would be exceeding the evidence, however, to suggest that Gregory identified τὸ τέλειον as the completed New Testament canon.²⁹

Ambrose, A.D. 340–397

In setting forth the kind of life that clergy ought to live, Ambrose addresses the issue of theodicy. In doing so he alludes to 1 Corinthians 13:9–10, relating the perfect to the future day when the believer will be face to face with God.

Do not, therefore, understand, or speak, or think as a child; nor as a child claim those things now which belong to a future time. The crown belongs to the perfect. Wait til that which is perfect is come, when thou mayest know—not through a glass as in a riddle, but face to face—the very form of truth made clear. Then will be made known why that person was rich who was wicked and a robber of other men’s goods, why another was powerful, why a third had many children, and yet a fourth was loaded with honours.³⁰

His discussion of the resurrection sounds a similar note as he explains Psalm 39:4 by comparing it with 1 Corinthians 13:12.

David knew that what is perfect cannot be grasped here, and therefore hastened on to those things which are to come. For now we know in part, and understand in part, but then it will be possible for that which is perfect to be grasped, when not the shadow but the reality of the Divine Majesty and eternity shall begin to shine so as to be gazed upon by us with unveiled face.³¹

John Chrysostom, A.D. 347–407

In his sermon on Matthew 5:17 (“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets”), Chrysostom compares the abolition of the Old Law by the coming of the New Law with the future abolition of the new law by the coming of the perfect.

²⁹Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 5 (1892; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 2.1; p. 101.

³⁰Ambrose, “Duties of the Clergy,” *The Principal Works of St. Ambrose*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 10 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 1.16.62; p. 11.

³¹Ibid., “Two Books of St. Ambrose on the Decease of Satyrus and the Resurrection of the Dead,” 2.32; p. 178.

If it [the old law] be more imperfect than the new, neither doth this imply it to be evil: since upon this principle the new law itself will be in the very same case. Because in truth our knowledge of this, when compared with that which is to come, is a sort of partial and imperfect thing, and is done away on the coming of that other. ‘For when,’ saith He, ‘that which is in part shall be done away:’ even as it befell the old law through the new. Yet we are not to blame the new law for this, though that also gives place on our attaining unto the Kingdom: for ‘then,’ saith He, ‘that which is in part shall be done away:’ but for all this we call it great.³²

Commenting on verse ten, he says, “It is not therefore knowledge that is done away, but the circumstance that our knowledge is in part. For we shall not only know as much but even a great deal more.”³³ He apparently identifies τὸ τέλειον with complete knowledge, which from the context of his remarks, will be when we see God.

In his homily on 2 Corinthians 2:12–13, he compares the savor of the knowledge of God (v. 14) with the dark, mirror-knowledge of 1 Corinthians 13:12. Both of these we have now in contrast with full knowledge which we will one day have.³⁴

Jerome, A.D. 345–420

Jerome makes passing reference to 1 Corinthians 13:9 in his arrogant and contemptuous³⁵ letter “To Pammachius against John of Jerusalem.” The context is a controversy over Origen’s teachings in regard to the trinitarian relationships of the godhead. The specifics are not necessary to understand his use of the text. He refers to Psalm 8 and argues that David deliberately couched the statement as a future reference: *I shall see* the heavens, not *I see*. He then explains that this will be when he beholds the glory of the Lord, juxtaposing Paul’s statement, “now we see in part, and we know in part.” Although he does not go on to cite verse

³²John Chrysostom, *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 1st series, ed. Philip Schaff, vols. 10–14 (1888; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Homily 16.6; p. 107.

³³Ibid., “Homilies on First Corinthians,” Homily 34.2 on 1 Cor; vol. 12, p. 202.

³⁴Ibid., Homily 5.2 on 2 Cor.; v. 12, p. 301; cp. also similar comments in Homily 10.4 on 2 Cor.; v. 12, p. 328 and Homily 11 on Eph. (ad loc. Eph. 4:13); v. 13, p. 105. Alford says that Chrysostom takes the first two future tense verbs in verse eight to refer to “the time when, the faith being every where dispersed, these gifts should be *no longer needed*.” (Alford, 2:587–88) He does not cite a specific reference in Chrysostom, so his comment cannot be verified. It would seem to be a different understanding of the texts cited above, or it refers to another passage in Chrysostom that this writer has not been able to locate. D. W. Poor (the editor of Kling’s commentary on 1 Corinthians in Lange’s) also says that “Chrys. and others, however, understand these futures, of the time when, faith having spread abroad, these special gifts will be no longer needed; hence, as belonging to the present age” (20:271).

³⁵This is the editor’s description of the letter.

ten's reference to τὸ τέλειον, it seems from his use of verse nine that he would contrast present knowledge with that which will be known in heaven. Whether he would take that to be gained at death (probably) or at the return of Christ (less likely) is not certain.³⁶

In refuting the Pelagian doctrine of sin, Jerome argues that perfection is not possible in this life despite the fact that a person can avoid sin for a short time. He buttresses his argument by appealing to the partial knowledge of which Paul spoke, citing verses nine and ten. "Therefore we have but the shadow and likeness of the pure heart, which hereafter is destined to see God, and, free from spot or stain, to live with Abraham." τὸ τέλειον apparently refers to the state of perfection or Christian maturity that the believer reaches at death.³⁷

Augustine, A.D. 354–430

Due to the prolific nature of Augustine's pen, there are far more references to individual passages than most other patristic writers. Augustine specifically relates the face-to-face knowledge to our future state after death. This is reflected in several of his letters to various people. For example, "The Holy Spirit... is to be loved, He is to be praised, with whom is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall see light, not darkly as we do here, but face to face."³⁸

Moreover, when you read, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face,' learn from this that we shall then see Him face to face by the same means by which we now see Him through a glass darkly. In both cases alike, the vision of God belongs to the inner man, whether we walk in this pilgrimage still by faith, in which it uses the glass and the αἰνιγμα, or when, in the country which is our home, we shall perceive by sight, which vision the words 'face to face' denote.³⁹

³⁶Jerome, "Letter 'To Pammachius against John of Jerusalem,'" *The Principal Works of St. Jerome, in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 6. (1892; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 9; p. 429.

³⁷Ibid., "Against the Pelagians," 3.12; p. 478; cf. also 1.15; p. 456.

³⁸Augustine "Letters, #27, to Paulinus," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, ed. Philip Schaff. (1886–88; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 4; 1:250. Cf. also, "We shall become the more like unto Him, the more we advance in knowledge of Him and in love...; yet so as that, however far one may have become advanced in this life, he is far short of that perfection of likeness which is fitted for seeing God, as the apostle says, 'face to face'" (3; 1:380).

³⁹Ibid., "Letters, #92, to Italica," 4; 1:381.

Augustine also comments on the passage several times in discussing the nature of God, using it to argue that God does not have a physical body—the reference to *face* being figurative.⁴⁰

Augustine’s description of the beatific vision in *The City of God* speaks of the difference between seeing now darkly, but then face to face, as the difference between the Christian’s present experience and that of the angels.

As, then, they see, so shall we also shall see; but not yet do we thus see. Wherefore the apostle uses the words cited a little ago, “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.” This vision is reserved as the reward of our faith; and of it the apostle John also says, “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”⁴¹

The “perfect” is apparently to be understood as the resurrected, glorified body: “When that which is perfect is come, and the corruptible body no longer oppresses the soul, but is incorruptible and offers no impediment to it.”⁴²

In his exposition of the Psalms he uses similar language. “That sight of Thee ‘face to face’ is reserved for those set free in the Resurrection.... Seeing face to face is reserved to a future time, when what the Apostle himself speaks of shall have come. ‘When Christ our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.’ It is against that time then that vision ‘face to face’ is reserved for you.”⁴³

He elsewhere argues that a mature Christian who has faith, hope, and love has no further need for Scripture (a rather presumptuous argument, it would seem!). In these instances he suggests that 1 Corinthians 13:8 has already been fulfilled. This is qualified by “so far as is possible in this life; for, in comparison with the future life, the life of no just and holy man is perfect here.”⁴⁴

In a fashion similar to Archelaus in his dispute with the Manichaeans, Augustine also rejected the Manichaean claim that New Testament Pauline revelation was to be described as “in a glass, darkly,” but that the Manichaean Paraclete was the perfect revelation that has made everything clear.⁴⁵ In a similar context he says,

⁴⁰See “Letter, #148, to Fortunatianus,” 1.1; 1:498, and 2.7; 1:500.

⁴¹Ibid., *City of God*, 22.29; 2:507.

⁴²Ibid., 22.29; 2:508.

⁴³Ibid., *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, Ps. 44.4; 8:141; cf. also Ps. 49.5; 8:170.

⁴⁴Ibid., *On Christian Doctrine*, 39.43; 2:534.

⁴⁵Ibid., *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean*, 15.6; 4:215.

In the words, ‘when that which is perfect is come,’ Paul spoke of the perfection in the enjoyment of eternal life. For in the same place he says: ‘Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.... This perfection will not come to the saints till the accomplishment of what John speaks of: ‘Now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when it shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ Then we shall be led into all truth by the Holy Spirit, of which we have now received the pledge.⁴⁶

Augustine can also identify “the perfect” as the Son. After citing 1 Corinthians 13:10, he explains, “then what appeared to the flesh in assumed flesh shall display Itself as It is in Itself to all who love It; then, there shall be eternal life for us to know the one very God; then shall we be like Him.”⁴⁷ It is interesting to note Augustine’s use of the neuter here (presumably, from the English translation) as is also the case of Paul. His exposition of Psalm 91 likewise speaks of “Christ Himself” as the one we will one day see “face to face.”⁴⁸

Theodoret, A.D. 393–453

Theodoret appeals to 1 Corinthians 13:9 as a general statement that no one knows perfectly. His letter addressed to Eusebius, Bishop of Ancyra, is a defense against charges of heresy. Near the end of the letter he appeals to the bishop that “if...anything that I have said jars with the divine teaching, I request to be told of it by your holiness. For, although I have spent much time in teaching, I still need one to teach me.” He then cites 1 Corinthians 13:9 as substantiation of this principle (“We know in part...”).⁴⁹

Theodoret also records a letter from Alexander, bishop of Alexandria to (a different) Alexander, bishop of Constantinople in regard to the Arian heresy. In it the writer argues for the importance of proper terminology in the Christological debate and in particular argues against the appeal of the Arians to the terminology of earlier writers who used similar terms in a more general sense. These earlier theologians had qualified their statements by saying, “as far as our comprehension has reached.” The Arians were now contending that they understood the technical

⁴⁶Ibid., 32.18; 4:338–39.

⁴⁷Ibid., *On the Spirit and the Letter*, 41; 5:100.

⁴⁸Ibid., *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, Ps. 91.20; 8:452. He also sometimes paraphrases “the perfect” as “when that which we now hope for and believe shall come” (*Sermons on NT Lessons*, Sermon #28.5; 6:348).

⁴⁹Theodoret, “Letters of the Blessed Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 3 (1892; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), Letter 109; 3:289.

distinctions more clearly. To this Alexander replies (and it is not clear if the Arians actually made this claim, or if he places the paraphrase in their mouth) that

if those who allege that what was “*known in part*” has been “*done away*” for them, expect from human lips anything beyond human powers, it is plain that the terms “was,” and “ever,” and “before all ages,” fall far short of this expectation. But whatever they may mean, it is not the same as “the unbegotten.”

It would appear that the verse is understood to refer to knowledge in general, but that some future condition has done away with the limitation. This conclusion is, of course, contested by Alexander. The Arians do not have the completed knowledge they claim. Alexander does not contest, however, the basic understanding of the verse as referring to partial knowledge. If use of this verse is Alexander’s and not the Arians, then it would imply that this is how he understood the verse.⁵⁰

Leo the Great, A.D. 390–461

Although he does not cite verse 10, he does, in his sermon on the Beatitudes, expound the blessedness of a pure heart and its promised reward of seeing God. That promise will be fulfilled in the future “when man’s nature is transformed, so that no longer ‘in a mirror,’ nor ‘in a riddle,’ but ‘face to face’ it sees the very Godhead ‘as He is.’”⁵¹

John of Damascus, A.D. 675–749

John of Damascus, the great Eastern theologian, understands τὸ τέλειον to refer to the law of Christ in contrast to the law of Moses, which was in part.

These are the things which the spiritual law of Christ enjoins on us and those who observe that become as superior to the law of Moses. *For when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away:* and when the covering of the law, that is, the veil, is rent asunder through the crucifixion of the Saviour, and the Spirit shines forth with tongues of fire, the letter shall be done away with, bodily things shall come to an end, the law of servitude shall be fulfilled, and the law of liberty be bestowed on us.⁵²

⁵⁰*The Ecclesiastical History of Theodoret*, “The Epistle of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, to Alexander, Bishop of Constantinople,” 1.3; p. 40.

⁵¹Leo the Great, Sermon 95, “A Homily on the Beatitudes, St. Matt. v.1–9,” *The Letters and Sermons of Leo the Great*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 12 (1894; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 8; p. 205.

⁵²John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*. In *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 9 (1898; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 23; p. 96.

Since this is not in an expository or apologetic context, it is possible that he uses the passage more as an illustration than as expounding the meaning of the text. (It would be anachronistic to refer Paul's future reference to τὸ τέλειον to the cross.)

The consensus of the church fathers is that Paul's reference to τὸ τέλειον in 1 Corinthians 13:10 is an eschatological one. None of them views it as a past event from their perspective.

Medieval Writers

For purposes of this paper, medieval writers are defined as roughly the ninth through the fifteenth centuries. Limited resources limit the size of this section.⁵³

John Colet, 1467?–1519

Colet, the Oxford-educated Dean of St. Paul's in London, presents τὸ τέλειον as a future event, perfected knowledge replacing the earthly imperfections of knowledge.

Prophecy, tongues, knowledge can perish, and perish they will, belonging as they do to this life, which shall come to an end. But charity, by which we are rooted in Christ, by which we grow, and bear flower and fruit for life everlasting, by which we are alive in oneness and purity, in the strength and brightness of faith, by which we are of one kind, as it were, of one nature with the undying Christ, this shall never pass away. It is our perfection, and it will not be brought to nothing: by it we shall be recognized and accepted. The other things are partial here—knowledge, i.e., and prophecy—as we also are partial, what we shall be not having yet appeared [I John III. 2]. For now we are little ones, and we see by a mirror in obscurity the imaged countenance of truth. But when that which has been made perfect comes, then shall be laid aside what is partial, and we shall discern the truth as men, face to face, keeping the charity we have as little ones, but turning our backs on the reflections of knowledge and prophecy, from the mirror turning to the true countenance of truth itself [I Cor. XIII. 10–12].⁵⁴

⁵³Other scholastic commentators that ought to be consulted, but which were not available for the present endeavor, include: Theophylact (late 11th and early 12th C.), Oecumenius (late 10th C.), Atto Vercellensis (10th C.), Herveus Burgidolensis (first half of 12th C.), Peter Lombard (first half of 12th C.) and Thomas Aquinas (mid-13th C.). For those able to read the text in the original Greek or Latin, these are available in Migne's *Patristics* series. A number of other classic writers who comment on 1 Corinthians whose position would be of interest in the further development of this issue are listed by Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*. International Critical Commentary. 2d ed. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), lxxvi–lxxviii.

⁵⁴John Colet, *John Colet's Commentary on First Corinthians: A New Edition of the Latin Text, with Translation, Annotations, and Introduction*, transl. and ed. by Bernard O'Kelly and Catherine A. L. Jarrott (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1985), 269, 271 (p. 270 = the Latin text of p. 271). Colet lived from 1467?–1519; his commentary on 1 Corinthians probably dates between 1496 and 1505.

Marsilio Ficino, 1443–99

The Italian neoplatonist, Marsilio Ficino, does not refer to τὸ τέλειον (at least in the limited material available), but does refer to 1 Corinthians 13:12 as related to the “next life” when man will understand Ideas more plainly.

Plato and Plotinus think that real things are actually Ideas, that is, that the natural forms of things are images of the Ideas, coming from the influx of the invisible Ideas into the very matter of this world, rebounding upon the senses as if from a mirror. You see that men are so deceived by these appearances that they consider them to be real things, just as children take images appearing in a mirror for real things.... But the Philosophers, especially the Platonists, observing forms within the matter of the world, realize that they are the likenesses of Ideas.... Turning our faces toward these Ideas in the next life, we see them plainly, face to face, as Paul says, and so almost shout with the Prophet, “Lord God of Hosts, convert us. Let your face shine upon us and we shall be saved.”⁵⁵

⁵⁵Marsilio Ficino, *In Epistolas D. Pauli*, c. VII; *Op. om.*, pp. 437–38, as cited by Colet’s editors, 333, n. 27, *John Colet’s Commentary on First Corinthians*, 333, n. 27.

Chapter Two: Modern Writers

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century

John Calvin, 1509–64

It is Calvin's position that the gifts, including prophecy, were given for believers during their "time of weakness," i.e., this life. This time will end one day, and with it the gifts since there will be no further need for them. He views τὸ τέλειον as the state of perfection that comes to some extent at death, but only completely at the judgment.⁵⁶ This is so obvious that he says "it is stupid of people to make the whole of this discussion apply to the intervening time."⁵⁷

Juán de Valdés, 1500–41

Using an interpretive paraphrase, the Spanish-born theologian from Italy, Valdés, suggests that it is "as though he [Paul] had said: I state that charity or love never faileth, for Prophecies shall fail, tongues shall fail, and knowledge shall fail, when Prophecies shall be accomplished, when it shall no longer be necessary to speak with diversity of tongues, and when we shall know God, even as we are known of God, which will be in the life eternal; but love will never fail, nay, it will be augmented, it will be increased."⁵⁸ Although this does not specifically identify τὸ τέλειον, it is clear that Valdés connects the entire passage with heaven.

⁵⁶John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (1546; transl. John W. Fraser, ed. David E. Torrance and Thomas E. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 280–81.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 281. This comment is made in conjunction with his discussion of verse 10, not verses 11 and 12. An interesting study of Calvin's view of the gifts (from a charismatic perspective) has been written by Paul Elbert, "Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts," in *Essays on Apostolic Themes: Studies in Honor of Howard M. Ervin*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 115–43.

⁵⁸Juán de Valdés, *Commentary upon St. Paul's First Epistle to the Church at Corinth*, transl. and ed. John T. Beets (Original, Spanish ed., 1557; English ed., London: Trübner & Co., 1883), 238–39. The work was apparently published posthumously, for Valdés died in 1541.

Francis Roberts, 1609–75

There is scarce comment in Roberts, but he does briefly note in *Clavis Biblorum* that love is “more permanent then all gifts, which fhall ceafe in heaven.”⁵⁹

John Trapp, 1601–69

Trapp identifies τὸ τέλειον as heaven and explains that this is when the believer will be taught by the “arch-prophet” (Jesus).⁶⁰

Richard Baxter, 1615–91

Baxter identifies τὸ τέλειον as the state of perfection reached at death. He says, in regard to verse eight, “Holy love is an everlasting quality and employment, and shall not cease, but be perfected at death, and in heaven: but prophesying, languages, sciences, and all the artificial and imperfect sort of knowledge which now we have, shall cease, as useless there.” Regarding verses nine and ten he adds, “For here the manner of our knowing in the body is imperfect, and the measure in all inadequate: we know nothing wholly, but some part of things: and so we speak, even in prophesying and preaching: but perfection will end all this imperfection.”⁶¹

Matthew Poole, 1624–79

Matthew Poole identified τὸ τέλειον as heaven: “When we come to heaven, we shall be in such a state, as nothing shall or can be added to us; then our partial and imperfect knowledge shall be swallowed up in a knowledge perfect and complete.”⁶²

⁵⁹Francis Roberts, *Clavis Biblorum. The Key of the Bible, Unlocking the Richeft Treafury of the Holy Scriptures* (London: George Calvert, 1649), 808. (Spelling is cited as in the original.)

⁶⁰John Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition upon all the Books of the New Testament* (London: R.W., 1656; reprint, ed. W. Webster, London: Richard D. Dickison, 1865), 545.

⁶¹Richard Baxter, *A Paraphrase on the New Testament, with Notes, Doctrinal and Practical*, [1680?] A new edition, revised and corrected (London: Richard Edwards, 1817), 395.

⁶²Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (1685; Reprint; London: Banner of Truth, 1963), 3:586. (The work was completed and published posthumously by friends.)

John Locke, 1632–1704

The famous English philosopher, John Locke—if indeed the source is correctly identified⁶³—would relate τὸ τέλειον to “the state of accomplishment and perfection” that comes “hereafter.”

Charity will never cease, as a thing out of use; but the gifts of prophecy, and tongues, and the knowledge whereby men look into, and explain the meaning of the Scriptures, the time will be, when they will be laid aside, as no longer of any use. For the knowledge as we have now in this state, and the explication we give of Scripture, is short, partial, and defective. But when, hereafter, we shall be got into the state of accomplishment and perfection, wherein we are to remain in the other world, there will no longer be any need of these imperfecter ways of information, whereby we arrive at but a partial knowledge here.⁶⁴

Matthew Henry, 1662–1714

Matthew Henry explains τὸ τέλειον as “a state of perfection.” His exposition of verse ten states that “when the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in a future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness.” Verses eleven and twelve are illustrations of this change.⁶⁵

⁶³Spurgeon identifies this work as that of the philosopher (*Commenting and Commentaries* [1876; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 169). Yet the contents of the statement give pause to this conclusion, for Locke denied the immortality of the soul (G. Holmes, “Locke, John,” in *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, ed. J. McClintock and J. Strong, 12 vols. [1867–87; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 5:476). This hardly seems compatible with the statement: “hereafter, we shall be got into the state of accomplishment and perfection, wherein we are to remain in the other world.” Neither is this work listed in any of the articles on John Locke in the standard reference sources. Perhaps there is another John Locke in the early 19th century who authored these notes. If so, the section above should be considered in that connection.

⁶⁴John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, I. and II. Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians* (reprint, London: Thomas Tegg, et. al., 1823), 156.

⁶⁵Matthew Henry, *Expositions of the Old and New Testaments* ([1708–10]; reprint, Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 6:576.

Eighteenth Century

John Albert Bengel, 1687–1752

Bengel’s comment is not explicit, but seems to imply heaven and/or spiritual maturity: “that which is perfect comes at death...and at the last day.”⁶⁶

Philip Doodridge, 1702–51

Doodridge understands τὸ τέλειον to refer to the heavenly state.

But whether men admire prophecies, it is fit they should know they shall be abolished, when the faith of God’s people shall no longer need to be encouraged, nor their devotion to be assisted, by such exhortations and instructions as are necessary now; or whether they boast themselves of the variety of tongues, they shall cease in those celestial regions; one speech and one language shall prevail among all the blessed inhabitants, and the languages of earth be forgotten, as too low and imperfect... For now we know but in part, and we prophesy but in part; there is a great deal of obvious imperfection attending all our knowledge, and all the services we can here perform for God and for his church: But when that which is perfect is come, as in the heavenly state it shall, then that [which is] only in part shall be abolished.⁶⁷

John Gill, 1697–1771

Gill identifies τὸ τέλειον as the perfect knowledge of God in the life to come. He also notes that ancient Jewish writers refer to the man attaining to [Heb text missing], *perfect knowledge*, at the resurrection (Midrash Haneelam in Zohar in Gen. fol. 69.1).⁶⁸

William Burkitt, 1752

Burkitt’s material is quite interesting and will be cited at length in the appendix. He connects the entire passage (verses 8–12) with heaven, identifying τὸ τέλειον as the perfect knowledge that the Christian will then possess.

As the imperfect Twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect Day; so at Death, when that which is perfect takes place, then that which was imperfect shall be done

⁶⁶John Albert Bengel, *New Testament Word Studies*. Transl. from the 3d ed. of *Gnomens of the New Testament* by C. T. Lewis and M. R. Vincent. ([1734]; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), 2:243.

⁶⁷Philip Doodridge, *The Family Expositor; or, A Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament*, 6 vols. (1738–55. Reprinted in one vol. London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1836), 701.

⁶⁸John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament* (1746–1748; reprint, London: William Hill Collingridge, 1851), 2:242.

away. Blessed be God for the Hopes of that blessed Place and State, where all Imperfections shall cease, especially the Imperfection of our Knowledge.⁶⁹

This is not a post-resurrection knowledge, but will be the believer's at death.

Blessed be God that this perfect State doth not succeed the imperfect one after a long Interval, (at the Resurrection and Re-union of the Body) but the imperfect State of the Soul immediately is done away by the coming of the perfect one; the Glass is laid by as useless, when we come to see Face to Face, and Eye to Eye.⁷⁰

John Wesley, 1703–91

In his brief notes on the New Testament, Wesley includes this terse explanation of τὸ τέλειον: “at death and in the last day.”⁷¹

James A. Macknight, 1721–1800

Macknight says that τὸ τέλειον is related to the understanding of spiritual things.

ἐκ μέρους in this passage, may be translated, *by a part*, so as to signify that we exercise the gifts of knowledge and prophecy only by a part of us; we do not all exercise these gifts, but depend on the spiritual men, who possess them, for knowledge and instruction. Accordingly it is added, but when the perfect spiritual gift *is come*, or bestowed on all the members of Christ's body in heaven, then that which was given to some members of Christ's body on earth, to enable them to teach the rest, will be withdrawn as of no further use; because in heaven every individual member will have an illumination peculiar to himself, which will be sufficient in all respects for his direction and happiness.⁷²

It is worth noting, however, his specific statement that the gifts ceased soon after the apostolic age was concluded. Although he does not specifically connect this with the completion

⁶⁹William Burkitt, *Expository Notes with Practical Observations, on the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (13th ed., London: R. Ware, et. al., 1752), 499.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* ([1754]; reprint, (London: Epworth, n.d.), 627.

⁷²James Macknight, *A New Translation from the Original Greek, of All the Apostolical Epistles. With a Commentary, and Notes, Philological, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical*, 6 vols. (London: Longman, et. al., 1806), 2:218–19. The original edition was published in 1795. His “new translation” of this passage reads as follows:

[8] Love never at any time faileth: but whether prophecies, they shall be abolished: or foreign languages, they shall cease: or knowledge, it shall be abolished. [9] Besides, we know ONLY in part, and prophecy in part. [10] But when the perfect GIFT is come, the one in part shall be abolished. [11] When I was a child, I spake as a child, I conceived as a child, I reasoned as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. [12] For now we see through a glass obscurely; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then, I shall fully know, even as I am fully known” (Ibid.)

of the canon, his statement would be compatible with that position. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:12, he says “These gifts were continued in the church, till the knowledge of the gospel became so general among the disciples, that the church could uphold itself by the exertion of the natural faculties of its members, Eph. iv. 13.”⁷³

Nineteenth Century

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries contain an embarrassment of riches for the purposes of historical survey. Due to the abundance of materials available, the selection will be somewhat more judicious.

Thomas Haweis, 1734–1820

All gifts must quickly have an end; ...[prophecies will] be of no further use in the eternal world....

All gifts are suited only to a state of imperfection; when we arrive to maturity in glory we shall be above them.... all imperfection will be swallowed up in perfection of knowledge and holiness, absolute and everlasting.⁷⁴

Thomas Scott, 1747–1821

Scott identifies τὸ τέλειον as “the perfect knowledge of heaven.” Prophecy and tongues would soon (after Paul’s day) be withdrawn from the church, to be “superseded by more ordinary methods.” The religious knowledge gained through prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will be done away “when the perfect discoveries of another world are made.”⁷⁵

⁷³Ibid., 2:202.

⁷⁴Thomas Haweis and John Brown (of Haddington). *The Evangelical Expositor; or, a Commentary on the New Testament* (Glasgow: Khull, Blackie, and Co., 1826), 489.

⁷⁵Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible ... with Explanatory Notes* (6 vols.; 5th ed., London, n.d.; reprint, Boston: Armstrong, 1827), 6:180.

S. T. Bloomfield, 1828

Bloomfield's *Greek Testament* identifies "that which is perfect" as "the perfect knowledge to be enjoyed in heaven."⁷⁶ He elaborates that brief comment in his larger, eight-volume work, again connecting it with the "future life," but adding an interesting qualification.

These charismata will cease...i.e. in a future life, since there will be no *need* of them, for all will praise God. This is the general view taken of the sense. I cannot, however, but think it too confined. The gifts spoken of ceased in a very short time after the Apostle wrote, having served the purpose intended by bearing testimony to the divine origin of the Gospel. It should therefore seem that the *ceasing* and *coming to nought* was meant to be gradual, and to take place first in this world, and then in the world to come.⁷⁷

The cessation of the gifts is not defended in this comment. Bloomfield does argue, however, that identifying τὸ τέλειον as a future event does not preclude a cessationist position in regard to the gifts. Indeed, he views them as having ceased during or shortly after the apostolic period. Depending on the length of "a very short time," his statement could allow for their cessation by the end of the first century.

Charles Simeon, 1759–1836

Although Simeon does not comment on the phrase τὸ τέλειον, his exposition of the entire passage assumes that it must refer to heaven.⁷⁸

Hermann Olshausen, 1796–1839

"Here on earth knowledge is only partial (ἐκ μέρους), but when a state of perfection arrives, in which knowledge also possesses a character of completeness, the former ceases."⁷⁹

⁷⁶S. T. Bloomfield, *The Greek Testament with English Notes, Critical, Philological, and Exegetical*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 2:228.

⁷⁷S. T. Bloomfield, *Recensio Synoptica Annotationis Sacrae; Being a Critical Digest and Synoptical Arrangement of the Most Important Annotations on the New Testament, Exegetical, Philological, and Doctrinal*, 8 vols. (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1828), 6:597.

⁷⁸C[harles] Simeon, *An Appendix to the Horæ Homileticæ, or Discourses...upon the Whole Scriptures*, 6 vols. (London: R. Watts, 1828), 2:202–03.

⁷⁹Hermann Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*. Translated with additional notes by John Edmund Cox (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1851), 209.

John Nelson Darby, 1800–1882

Darby taught that τὸ τέλειον was the eternal state. “‘When that which is perfect is come’ (ver. 10) means the time of glory, when everything is perfect, and these partial things will have ceased.”⁸⁰ His opposition to the Irvingites and tongues in general is very evident in his writings.⁸¹

Robert Govett, 1813–1901

Govett is one of the most significant nineteenth century writers for the purposes of this paper. He is the oldest writer found who evidences any knowledge of the view identifying τὸ τέλειον with the completed canon of Scripture. His own view is that it refers to the period of perfection in eternity future (after the millennial reign).⁸² He argues against the canon view in some detail.

Some have imagined, that the cessation of the gift of tongues and prophecy which took place almost immediately after the apostolic age, is the thing intended. Hence they are driven to the absurd conclusion, *that perfection came then, and continues now!* They would find the perfection for which they look, in the completion of what is called the ‘canon (or rule) of Scripture.’ But it cannot be proved that we have all that apostles wrote.... And even in regard to those writings which we have there is not perfection: in not a few passages, it is doubtful whether we have the true reading; and if we have it, which it is. Again, with regard to the *meaning* of what we possess, ...is there perfect understanding of all that apostles wrote?... Even New Testament prophets knew but partially: *do we the uninspired know more?* Paul knew but *darkly*; do we see more clearly than the Great Apostle?...

Again, Paul supposes that the perfection of which he speaks, would belong to *himself*, and not to *others* as distinguished from himself. He says not, ‘*I* know a little, but the *church* in the ages to follow my decease will know much more.’ But ‘*Though I* know a little now, yet in comparison of what *I* shall attain in a future state, it is but the child’s knowledge to the man’s.’ So that in another point of view the interpretation fails. Paul supposes the perfection that is to come, to be, not so much the perfection of that which is *without*, as *internal* and conscious perfection—which the perfection of the Scriptures, even if completely collected, and edited by perfect criticism, can never be. None will venture to say, that our knowledge of the things of God is as superior [*sic*] to Paul’s, as that of the man is beyond the child’s. We are so far from knowing all which that great apostle knew,

⁸⁰J. N. D. *Notes of a Reading on I and II Corinthians* (London: G. Morrish, n.d.), 129.

⁸¹E.g., *Collected Writings*, 6:444–51. Huebner frequently cites Darby in his refutation of the charismatic movement (*The Word of God Versus the “Charismatic Renewal”* [Morganville, NJ: Present Truth, 1988]).

⁸²Robert Govett, *The Church of Old: Its Unity, Gifts, and Ministry: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14* (Norwich, England: Josiah Fletcher, 1850; Reprint; Miami Springs, FL: Conley & Schoettle, 1985), 52–56.

that we know not even what many of his hearers knew... Do we see ‘face to face’ at present? We do not, *even in things revealed*, see eye to eye!”⁸³

The phrasing of his objections to the canon view is so similar to twentieth-century discussion and there is such a dearth of evidence for the view prior to the mid-twentieth century, that it is tempting to speculate regarding the possibility that the reprint edition has been edited without comment to bring it up to date. Yet the reprint has not been reset and this edition appears to be a photographic reproduction of the original.⁸⁴ As it stands, Govett considers it worth the space to rebut the position in considerable detail. Yet no pre-1850 commentator found in the course of research for this paper holds this view nor does any other commentator prior to the twentieth century even recognize such a position. Govett’s commentary suggests that there were much earlier roots to this view than it has been possible to document. It is very possible, given the number and variety of commentators examined prior to 1850,⁸⁵ that Govett was aware of this view only through verbal presentations—perhaps (though this is only speculation) among the early brethren Bible teachers.⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid., 54–55.

⁸⁴Blemishes, presumably from the original copy, are evident as are several places where the original copy has been retouched with pen. An original edition was not available to confirm this judgment. Comparison of another of Govett’s books in both reprint (also by Conley & Schoettle) and original editions showed an exact photographic reproduction in that case, though the title had been simplified on the cover.

⁸⁵Most of the major commentators of the pre-1850 era listed by Spurgeon in *Commenting and Commentaries* have been included in this study. Only Lothian (1828) and Pearce (1777) are missing from those that Spurgeon lists in the section on 1 Corinthians. A few others might be included from his listings of commentaries on the whole Bible, the New Testament, or the epistles, but even here access to Spurgeon’s own library at William Jewell College (Liberty, Missouri) has enabled quite a wide, representative survey of material prior to 1850.

⁸⁶Some of the factors that suggest this as a possibility are that, 1) Govett (1813–1901) was a contemporary of Darby’s (1800–1882); 2) he also held premillennial views; and 3) left the established church for doctrinal reasons. (Govett left the Church of England in 1844, acknowledging that he had forced his conscience regarding infant baptism. He then formed a nondenominational church, Surrey Chapel, in Norwich where he ministered until his death. Darby’s split from the Church of Ireland in 1827 was over the nature of the church.) If this hypothesis were to be pursued, it would be of considerable interest to peruse the writings and history of those active in the brethren movement during the first half of the nineteenth century (e.g., A. N. Groves, John Parnell, John Bellett, Francis Newman, and B. W. Newton). Darby’s position was noted above. William Kelly might be expected to comment on this view if indeed the “canon view” originated in these circles, or was known by these Bible teachers, but he does not. His writings were largely later than 1850 (though he had begun editing *The Prospect* in 1848). Kelly holds the majority view on the subject (see above). For the matters in this note, see the relevant articles in *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), s.v., Darby, Govett, Plymouth Brethren, etc.

Roy Huebner, an authority on the early brethren movement, indicates that he is not aware of the canon view among any of the brethren writers in the last century. He points out that Govett was opposed to Darby on many matters. (Roy Huebner, Morganville, NJ, letter to Rodney J. Decker, 29 July 1994.)

It may be questioned whether or not Govett understood the argument he was seeking to rebut since he directs most of his attention to disproving that Christians are not perfect and do not have perfect understanding of divine things. This is irrelevant to the position that τὸ τέλειον may be the completed canon of Scripture. He assumes a different meaning for τέλειος (*perfection* rather than *complete*) and applies it to the individual rather than the canon itself. His statements are of value for tracing the historical origins of the canon view, but are not helpful in an evaluation of that view, at least in its modern dress.

William Kelly, 1821–1906

Kelly says that prophecies, knowledge, and tongues “are suited to our time-state, they are but in part, and do not square with the perfection where no evil exists and love is in fullest exercise. Love is thoroughly in keeping with a condition of glory, while incidental and partial agencies as naturally terminate with its arrival.”⁸⁷ Presumably, he intends to say that τὸ τέλειον is the future state of the believer in heaven (“the perfection where no evil exists”)—the arrival of glory which will bring an end to the “partial agencies” of prophecies, knowledge, and tongues. He does not comment specifically on 13:10 in his introductory lectures on the epistles, and does not mention τὸ τέλειον, but his comments that relate to chapters thirteen and fourteen contain the following relevant statement.

I doubt very much whether there was any revelation after the scheme of Scripture was complete. To suppose anything revealed, when that which is commonly called the canon was closed, would be an impeachment of God’s purpose in it. But till the last portion of His mind was written down in a permanent form for the church, we can quite understand His goodness in allowing a special revelation now and then. This gives no warrant to look for anything of the sort at any time subsequent to the completion of the New Testament. Again, it is plain from this that there are certain modifications of the chapter. Thus so far it is true that if anything has, through the will of God, terminated (for instance, miracles, tongues, or revelations), it is evident that such workings of the Spirit ought not to be looked for; but this does not in the smallest degree set aside the Christian assembly or the exercise according to God’s will of what the Spirit still distinctly gives. And undoubtedly He does continue all that is profitable, and for God’s glory, in the present state of His testimony and of His church here below.⁸⁸

⁸⁷William Kelly, *Notes on the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* ([1869]; reprint, Sunbury, PA: Believers Bookshelf, n.d.), 223.

⁸⁸William Kelly, *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle*. ([London: Broom], 1869; reprint, Sunbury, PA: Believers Bookshelf, 1970), 84–85.

The point of interest here is that he does view the completion of the canon as the time when the miraculous gifts would cease. This is not the canon view, but is an independent cessationist argument.

Andrew Robert Faussettt, 1821–1910

Faussettt connects τὸ τέλειον with the return of Christ, but also notes a relationship with the completion of the canon and the maturity of the church.

Translate, “shall be done away with”—*i.e.*, shall be dispensed with at the Lord’s coming, superseded by their more perfect analogies; for instance, *knowledge by intuition*. . . . A primary fulfillment took place when the Church attained its maturity: then “tongues ceased,” and “prophesyings” and “knowledge,” as *supernatural* gifts were superseded, as no longer required, when the Scriptures of the New Testament had been collected together.⁸⁹

Some might be tempted to identify this as one of the maturity views (to be discussed below), but the closer association is probably with the canon view—even though that is not Faussettt’s explanation of τὸ τέλειον. The perfect is still associated with a future event. The completion of Scripture is “a primary fulfillment,” but not, apparently, *the* fulfillment. The hermeneutical legitimacy of multiple fulfillments might be challenged, but the fact remains that this is the only other pre-twentieth century writer besides Kelly who even comments on the completion of the canon in connection with the passage. Govett mentions but rejects it; Kelly and Faussettt held the standard parousia view, yet drew a link with the completion of the canon. It was perhaps the popularity of Jamieson, Faussettt, and Brown’s *Commentary* in conservative⁹⁰ circles as well as Kelly’s influence in the development of dispensationalism that planted the seeds for the germination of the canon view in the first half of the twentieth century.

⁸⁹A. R. Faussettt, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, in *A Commentary Critical, Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Faussettt, and David Brown, 6:283–336 ([n.p.: W. Collins, Sons & Co., 1864–70]; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945), 6:322.

⁹⁰Faussettt was a premillennialist and would have therefore been attractive to premillennialists generally; Brown was a postmillennialist. Wilbur Smith says that “Brown was the most scholarly advocate of the postmillennial view in Great Britain, throughout the last half of the nineteenth century, while Faussettt, with equal insistence, was an ardent premillennialist” (“Biographical and Bibliographical Foreword,” Jamieson, Faussettt, and Brown, *Commentary*, k).

Joseph Agar Beet, 1840–1924

The parousia is also the view of Beet: “When dawns the eternal day [knowledge and prophecy] will become useless.”⁹¹ He specifically rejects the use of this passage to demonstrate a cessationist position, although it appears that he does, indeed, hold that position. This passage, he argues, does not speak to the question of cessation.

From v. 12. it is quite clear that the light which will supersede the gifts of knowledge and prophecy is that of eternity. Consequently, v. 8 refers, not to the cessation of extraordinary gifts in the later ages of the Church, but to the end of the present life, either at death or at the coming of Christ. But it would be unfair to infer from this that Paul expected these gifts to continue till Christ comes. For, about this he says nothing; but declares only that sooner or later, to the individual and to the race, these gifts will pass away.⁹²

Charles John Ellicott, 1819–1905

Ellicott explains that τὸ τέλειον relates to the future state of things in the future dispensation following the return of Christ.

Knowledge and prophecy, χαρίσματα though they be, are, in the present dispensation, ἐκ μέρους, and so must pass away and give place to the τὸ τέλειον which the ὁ αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων will bring with it...

...the future, and of the mighty changes that it will bear with it: when the Lord comes, then τὸ ἐκ μέρους will necessarily be done away with.⁹³

Thornley Smith, 1888

Smith is more cautious than many commentators in discussing τὸ τέλειον and also seeks to be more specific in his identification. It is “not in the intermediate state. That state is not the full fruition of God, and not, therefore the state referred to in vers. 9, 10.” He confesses that “these words [τὸ τέλειον] are difficult of interpretation, and I almost hesitate to proceed. By that which is perfect the apostle probably means the knowledge which is perfect, and especially the knowledge of divine things.”⁹⁴

⁹¹Joseph Agar Beet, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians* (1882; reprint, Salem, OH: Schmul Publishing, 1988), 199.

⁹²Ibid., 200.

⁹³Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887. Reprint; James Family, n.d.), 254.

⁹⁴Thornley Smith, *The More Excellent Way: Thoughts, Expository and Practical on the Thirteenth Chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: T. Woolmer, [1888]), 90–99, 108.

Now the day will come when the Sun of righteousness will break forth from behind the clouds by which He is now partially concealed, and will pour such floods of light upon our minds that, compared with what it now is, our knowledge of God and of the truths of Christianity will be perfect, —so perfect that we shall stand amazed at the brightness of the revelations which will then be made to us. Do you ask when? On part at the *Parousia*, or Second Coming of our Lord, for then the knowledge of his glory will cover the earth, and all the nations will see it together.... But still more perfect will be the knowledge possessed by the redeemed in heaven.⁹⁵

There is

a yet brighter state than that of the disembodied spirit. However glorious and blessed the intermediate heaven of believers may be, it is not their final heaven,—not the heaven which they will enter after their resurrection from the dead. God has in reserve for them heights of knowledge loftier far than those of their present paradise, where they will mount upward for ever into regions of supernal blessedness and glory.⁹⁶

M. F. Sadler, 1888

There is one other nineteenth century writer who reflects knowledge, not of the canon view, but at least of a view that uses this passage in some way to argue that the gifts had ceased. The position he rebuts has similarities to the mature body view. To whom Sadler refers is not known, but it was a view of sufficient importance in his day to merit his comment.

It has been a matter of question what time the Apostle alludes to as the one in which these manifestations of the Spirit shall cease, and some have supposed that the present state of the Church, in which prophesy and tongues have ceased, is that to which he alludes, but this to me seems impossible. Surely this, our present state, is anything but perfect. It certainly is not perfect in love, for it has declined from the love of the first age. The perfect state is evidently that in which our bodies will be raised in the likeness of Christ's, and our faculties of receiving knowledge will not be clogged then as they are now by the conditions and limitations of our unrenewed frames, but the body will then answer to the spirit in its highest state.⁹⁷

Frederick Louis Godet, 1812–1900

The last nineteenth century commentator that will be noted is Godet. He says quite bluntly that the reference can “be no other than that of the Advent.”⁹⁸ Having said that, however,

⁹⁵Ibid., 109, 110.

⁹⁶Ibid., 111.

⁹⁷M. F. Sadler, *The First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (London: George Bell, 1888), 226.

⁹⁸Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1889; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 680.

he argues strenuously and extensively that this does not mean that the gifts, as known in the first century, apostolic church, continue throughout the history of the church up until the parousia. Rather there was a gradual change during the second and third centuries in which prophecy became simply preaching, tongues became poetry and music, and knowledge became theological teaching. This gradual change is likened to the gradual change of the child-to-adult picture in the following context.⁹⁹

Additional nineteenth century writers who identified τὸ τέλειον as related in some way to the parousia, to heaven, or to the eternal state rather than to a historical event include the following commentators. (The list is arranged chronologically.)

Gustav Billroth, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*. 2 vols. in *The Biblical Cabinet; or Hermeneutical, Exegetical, and Philological Library*. transl. and ed. W. Lindsay Alexander (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1837–38), ad loc.

Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (1857, 1859; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), 272.

Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Epistles of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (2d ed., London: John Murray, 1858; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1981), 243.

Frederick W. Robertson, *Expository Lectures on St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians* (London: Smith, Elder, 1859), 215.

T. Teignmouth Shore, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, ed. Charles J. Ellicott, 7:281–361 (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 7:339.

Christian Friedrich Kling, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostles to the Corinthians*, transl. and ed. D. W. Poor, vol. 20 of *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, transl. and ed. Philip Schaff (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 20:271.

W. L. Blackley and James Hawes, *The Critical English Testament*. 3 vols. (London: Strahan and Co., 1869), 461.

D. D. Whedon, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 5 vols. (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875), 4:100.

Adam Clarke, *The New Testament...A Commentary and Critical Notes* (New ed. by Daniel Curry, New York: Eaton & Mains, 1883), 6:149.

Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes*, ed. Robert Frew, 14 vols. (London: Blackie & Son, 1984–85; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 11:254.

Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, transl. and ed. D. Douglas Bannerman and William P. Dickson ([New York]: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884; reprint, Winona Lake, IN: Alpha, 1979), 305.

⁹⁹Ibid., 677–79.

J. M. Pendleton, "The Acts, Epistles, and Revelation," in *Brief Notes on the New Testament* by George W. Clark and J. M. Pendleton (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1884), 462.

Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* ([London?]: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1885; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1979), 349.

J. J. Lias, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Cambridge Greek Testament (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1886), 149.

Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Epistles of Paul*, 2 vols., in *Hours with the Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [≈1890]), 2:192.

Twentieth Century

Twentieth-century literature will be organized topically and then chronologically within each category. Material will be considered from representative charismatic writers, from dispensationalists, and from non-charismatic, non-dispensationalists.

Precursors to the Contemporary Debate

Garrison

The Pentecostal movement was only beginning early in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁰ As a result there was not the abundance of material arguing against tongues and the claim of the miraculous that is present today. An early twentieth-century writer, James Garrison, may reflect the beginnings of these concerns.

These spiritual gifts, so far as they were extraordinary, were designed to meet a temporary need in the Church, and were to give away in time to the normal gifts of the members in the course of their spiritual development. "Whether there be prophecies they shall be done away; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall be done away." But the great fundamentals of Christianity—faith, hope and love—these abide, "and the greatest of these is love." This is "the more excellent way" which the apostle commended to the Corinthians. It has not yet been learned by all who profess Christianity that these abiding principles are of more value than the extraordinary and spectacular gifts which marked the infant period of the Church, and that all these gifts, without love, are as nothing in the sight of God. It was the constant effort of Jesus to impress His disciples with the superior value of truth, and of their personal relation to Him, over the miraculous works they saw Him perform, and which they were enabled to perform in His name, in attestation of their mission. He told His disciples not to rejoice that evil spirits were subject to them and could be cast out by their word, but rather that their names "are written in heaven." They were to do "greater works" than He had done, through His

¹⁰⁰Modern Pentecostals trace their roots to 7 P.M. on December 31, 1900 when Charles Parham laid hands on Agnes Ozman with the result that she spoke in tongues (John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964], 30–42).

completed Gospel, when He should go to the Father. The cessation of the miraculous, therefore, was not retrogression but progress. It indicated not a declining faith and waning spiritual power, as many seem to think, but a faith strong enough to stand without such extraneous helps, and a spiritual development which could dispense with supernatural or extraordinary gifts. “When I was a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man I have put away childish things.” So Paul illustrated the difference between the infant condition of the church, when it required these miraculous gifts, and its mature stage of development when such infantile helps would no longer be necessary.¹⁰¹

Garrison does not speak directly to the question of the reference of τὸ τέλειον, but his comments strongly suggest that he would connect it with the maturity of the church. He certainly would identify the function of the gifts as being related to maturity. This is one of the earliest writers found who made this association.

Warfield

Though not commenting on 1 Corinthians 13:10, Warfield explicitly connects the miraculous gifts with revelation, arguing that they are the inseparable credentials of God’s revelation. When the period of revelation closed (the apostolic era), then the miracle era ended also as a matter of course. During the revelatory period the Scriptures were being produced, but following the completion of that body of revelation they are being applied. No references to 1 Corinthians 13:10 were found in the entire book—a significant omission if Warfield believed it served as a proof-text for cessation of the gifts with the completion of the canon, and that despite the fact that he argues a similar conclusion on different grounds.¹⁰²

Charismatics

Four representatives of the broad charismatic movement have been selected, representing major sectors of that position. Gordon Fee and Siegfried Schatzmann represent the older, mainline Pentecostal groups, Barnett and McGregor the charismatic renewal movement outside those groups; and Wayne Grudem presents the most recent variation, the Vineyard

¹⁰¹James Harvey Garrison, *The Holy Spirit: His Personality, Mission, and Modes of Activity* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing, 1905), 153–55.

¹⁰²Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 25–27. Warfield is sometimes cited as a proponent of the canon view, e.g., Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 645, n. 23; Barnett and McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues*, 577, n. 144. That citation could not be verified either on the pages cited or elsewhere in Warfield’s writings.

movement. These three are treated in the historical order of their respective groups rather than of actual publication.

Fee

Gordon Fee is one of the few scholars in the Pentecostal tradition. His work is represented by a number of books; most notable for the present purposes are his major commentary on 1 Corinthians¹⁰³ and his most recent publication, a massive (967 pages) work on Pauline pneumatology.¹⁰⁴ Although the confines of a commentary do not allow room for extensive argumentation, Fee makes his conclusion quite clear—and also leaves no doubt of his opinion of the other views.

He begins by establishing the meaning of the word τέλειος: the adjectival form of the verb τελιώω, “to bring to an end, complete.” This can carry the added sense of “being perfect” in that “the completing of something is the perfecting of it.” In this context the specific semantic nuance is determined by the contrast with ἐκ μέρους, “partial,” suggesting “having attained the end or purpose” and is therefore “complete.” Since, he argues, the contrast is between the *gifts* being partial (rather than believers or the church), it cannot mean “mature.” The ἐκ μέρους refers to the present era and τὸ τέλειον to the eschatological conclusion when the church’s “final destination in Christ has been reached.”¹⁰⁵

The term “the perfect” has to do with the Eschaton itself, not some form of “perfection” in the present age. It is not so much that the End itself is “the perfect,” language that does not make tolerably good sense; rather, it is what happens at the End, when the goal has been reached.... At the coming of Christ the final purpose of God’s saving work in Christ will have been reached; at that point those gifts now necessary for the building up of the church in the present age will disappear, because the “the complete” will have come.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Fee, *1 Corinthians*.

¹⁰⁴Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994). Since the section on 1 Corinthians is an almost verbatim reproduction of the commentary, the earlier work will be cited as the standard.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 644–46; see esp. n. 22.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 646. It might be asked if “at the coming of Christ the final purpose of God’s saving work in Christ will have been reached.” Such would not seem to accord well with a premillennial system in which there are further purposes, even for the redeemed, than those climaxed at the second coming. Only a considerably qualified form of amillennial or postmillennial eschatology could make such a blanket statement.

In a lengthy note he interacts with those views that emphasize maturity in some way, listing three forms of such a position. The first is a rather traditional, noncharismatic view that sees the passage referring to the Corinthians' lack of maturity in desiring the charismata—something they will put away when they grow up. (No response to this view is offered.) The second form is the canon view in which the full revelation of the New Testament is “matured,” thus doing away with the partial forms of charismatic revelation. This he judges to be impossible “since Paul could not have articulated it.” The third view is the maturing of the body (McRay and Thomas, see below), which he dismisses as a “misguided emphasis” with “nothing to commend it.” He continues to castigate the position by commenting that “it is perhaps an indictment of Western Christianity that we should consider ‘mature’ our rather cerebral and domesticated—but bland—brand of faith, with the concomitant absence of the Spirit in terms of his supernatural gifts!” All Christians should apparently become charismatics to avoid such blandness!¹⁰⁷

Schatzmann

Schatzmann argues vigorously against any claim that tongues were temporary gifts, claiming that such a position is “generally not advanced on the basis of thorough exegesis, but receives its impetus from presuppositional and historical biases. Scriptural evidence is brought to bear more in terms of proof-texting than in terms of contextual interpretation.” Appeal to 1 Corinthians 13:8–9 to substantiate the position that “the more spectacular charismata, in particular the so-called sign gifts” were authenticating marks valid only prior to the canon is, Schatzmann thinks, a weak argument. He gives three reasons for rejecting this position. First, the gift of knowledge represents the non-miraculous gifts (in contrast to prophecy and tongues that represent the miraculous gifts). (The implication is that since knowledge is still present, tongues and prophecy must be also.) Second, verse eight uses the plural form *προφητεῖαι*, probably referring, not to the gift of prophecy, but to the prophetic utterances “in the course of the church’s ministry.” Third, by *τὸ τέλειον* Paul refers to “the eschatological revelation of Christ at the end of the present age. All charismata, Paul said in essence, will cease at that time.” (No particular evidence is given for this claim other than that this is the view of most commentators.)¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 645, n. 23.

¹⁰⁸Siegfried Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 77. Appeal to the context is not a common form of argument in popular charismatic literature, though it is less rare in the more mature Pentecostal scholarship that has developed in recent decades.

Barnett and McGregor

The book that will be treated as a representative sample of the charismatic position generally¹⁰⁹ is Barnett and McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues: A Scholarly Defense*.¹¹⁰ Although this is not a scholarly treatise (despite the claims of the title),¹¹¹ its sheer size and (self-proclaimed) position as the definitive apologetic for the movement suggests the appropriateness of the selection.

Billed as “the most thorough refutation of this argument available,” chapter five of Barnett and McGregor’s book consists of a 133-page consideration of the question, “Did tongues cease at the end of the first century?”¹¹² This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the canon view of 1 Corinthians 13:10. Their own position is that τὸ τέλειον refers to Jesus Christ. “Even without the context,” they argue, “our minds should immediately think of Jesus Christ...in His Coming.”¹¹³ The neuter τὸ τέλειον is explained on the analogy of Luke 1:35, διὸ καὶ τὸ

¹⁰⁹Reference is made to the renewal movement that has developed since the 1960s outside the established Pentecostal denominations.

¹¹⁰Seattle: Community Chapel Publications, 1986.

¹¹¹This has been pointed out by Pettegrew (*The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 74, n. 5). The book does represent what seems to this writer to be the typical approach of many charismatic groups.

¹¹²Although their title leaves no doubt, a summary of their position stated in their own words may be helpful.

God has not ordained that the church lose the power and gifts that He gave it! There is a widespread doctrine that speaking in tongues is past, gifts of the Spirit are past, Divine healing is past, raising the dead is past, and revelations from God are past. This amounts to a terrible twisting of Scripture and a slap in God’s face. It means that He has begun a good work in us, but will not continue it to the end. It means that He has taken away His gifts, His power, and His glory, leaving the church with only a set of moral codes. It leaves the church to battle the power of the devil in the last days without the power of God. The church is to have the letter that killeth but not the Spirit that giveth life!

(Barnett and McGregor, *Speaking In Other Tongues*, 163). Although this paper is not intended to critique the entire book, it is worth noting the following fundamental errors in this introductory statement. 1) They have committed themselves to proving, not only that tongues and healing are for today, but also that raising the dead is for today—a specious claim if there ever was one. A few trips to the local mortuary should establish the validity of such claims. 2) It takes Scripture out of context, applying Phil. 1:6 to the gifts rather than to salvation. 3) It assumes that rejecting tongues, etc. as valid for today rejects all aspects of God’s power. This totally ignores the non-charismatic works of the Spirit even in the Old Testament and (especially) in apostolic times. 4) It denigrates the character of the Word of God, categorizing it as “the letter that killeth,” again ignoring the context that relates this statement to the old covenant, and that only in contrast to the better provisions of the new covenant.

¹¹³Ibid.

γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ. “That ‘holy thing’ was Christ, and this ‘perfect [thing]’ which is to come is Christ, too.”¹¹⁴

God is not talking about a set of scrolls as “that which is perfect,” but rather Jesus Christ—born of a woman, justified by the Law, sinless, learning obedience by the things which He suffered, and being perfected—first finishing His earthly work and now finishing His heavenly work. This is God’s perfect and holy thing that would defeat Satan and his legions of demons, enabling us to be with Him where He is and see Him face to face, knowing even as we are known.¹¹⁵

Their arguments against the canon view may be summarized as follows. First, the word τέλειος is never used in reference to the completed New Testament. James 1:25, the closest such reference adduced by advocates of the canon view, is rejected since it must refer to either the Old Testament (if written) or to oral (apostolic?) instruction since James could not be referring to the yet unwritten New Testament.¹¹⁶ Second, the statement of verse ten demands that τὸ τέλειον be already in existence and already perfect at the time Paul wrote since it is “coming,” not “being completed.” Third, seeing face to face cannot refer to a written book; it can refer only to seeing Jesus’ face. Seeing God in the Bible is part of seeing through a glass darkly. Although it is phrased sarcastically, their explanation does contain the kernel of a valid criticism:

Otherwise Paul and the other Christians of his day *did* see God face to face, for by the time Paul finished his course, about 96% of the Bible was complete. Is it not absurd to say that those who had 96% of the Bible, and Paul as their teacher, saw dimly, but that Christians today with 4% more of the Bible, under lesser teachers, after Christendom has been split into several hundred different denominations, see face to face?¹¹⁷

Fourth, Christians today do not possess knowledge than can be described as face-to-face knowledge.¹¹⁸ This argument is based on the assumption that knowledge is ordinary knowledge rather than the gift of knowledge that Paul has been talking about in the earlier context (12:8). Although their point may be legitimate that the final penning of the New Testament may not have

¹¹⁴Ibid. They also cite neuter phrases that have reference to persons (though not Jesus) in 1 John 5:4; Luke 19:10; and Hab. 2:3. Blass-Debrunner suggests that “the neuter is sometimes used with reference to persons if it is not the individuals but a general quality that is to be emphasized.” Alternatively, and Blass-Debrunner’s preference in Luke 1:35, is that Luke [the angel?] may have had τὸ τέκνον in mind. (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, transl. and rev. Robert Funk [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961], §138.1.)

¹¹⁵Barnett and McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues*, 165–66.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 177–79. This is a valid criticism, though specific parts of their explanation are fallacious.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 182.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 183–84.

been a gigantic leap in knowledge and that we may not have the understanding that Paul had prior to that time, postulating that this refers to general knowledge creates a problem which many charismatics seem to overlook: if the coming of Christ brings an end to knowledge in general, how will we ever know it?¹¹⁹

Barnett and McGregor go to great lengths to list many commentators that do not hold the canon view. Excerpts from seventeen writers are given in part four of the chapter and an appendix lists an additional twenty-nine. “The majority of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Bible commentators who never spoke in tongues...had already dismissed the ‘completed New Testament’ proposition as an unlikely excuse for the absence of tongues in their day”—and that “even before Pentecost was repeated on any large scale.”¹²⁰ What they fail to realize is that just because the majority of scholars reject the canon view does not prove the charismatic view. Commentators prior to the twentieth century had, by and large, not even heard of the canon view, let alone “dismissed” it as “an unlikely excuse.”

Grudem

The most well-known theologian of the Vineyard movement is Wayne Grudem. His 1978 doctoral dissertation at Cambridge has been published in a slightly expanded form as *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*.¹²¹ He summarizes his understanding of τὸ τέλειον as follows.

What Paul is speaking about, however, is the total and final abolition of prophecy which is to be brought about by divine initiative at the Parousia. And he is saying that he thinks that until the time of the Parousia the gift of prophecy will at least to some extent remain available for use, and God will continue to give men the revelations which make prophecy possible.¹²²

This conclusion is substantiated in four steps. First, verse 12’s τότε (“then”) refers to the same time as ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον in verse 10. Since πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον in verse twelve must refer to the consummation, τὸ τέλειον can only come at that time. Second, the

¹¹⁹Carson points this out in his usual style: “What passes away, of course, is not knowledge per se, but the charismatic gift of knowledge (for knowledge itself will never pass away; and if it did, no one would know it)” (Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 67–68).

¹²⁰Barnett and McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues*, 220–23; 295–96; 164.

¹²¹Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1982. The dissertation was titled: “The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 12–14.” A popularized version has also appeared as *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1988).

¹²²*Ibid.*, 218–19.

contrast between τὸ τέλειον and ἐκ μέρους relates to the means of acquiring knowledge. The difference between these two is so sharp that only the qualitative difference in knowledge that will come with Christ's return provides an adequate explanation of τὸ τέλειον. Third, the parallel of 1 Corinthians 1:7 confirms that the charismata are for the pre-parousia period and are unnecessary after that time. Fourth, the use of καταργέω in 1 Corinthians is always used to present a contrast with those things that will pass away at the parousia (1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 15:24, 26).¹²³

He does address the semantic issue of τέλειος and the proposal of some that it refers to maturity (especially in Paul) rather than perfection or completion. These instances are not relevant to this passage, however, because in the other instances it relates to persons. Here the subject is a means of acquiring knowledge. Paul does use related forms (τέλειόω and τέλος) to refer to the consummation. And finally, the parallel phrase ἐκ μέρους indicates that the intended contrast is partial/complete rather than immature/mature.¹²⁴

Grudem offers several objections to the two other major views (canon and maturity of the body). Verse twelve is the crux of these arguments; none of the other views can adequately explain the relationship of seeing God face to face. Likewise they all assume that prophecy was intended to provide divinely authoritative guidance—a position that Grudem's entire dissertation is designed to counter. He also notes that maturity is nowhere discussed in the context and is thus irrelevant. Last, "these suggestions trivialize the whole passage in an unconvincing way." To prove that love is a permanent gift it will hardly do to argue that it will last beyond a date in the near future (i.e., the first century). Paul's regular approach to such things is to show that it will last beyond the Lord's return (cp. 3:13–15; 15:51–58).¹²⁵

Non-Charismatic Literature

The controversial literature of the twentieth century that opposes the charismatic movement and its theology has focused heavily on 1 Corinthians 13:10—for obvious reasons. The most significant exegetical and theological treatments are summarized below.

¹²³Ibid., 212–14.

¹²⁴Ibid., 213–14, n. 58.

¹²⁵Ibid., 215–16.

Views that connect τὸ τέλειον with the early church

Completed canon view

Vine (1951)

Vine is the earliest proponent of the canon view found in print.¹²⁶ “With the completion of Apostolic testimony and the completion of the Scriptures of truth... ‘that which is perfect’ had come, and the temporary gifts were done away.”¹²⁷ Although this is Vine’s first explanation, he proceeds, in the very next paragraph, to offer a second interpretation that is “also true.” As he puts it, “it is also true that ‘that which is perfect’ is to be brought in at the *parousia* of Christ when the Church is completed and caught up to be with Him. That which is partial will then be done away. Then the perfect will be substituted for the partial.”¹²⁸ In discussing verse twelve he evidences the same dual interpretation.

This applies the principle in verse 10 to the future state of perfection to be brought in at the *Parousia* of Christ. It is also applied to the distinction between the period in which the gifts of tongues and prophecy were in exercise, as being one of partial vision, and the subsequent period of clear vision through possession of the complete Word of God, a face-to-face condition, so to speak, a knowledge which the believer has the capacity even now of knowing, not in part, but fully.¹²⁹

Vine’s popularity in fundamental circles as a respected scholar (largely due to his *Expository Dictionary*¹³⁰) may account for the widespread acceptance of this interpretation in the years following the publication of his commentary on 1 Corinthians, though the dual interpretation has seldom been repeated. That he comes from a brethren background may also

¹²⁶Govett’s comments (see above) reflect the fact that this view was known earlier, but no earlier documentation has been found in which a writer defends the canon view. McRay lists David Lipscomb’s *Commentary on the New Testament* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1935) as a proponent of the canon view, but this source was unavailable for confirmation and no quotations from it were included (John R. McRay, “*To Teleion* in I Corinthians 13:10,” 168).

¹²⁷W[illiam] E[dwy] Vine, *I Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1951), 184.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with Their Precise Meanings for English Readers*, 4 vols. (London: Oliphants, 1940; 1 vol. reprint, Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.). A preface by W. Graham Scroggie (in both editions) and a forward by F. F. Bruce in the one-volume reprint, both well known scholars in fundamental circles, probably hastened the acceptance of the dictionary and the popularity of Vine’s work in general.

lend credence to the hypothesis suggested earlier that the canon view may have had its roots in that movement.

Hoyt, Toussaint, Applebury (1963)

The next three references found to the canon view all come in 1963; two in articles from professors at two major dispensational seminaries, Grace and Dallas, and the third from a Church of Christ context. Hoyt argues that it was probably at the completion of the canon that tongues and prophecy ceased. He explains that “the gift of prophecy was necessary in the Early Church, for this new society of believers had needs that were not met in Old Testament revelation. When the New Testament writing prophets had completed their work, and the New Testament was finished, there was no longer need for prophets.”¹³¹ It is very interesting that although this sounds like the canon view, Hoyt does not appeal to τὸ τέλειον and explain it as a direct reference to the canon. It would seem that he has come to the conclusion on the basis of the theological explanation given and not by defining “the perfect.”¹³²

Toussaint’s article lists three explanations for the cessation of tongues and prophecy: the canon view, the mature church view, and the rapture. In explaining the canon view he cites Vine’s explanation, but no other advocates. This would verify that it was Vine’s influence in fundamentalist and dispensational circles that promoted the view. Toussaint rejects it because it does not harmonize with the following context (verse twelve in particular).¹³³

Applebury’s commentary on 1 Corinthians presents a fully developed canon view. The “completed thing” is the completed revelation—the Bible. His basis is that τὸ τέλειον means “mature” only when describing persons; when speaking of things it means “complete.” It cannot refer to the coming of Christ because there is no reference to that in the context. Finally, τὸ

¹³¹Herman A. Hoyt, “Speaking in Tongues.” *Brethren Missionary Herald*, 20 April 1963, 205–06.

¹³²It would be interesting to know how this may have developed into the canon view (as an explanation for τὸ τέλειον) at Grace as reflected in Gilbert Weaver’s unpublished paper there in 1964 and Gromacki’s dissertation in 1967 (see below). It may well be that Grace Seminary deserves the credit for developing and popularizing the view in American dispensationalism. At Dallas, Unger, of course, was advocating it in print ten years later. This cannot be the actual source of the canon view, however, since Vine (and perhaps Lipscomb) had taught it previously and Applebury was proposing it at the same time; Blaiklock’s views a few years later were not likely influenced by American dispensationalism. It seems probable that there is a still unidentified influence prior to 1950 that provided the impetus for the view. Whether Lipscomb could have provided that influence (or another early 20th century writer), or the possible nineteenth century view that Govett rejected remains undetermined.

¹³³Stanley D. Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen and the Tongues Question.” *BibSac* 120 (1963): 312. His own view is that τὸ τέλειον refers to the rapture.

τέλειον must balance τὸ ἐκ μέρους, and since the spiritual gifts “were used of the Lord to bring revelation of His will to man,” there was “no further purpose to be fulfilled by these gifts” once their message was committed to writing.¹³⁴

Gromacki (1967)

The first major defense of the canon view came in a doctoral dissertation submitted to Grace Theological Seminary in 1966: “Scriptural Evaluation of the Modern Tongues Movement,” by Robert Gromacki. This was published the following year as *The Modern Tongues Movement*.¹³⁵ In support of his argument that “most spiritual gifts, including that of tongues, ended when the canon of the New Testament was completed,” he argued that τὸ τέλειον in 1 Corinthians 13:10 was the “completed canon which formed the climax of the maturing process of the church.”¹³⁶ This identification is based largely on the contrast between τὸ τέλειον and ἐκ μέρους. Both of these must be in the same category, and “since *to ek merous* refers to the transmission of divine truth by revelation, the other term *to teleion* must refer to God’s *complete* revelation of truth, the entire New Testament.”¹³⁷ Gromacki relates this to the concept of progressive revelation and the development of the New Testament “of which Paul was aware (John 14:25–26; 16:12–13; cf. Col. 1:25).”¹³⁸ He also appeals to the use of τέλειον in James 1:25 as one instance where this word does refer to Scripture (acknowledging that it usually refers to maturity).¹³⁹

¹³⁴T. R. Applebury, *Studies in First Corinthians*, Bible Study Textbook (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1963), 243.

¹³⁵Robert Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1967).

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 125, 126.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 126, citing Gilbert B. Weaver, “‘Tongues Shall Cease’: 1 Corinthians 13:8” (unpublished paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1964), 12. This paper has been influential in several sources cited above; e.g., James E. Rothhaar, “An Exegetical Investigation of 1 Corinthians 13:10” (MDiv thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1984), 10, 13, 36, 39. It was not available to this writer.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, 126. That Paul was aware of the concept of a New Testament canon could be challenged. The verses cited by Gromacki had not even been written when Paul died. The comparison with Colossians 1:25 does not at all demand the concept of a canon but may refer only to his preaching God’s truth in detail. Fee and others have challenged this argument on the basis that Paul and the Corinthians could not have understood the concept of a completed canon at the time Paul referred to τὸ τέλειον. (“It is an impossible view, of course, since Paul himself could not have articulated it.” Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 645, n. 23.) See the comments in note 224 evaluating this criticism.

¹³⁹*Modern Tongues Movement*, 127.

Blaiklock (1968)

In his comments on verses 8–10 of 1 Corinthians 13, Blaiklock also draws a link between the cessation of the gifts and the completion of the canon. It is probably not valid to call this the canon view in a technical sense since he does not identify τὸ τέλειον with the canon. The link is nevertheless significant and also represents another nondispensationalist who uses this approach.

The teaching of insight and mystic understanding, which was given and rightly valued in the early days of the Church, had its natural term and limitation. The completion of an authoritative New Testament canon put an end to such ministry, a point to be firmly remembered by all who are called to teach the Church...

It is interesting to note that Paul ranks along with an obsolescent ‘prophecy’ the Corinthian ecstatic utterance, or ‘tongues’, that feature of worship which he appears rather to have permitted than encouraged. This verse, therefore, is a contribution to the controversy which the phenomenon sometimes precipitates still on the sidelines of evangelical religion. Like the passing features of prophecy, it was to diminish and disappear.¹⁴⁰

Unger (1971)

Dr. Unger’s book addressing the issue of tongues speaking¹⁴¹ relies on the canon view of 1 Corinthians 13:10 to a great extent. Of his four major arguments¹⁴² for the temporary nature of tongues, two hinge on this position. The gifts of prophecy and knowledge were temporary “tie-overs” until the New Testament was available and tongues likewise belonged “to a period of partial revelation before there were any New Testament books in general circulation.”¹⁴³ He specifically defines τὸ τέλειον as “the completed and final thing, which means ‘the New Testament Scriptures’; the neuter in the Greek denotes neither Christ nor His second advent, both of which thoughts are foreign to the context.”¹⁴⁴ The illustrations in the following verses make the same point: the three gifts will be unnecessary and useless “because the completed revelation of Scripture in the canonical books of the New Testament” will surpass them. This completed

¹⁴⁰E. M. Blaiklock, *The Way of Excellence* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1968), 33–34.

¹⁴¹Merrill F. Unger, *New Testament Teaching on Tongues* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971).

¹⁴²The four are as follows. 1) Tongues are listed only in 1 Corinthians (as opposed to the later lists in Romans and Ephesians). 2) They are a less useful gift than the others. 3) Tongues are specifically said to be temporary in contrast to love which is permanent. 4) They were limited to the apostolic church (ibid., 90–101).

¹⁴³Ibid., 94, 95.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 95.

revelation is illustrated by the adult-male knowledge and the face-to-face knowledge of the canon as opposed to the piecemeal, incomplete knowledge illustrated by the child and the mirror.¹⁴⁵

This position is defended, not only by appeal to the gender of τὸ τέλειον, but also by several other arguments. First, τὸ τέλειον must mean *complete* rather than *perfect*. Second, ἐκ μέρους “specifically concerns piecemeal revelation by extraordinary, emergency means—‘prophecies, tongues, and knowledge’ (vs. 8).” This is the “direct opposite” of τὸ τέλειον which “specifically concerns revelation by usual means”—i.e., the revelation through the written Scriptures. Third, that God would continue to give revelation through the three gifts in addition to “the complete, perfect, all-sufficient revelation contained in the Bible” is redundant.¹⁴⁶ Fourth, other Scriptures foretell a “great resurgence of the prophetic gift and prophetic visions” following the return of Christ (Joel 2:28). This would argue against that return marking the terminus of tongues and prophecy, since it does not harmonize with Joel’s prophecy.¹⁴⁷

Chantry (1976)

In light of the writers already cited (and those to follow) some might conclude that the canon view is unique to dispensationalism. That this is not true can be seen in the nondispensational writers who also espouse it.¹⁴⁸ Walter Chantry is one example of this. He argues that τὸ τέλειον means *mature* rather than *perfect*, and that it refers to the “fully-matured or adult revelation” in contrast to the “partial revelations of a childish state,” connecting verse ten with the illustrations in the following context.¹⁴⁹

When Scripture is completed, then the church will have revelation thoroughly suited to her condition on earth. Our completed Bible is perfect in the sense that it is utterly sufficient revelation for all our needs. Paul is saying, ‘When the sufficient comes, the inadequate and partial will be done away. Tongues will vanish away, knowledge will cease at the time that the New Testament is finished.’

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 96–98, cp. 100.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 100.

¹⁴⁷Ibid. See also Charles R. Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective: A Summary of Biblical Conclusions Concerning Tongues* (2d ed. rev., Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1973), 75. Smith adds Rev 11:3–13 as another example of prophecy following the return of Christ.

¹⁴⁸This can also be demonstrated by noting the dispensational writers who hold another view; see the following sections of the paper.

¹⁴⁹Walter J. Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles: Observations on Pentecostalism Old and New* (2d ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 50.

...The manly words, thoughts, and satisfying insights of a completed Scripture will cause the church to outgrow the childhood of charismatic revelations.”¹⁵⁰

Chantry seeks to blunt the theophanic language of verse twelve by drawing the contrast between lesser and greater prophets rather than between prophets and heaven. The NT is the inscripturation of the face-to-face revelation that came in Jesus Christ. Other revelations that came through NT prophets “were the equivalent of seeing through a glass imperfectly transparent” in contrast to “coming ‘face to face’ with God” in Scripture.¹⁵¹

Judisch (1978)

Douglas Judisch considers the meaning of τὸ τέλειον at some length, arguing for the canon view. He rejects the possibility that it is a reference to Christ on the basis of gender.¹⁵² The final maturity view is considered in greater detail.¹⁵³ Three arguments are offered against it. First, the eternal state is not in view in 1 Corinthians 12–14. Second, the contrast between τὸ τέλειον and ἐκ μέρους is destroyed by the final maturity view. The contrast is a quantitative one (a whole versus the parts) rather than a qualitative one (this life and the life to come). Third, verse thirteen demands a contrast between faith, hope, and love (which abide now [νυνί]¹⁵⁴) and prophecy, knowledge, and (presumably) tongues (which will cease rather than abide).

After rejecting these views he presents three major arguments in support of the canon view. First, τὸ τέλειον must be defined by the contrast with τὸ ἐκ μέρους—which Judisch translates as “the piecemeal thing.” This produces the conclusion that τὸ τέλειον is

the composite of all the individual pieces of prophecy, discourse in unlearned tongues, and prophetic knowledge (v. 8) which “we know...and prophesy” or will know and prophesy before the prophetic gifts cease. In other words, “the complete thing” is the complete revelation of God to man through the medium of the prophetic gifts. The prophetic gifts, then, must cease when God’s revelation is complete.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 50–51.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 52–53.

¹⁵²Douglas Judisch, *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), 46.

¹⁵³This is probably due to the fact that he originally held this view “but a closer examination of the passage in the course of preparing this study necessitated a change of mind” (ibid., 47).

¹⁵⁴Either the temporal or logical force of νυνί provides the necessary contrast. “In order to make a point of the contrast between the temporary nature of the prophetic gifts and the relatively enduring nature of faith and hope, Paul must presuppose the disappearance of the prophetic gifts a considerable time before the translation to glory of the church in general” (ibid., 47–48).

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 48.

The second argument relates to the first person plural subject of γινώσκομεν and προφητεύομεν in verse nine. This *we* can be either inclusive (Paul and all believers) or exclusive (Paul alone, or perhaps Paul and the other apostles). Paul's normal use in the Corinthian letters is the exclusive *we*, which "creates the presumption that Paul is employing the apostolic plural" in this text.¹⁵⁶ This presumption is strengthened by the context: "not all Christians—indeed not even a majority—prophesy or receive knowledge of divine truths by direct revelation."¹⁵⁷

Third, the illustrations in the following context "contrast the state of the Christian before the completion of the apostolic revelation and his state after its completion." The child/man contrast demonstrates that "the Christian was less knowledgeable and consequently less capable of self-expression and systematic thought in A.D. 50, when Paul wrote I Corinthians, than he was in 64, when Paul died, or in 100, when John died."¹⁵⁸ The mirror analogy is handled in a similar fashion.

Pettegrew (1993)

One of the most recent defenses of the canon view is to be found in Pettegrew's *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*. Four arguments may be gleaned from his presentation. First, the contrast between τὸ τέλειον and ἐκ μέρους should be translated "complete...incomplete." This implies that "the partial prophecies and knowledge will be replaced by completed prophecies and knowledge"—i.e., the completed New Testament canon. Second, this is the best way Paul could have explained a new concept to the Corinthians since the word "'canon' was not used for Scripture until a couple of hundred years later." The use of διαθήκη "would not have clarified the matter." The best terminology would be "completed prophecy"—represented by Paul's choice in the text (ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν ... τὸ τέλειον).¹⁵⁹

Third, the phrase πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον should not be understood in terms of the eschaton, but rather as an illustration that contrasts dim seeing (in a mirror) with precise seeing (seeing someone in person, face to face). The phrase πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον is thus "simply a figure of speech for 'precisely' or 'clearly.'" The partial revelation available to the early church

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 49. Judisch acknowledges that this cannot be an absolute proof since the inclusive *we* is used at least once (1 Cor 15:49).

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 49.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 49, 50.

¹⁵⁹Pettegrew, *New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 187.

thus provided a dim grasp of spiritual things. One day this would be replaced by a “vivid seeing of spiritual and doctrinal matters through completed revelation.” Fourth, the reference to “being known as I am known” has often been misread as “being known as I am known *by God*,” whereas it should be understood as “being known as I am known *by others*.”¹⁶⁰

It is Pettegrew’s conclusion that “interpreting ‘the completed’ as the New Testament is still the most natural and logical explanation of the passage—far better than trying to introduce the rapture, second coming, death, or eternal state into the interpretation.”¹⁶¹

Maturity view

This view has become popular only in the last twenty-five years, though it can be traced earlier in less developed forms. Laurin espoused it in his 1950 commentary,¹⁶² it is referred to in

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 188–89. It would have been very helpful if support for this final argument had been provided. Emanuel Miguens also rejects *God* as the object of *know*, though he opts for an intransitive use that is equivalent to ἔχειν γνώσιν—to have knowledge of the mysteries (“I Cor. 13:8–13 Reconsidered,” *CBQ* 37 [1975]: 81–82).

¹⁶¹Ibid., 187. There are several others who hold this view. Boyer says that

the present writer prefers the interpretation which sees this phrase as a reference to the completion of the New Testament Scriptures. The miracle gifts of prophecy and knowledge were invaluable to the early church, but they were always piecemeal, ‘in part’ (Greek, *ek merous*). When by the exercise of these oral gifts, the full canon of Scripture had been put into writing, the church then had a complete, perfect body of revelation, all they would need for their age and the ages to come. These temporary gifts then were replaced by that which is perfect. The usual interpretation, which refers the phrase to heaven or the second coming of Christ must either play down the miraculous, revelatory character of the gift of prophecy, or admit that such revelation is going on today. Not many new books have been added to the Bible recently!

(James L. Boyer, *For a World Like Ours: Studies in I Corinthians* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1971), 125.) Gordon Clark suggests that any discussion of identity of the perfect must grapple with the statement that the coming of this perfect will abolish the partial. As Clark asks,

Can more advanced truths make simpler truths untrue?...

It could be the completion of the canon. Miracles and tongues were for the purpose of guaranteeing the divine origin of apostolic doctrine. They ceased when the revelation was completed.

Even the word *knowledge* is better understood this way.... It would be better to take *knowledge* as the apostolic process of revealing new knowledge. This was completed and revelation ceased.

(Gordon H. Clark, *First Corinthians: A Contemporary Commentary* [Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1975], 212–13) [It might be asked if καταργέω means “abolished” here.] Ronald Baxter also holds a completed canon view, though he manages to combine it with a mature church view in the following verses (*The Charismatic Gift of Tongues* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1981], 70–71).

¹⁶²Laurin is an early advocate of this position, though he does not develop it in great detail. He states several times that the partial gifts (prophecy, tongues, and knowledge) would be done away “by the written word. When the body of Scripture came into being, the verbal gift ceased its necessity.” τὸ τέλειον is related to the maturity

Toussaint's 1963 *BibSac* article,¹⁶³ in Pentecost's book on pneumatology,¹⁶⁴ and it appears in a 1966 thesis at Talbot.¹⁶⁵ Godet may be one of the sources of this position,¹⁶⁶ although he explains τὸ τέλειον as heaven.

McRay (1971)

John McRay has been one of the most influential advocates of a maturity view. His 1971 article¹⁶⁷ is cited by a number of later writers. He summarizes his view as follows.

In verses 8–12 [Paul] contrasts the individual stage of the Corinthian church with the corporate stage, using *teleios* to mean the inclusion of the Gentiles, to whom God had also granted *charismatic* gifts. *To teleion* refers, therefore, to the concluding stages of Paul's work as an Apostle to the Gentiles.¹⁶⁸

The corporate, τέλειος stage of the church to which McRay refers is based on drawing a very tight correlation of 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians, particularly 4:13. He builds this on the parallels of vocabulary and illustrations between the two passages. The meaning of τέλειος is a crux for any interpretation of the passage. McRay suggests that “the general procedure employed in identifying *to teleion* has been to assign it a meaning consistent with its meaning elsewhere in a particular New Testament text which is clearer than the one in I Corinthians 13.”¹⁶⁹ He acknowledges that this is a legitimate methodology, but points out that one's conclusions depend

of the church: “the things of the early age of Christianity's immaturity would be supplanted by the things of Christianity's maturity” (Roy L. Laurin, *I Corinthians: Where Life Matures* [Wheaton: Van Kampen, 1950], 242–44).

¹⁶³Toussaint, “First Corinthians Thirteen and the Tongues Question,” 311–16.

¹⁶⁴Pentecost paraphrases τὸ τέλειον as “full maturity, full knowledge, full understanding of the revelation,” and then goes on to explain that the temporary gifts, and particularly the gift of tongues, were suited to the infancy period of the church's history, but when the church grew up out of its infancy, the members no longer needed the substantiating and confirming sign of speaking in tongues. If a church claims the need for the gift of tongues today, it is confessing spiritual immaturity and ignorance of the truth of the Word of God. The gift of tongues was suited to the infancy period of church history before the Scriptures were completed; before the Spirit had done His work of teaching, instructing, revealing, and illuminating the things of the written Word.

J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1963), 190.

¹⁶⁵Donald G. McDougal, “Whether There Be Tongues They Shall Cease” (BD thesis, Talbot Theological Seminary, 1966).

¹⁶⁶See the summary of Godet's position earlier in the paper.

¹⁶⁷“*To Teleion* in I Corinthians 13:10.”

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 171.

very much on which passage is selected. James 1:25 may suggest the canon by analogy with the perfect law of liberty. Matthew 5:48 may be used to argue for individual sinlessness. James 1:17 or Revelation 21 may support heaven.¹⁷⁰ To resolve this dilemma McRay seeks to establish that the closest contextual parallel with 1 Corinthians 13:8–12 is to be found in Ephesians 4:7–16. He tabulates seven specific correlations.¹⁷¹

Ephesians 4:7–16	1 Corinthians 13:8–12
1. Jew-Gentile discussion 2:11; 3:1; 4:17 (22)	1. Gentiles 12:2; Greeks 12:13
2. Emphasis on “all” 4:6	2. “All in all” 12:6, 12
3. Emphasis on “oneness & unity” 4:4–6; 2:16ff. 4:2 <i>unity</i> of the Spirit 4:4 <i>one</i> body, <i>one</i> Spirit, <i>one</i> hope 4:5 <i>one</i> Lord, <i>one</i> faith, <i>one</i> baptism 4:6 <i>one</i> God and Father of <i>all</i> 2:16 <i>one</i> body 2:18 <i>one</i> Spirit	3. Emphasis on “one, one & the same” giver of the gifts 12:4–14 12:4 <i>same</i> Spirit; 12:5 <i>same</i> Lord 12:6 <i>same</i> God; 12:8 <i>same</i> Spirit 12:9 <i>same</i> Spirit; <i>one</i> Spirit 12:11 <i>one</i> and the <i>same</i> Spirit 12:12 <i>one</i> body; 12:13 <i>one</i> Spirit; <i>one</i> body; <i>one</i> Spirit
4. Divine gifts 4:7–11	4. Divine gifts 12:4–11, 27–31; 13:1–3, 8–13; 14:1–40
5. Human body illustration of unity 4:12–16	5. Human body illustration 12:12–13, 14ff
6. Human growth illustrates progress of the Spiritual body (church) 4:13–16	6. Paul’s growth illustrates Corinthian progress 13:11
7. <i>Teleios</i>	7. <i>Teleios</i>

He next sketches the argument of Ephesians, emphasizing that the inclusion of the Gentiles is a major thread in that argument. The crucial point in his argument rests at Ephesians 4:12–13. He translates verse twelve: “to equip the Jewish Christians to do their work of ministering which is to include the Gentiles into the body of Christ.” He goes on to explain that this work was to continue until

a level of faith and knowledge may be achieved that can be characterized as *teleios*, ‘a *fullgrown* man.’ This can only mean in the total context of the discussion *the maturity of*

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 168–71.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 73–74. The table is essentially as McRay gives it except that the two columns have been set side by side to make his comparisons clearer. A composite list of eighteen items combining the lists of McRay, Thomas, and Dillow appears in Rothhaar, “An Exegetical Investigation of 1 Corinthians 13:10,” 32–34.

*the church as evidenced in the Jewish acceptance of the inclusion of the Gentiles into one divine body, which for at least a decade belonged only to the Jews.*¹⁷²

Based on this understanding of Ephesians, McRay argues that because the context is identical and the argument is developed in an identical way, then τὸ τέλειον must have the same meaning in 1 Corinthians 13:10 as it does in Ephesians 4:13—the inclusion of the Gentiles. This was tied to Paul’s personal, apostolic work as the apostle to the Gentiles who was responsible to bring them into the church. “When this ministry had been completed and the church throughout the empire had accepted its implications, *to teleion* came.”¹⁷³

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to engage in exegetical evaluation and debate, there are two observations that may be appropriate in regard to McRay’s proposal. First, the parallels that he charts between 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 are not as close or as unique as they at first appear. The fact that both Jew and Gentile are mentioned is true in many passages;¹⁷⁴ it is certainly not a unique correspondence that must carry heavy weight here. Nor is unity particularly unique.¹⁷⁵ Gifts are likewise discussed in several other passages.¹⁷⁶ A similar conjunction of τέλειος and νήπιος (or their verb forms) can be found in 1 Corinthians 2:6/3:1; in 14:20; and in Hebrews 5:13–14.¹⁷⁷ It is of interest, however, that these two passages contain a similar combination of factors, but this does not constitute proof that identical word meanings must therefore be involved nor that conceptual equations may be drawn.

Second, McRay’s reconstruction of the argument of Ephesians is not to be accepted as the only possible one nor as semantically determinative for the sense of τὸ τέλειον in 4:13. It seems to place too great a weight on a concept that is not explicit: that the church became mature with the close of Paul’s ministry in Rome in the mid-60s. Certainly Paul’s ministry *was* involved in the maturing of the church—but so was that of the other apostles, prophets, and church leaders of the first century.

¹⁷²McRay, “*To Teleion* in I Corinthians 13:10,” 176.

¹⁷³Ibid., 180.

¹⁷⁴This same correspondence appears in Romans 1, 2, 10; Galatians 2, 3; and Colossians 3.

¹⁷⁵Other discussions of unity may be found in 1 Corinthians 1; Colossians 2; and 1 Peter 3.

¹⁷⁶Major passages that discuss the gifts include not only 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Ephesians 4, but also Romans 12 and 1 Peter 4.

¹⁷⁷In the same semantic range is πρεσβύτερος ... τέκνον in Philemon 9–10.

Thomas (1974, 1978, 1993)

The scholar who has been most vocal in his advocacy of a position regarding 1 Corinthians 13:10 in recent years is Robert Thomas. He has addressed the issue in at least three separate publications spanning twenty years.¹⁷⁸ That his writing has been influential may be seen in its reflection in theses that have been written since 1974.¹⁷⁹ Though his position may be classified as a maturity view, it is different than McRay's. Instead of identifying a specific historical point at which the church reached maturity within the lifetime of Paul, Thomas hybridizes the canon view with the second coming view.

The church is viewed collectively, "growing up as one body, beginning with its birth, progressing through different stages of development during the present and reaching complete maturity at the *parousia*."¹⁸⁰ Since Paul did not know the time of the second coming (though he expected it in his lifetime during much of his ministry), he realized that the revelatory process of tongues, prophecy, and knowledge might either continue up to the return of Christ (if that occurred soon), or be completed prior to that time (if his return was distant). The church might mature to a point "where continuing revelation was no longer necessary." Since Paul would have been aware of the decrease in authenticating miracles as the early years of the church passed, and since he "also knew that an objective record of 'the faith...' was little by little being put into written form," he may well have concluded that "this growing canon would some day reach completion, like its Old Testament counterpart, and a new stage of the church's maturity would result."¹⁸¹

From a twentieth-century perspective, this results in a tripartite view of the church's development and maturity. The first period, illustrated by the infancy of 1 Corinthians 13:11, was characterized by ongoing revelation and miraculous authentication. The second period is

¹⁷⁸Robert L. Thomas, "Tongues Will Cease." *JETS* 17 (1974): 81–89; idem., *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: An Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978); idem., "1 Cor 13:11 Revisited: An Exegetical Update," *TMSJ* 4 (1993): 187–201. That he held this view prior to 1974 is likely in view of the thesis for which he served as the advisor in 1966: McDougal, "Whether There Be Tongues They Shall Cease." This thesis also argued for a mature church position which "may have been near the time of the completion of Scripture" (*Ibid.*, 44).

¹⁷⁹For example, Rothhaar, "An Exegetical Investigation of I Corinthians 13:10." It is also possible (probable?) that Thomas has been influenced by McRay's article. Though he never mentions McRay's article in his first two publications (1974, 1978), the list of parallels between 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4 is very similar (cf. Thomas, "Tongues... Will Cease," 86, with McRay, *To Teleion* in 1 Corinthians 13:10," 173–74). He does refer to McRay once in his most recent article ("1 Cor 13:11 Revisited," 191, n. 14).

¹⁸⁰Thomas, "Tongues... Will Cease," 86.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 88.

characterized by faith, hope, and love (verse 13) rather than by miraculous phenomena. It spans the time from the completion of the canon until the *παρουσία*. The third period is that time following the *παρουσία* when love alone remains “and the church’s maturity will be perfect.”¹⁸²

Much of Thomas’ argument is based on the meaning of the word *τέλειος*. He lists four major arguments for understanding it as *complete, mature* rather than *perfect*. First, this is the normal New Testament use of the word. Second, whenever *τέλειος* is used in conjunction with *νήπιος* it has this meaning. This is true in all Greek literature. Third, the parallels with the portrait of a gradually-maturing church in the present age found in Ephesians 4:1–16 point toward maturity in this passage also. Fourth, the *νήπιος/άνηρ* illustration of verse eleven does not fit the events of the *parousia* which will be a sudden transition, not the gradual growth and development from *νήπιος* to *άνηρ*.¹⁸³

Dillow (1975)

Thomas’ view has been widely popularized through Joseph Dillow’s book, *Speaking in Tongues: Seven Crucial Questions*.¹⁸⁴ He explicitly acknowledges that he has “borrowed heavily from [Thomas’] article in this discussion.”¹⁸⁵ His discussion follows Thomas quite closely, though he does add one additional aspect of church maturity: dependency on Judaism. He defines immaturity as a lack of knowledge and a state of dependency. The condition of *τὸ τέλειον* is therefore the “full knowledge characteristic of maturity in that a completed canon of Scripture was theirs” and their no longer being in “the infancy period of shelter under the umbrella of institutional Judaism.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸²Ibid., 88–89. This same position is adopted (with little modification) in a recent *BibSac* article: Farnell, “When Will the Gift of Prophecy Cease?” 191–95.

¹⁸³Thomas, “1 Cor 13:11 Revisited,” 190–94. The list of parallels between this passage and Ephesians 4 is more complete and more carefully stated than his earlier, 1974 article and McRay’s similar list. He also interacts with two critiques of his view (Grudem and Fee) and replies to six objections that they raise (195–98). It is beyond the scope of this paper to interact with that very interesting interchange. His arguments seem to demonstrate that the *provisions* for the church’s maturity were complete rather than that the church itself had become mature. The history of the church since the completion of the canon would also seem to raise serious questions regarding the wisdom of describing the church itself as mature. (Huebner makes a similar observation from a slightly different perspective: *The Word of God Versus the “Charismatic Renewal,”* 206–07.)

¹⁸⁴Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 131, n. 16.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 130, 132.

Rothhaar (1984)

Another variation on the maturity view was proposed by Rothhaar in his master's thesis.¹⁸⁷ In essence he seeks to combine the views of McRay, Thomas, and Dillow. He agrees with them that the best meaning for τέλειος is *mature* rather than *complete* or *perfect*. He then presents two characteristics of maturity that he says are “implied in the context of 1 Corinthians 12–14.”¹⁸⁸ These are independence and unity. The concept of independence is adapted from Dillow. “The independence of the early Church involves a separation from Judaism, a separation from the need of divine revelatory gifts and a separation from the Apostolic leadership of the Twelve.” The two-fold characteristic of unity involves unity of knowledge and unity of function; this comes from Thomas/Dillow and McRay respectively. Unity of knowledge involves a “fixed standard of truth” and unity of function relates to the union of Jew and Gentile in the body.¹⁸⁹

Working from that (somewhat arbitrary) definition of maturity, Rothhaar then asks when is the church mature? His answer is that the break with Judaism comes in A.D. 70 (though he never addresses the issue of *unity* between Jew and Gentile as McRay did), independence from apostolic leadership “was accomplished early in church history” (date unspecified), and that the standard of truth and independence from the supernatural gifts came with the completion of the canon “shortly before A.D. 100.”¹⁹⁰ This view differs from the canon view in that τὸ τέλειον is not viewed as the canon per se, but rather as “the primary tool for causing the maturity of the Church.”¹⁹¹ It differs from the other maturity views (Rothhaar refers to it as the “modified mature body view”¹⁹²) only in that he attempts to combine all the variations of a maturity view into one hybrid system.

¹⁸⁷“An Exegetical Investigation of 1 Corinthians 13:10.” The primary value of this thesis is not for his attempted synthesis but for a helpful overview of the issues. He offers nothing creative or unique in his own right, but does summarize the options that have been offered by others.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 54. The thesis never shows where or how these characteristics are implied in the context, however.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 54–55.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 58–61.

¹⁹¹Ibid., 62.

¹⁹²Ibid., 51.

Other advocates of a maturity view

Other commentators understand maturity to be an individual matter. Snyder, e.g., says that τὸ τέλειον is maturity in an individual's life (presumably before death?): "The time will come when we are complete ourselves and then we will no longer know and prophesy partially...it is the individual's process of understanding which matures."¹⁹³ Schmidt, likewise views it as maturity in this life: τὸ τέλειον

bears the idea of 'full-grown.'...The speech, knowledge, and methods of thinking that belong to childhood are both necessary and useful during the early years of our lives. Yet all these are incomplete and inadequate.... This is not so much the result of any decision or series of them, as a simple consequence of growing up.¹⁹⁴

Neither of these individual views reflect sensitivity to the context or the theological issues that are involved.

Views that relate τὸ τέλειον to an eschatological context

With this section once again the majority view is found. Due to the prolixity of material, only brief excerpts of selected writers will be included. Only those who discuss the question at length will be considered in any detail. Because of the great variety of eschatological views no attempt will be made to categorize subtle distinctions of eschatology as might be done if only dispensational writers were included.

Overview

Most commentators simply assume that τὸ τέλειον relates to the parousia in some way without any attempt to be specific. This includes both dispensational and nondispensational writers. Geikie, e.g., says that it is the return of Christ when the state arrives in which everything is perfect.¹⁹⁵ S. Lewis Johnson is one of the few dispensational writers who would identify τὸ τέλειον with the second coming.

That which is perfect cannot be a reference to the completion of the canon of Scripture; otherwise we now, living in the age of the completed canon, would see more clearly than

¹⁹³Graydon F. Snyder, *First Corinthians: A Faith Community Commentary* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1992), 175–76. This is explicitly said not to be "at the endtime."

¹⁹⁴John Schmidt, *Letter to Corinth* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1947), 114.

¹⁹⁵Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Epistles of Paul*, 2 vols., in *Hours with the Bible* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [≈1890]), 2:192.

Paul did (v. 9). Even the most self-satisfied and opinionated of theologians would hardly admit that. The coming of that which is perfect can only be a reference to the Lord's second coming. That event will mark the end of the exercise of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.¹⁹⁶

Toussaint, similarly, identifies τὸ τέλειον as the rapture. His primary basis for doing so is the parallel with verse 12.¹⁹⁷ Others who would identify τὸ τέλειον as either the parousia or "the return of Christ" include Parry,¹⁹⁸ Luck,¹⁹⁹ Blair,²⁰⁰ and Martin.²⁰¹

The term *beatific vision* is not common among conservative Protestant writers. It is usually viewed as a Catholic phrase,²⁰² but is used to explain τὸ τέλειον by Wilson, who says that it is "the beatific vision of God in Christ."²⁰³ Although he does not use the same phrase, Hughes' explanation is essentially the same thing: it is when the believer sees God face to face.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁶S. L. Johnson, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, ed. C. F. Pfeiffer and E. F. Harrison, 1227–60 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 1252.

¹⁹⁷Toussaint, "First Corinthians Thirteen and the Tongues Question," 313. He says that "the conclusion is clear: prophecies and knowledge continue until the rapture when they will be rendered inoperative in the full brightness of Christ's presence" (Ibid.). He maintains a cessationist position by arguing that prophecy refers to the content of prophesy rather than the act of it. Tongues he eliminates on three bases: the "voice argument" from verse 8 (the middle voice suggests that tongues will cease prior to prophecy), the change of verbs from καταργέω to παύω, and the omission of tongues in verses 9 and 12.

¹⁹⁸R. St John Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Cambridge Greek Testament (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 195.

¹⁹⁹G. Coleman Luck, *First Corinthians*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 103.

²⁰⁰J. Allen Blair, *Living Wisely: A Devotional Study of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux, 1969), 275–76.

²⁰¹Ralph P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 53.

²⁰²"In Roman Catholic theology the beatific vision (*visio Dei*) refers to the direct, intuitive knowledge of the triune God which perfected souls will enjoy by means of their intellect; that is, the final fruition of the Christian life, in which they will see God as he is in himself." J. Van Engen, "Beatific Vision," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 130. Although the actual term is not used, Callan reflects this concept in his explanation of τὸ τέλειον: "Perfect refers to the vision of God hereafter in which we shall see and know all things." (Charles J. Callan, *The Epistles of St. Paul*. 2 vols. [New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1951], 1:397.) Augustine also used this terminology (see the section on Augustine near the beginning of this paper).

²⁰³Geoffrey B. Wilson, *I Corinthians: A Digest of Reformed Comment* (London: Banner of Truth, 1971), 196.

²⁰⁴Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *I Corinthians*, in *The Biblical Expositor*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry, 258–78 (Philadelphia: Holman, 1960), 274.

A number of writers connect τὸ τέλειον, not with the return of Christ per se or seeing him, but with the state of affairs that will come into being at that time. *Perfection* or perfect knowledge is often in view. Bruce, e.g., describes it as the consummation and fullness of knowledge that arrives with the parousia.²⁰⁵ Craig & Short speak of the age to come, the parousia, when the Christian will live “in the realm of that perfect knowledge and perfect understanding of God which is of the very essence of heaven.”²⁰⁶ Dods speaks of our present, incomplete knowledge in this life in contrast with the full knowledge of the life to come.²⁰⁷ Farrar describes it as “heavenly knowledge which shall gradually broaden into the perfect day” and “perfectness when we have at last attained to ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. iii. 14).” In other words, Christian maturity.²⁰⁸ Findlay relates it to complete knowledge (in contrast to the partial knowledge available now through prophecy and the gift of knowledge) that is brought about by the parousia.²⁰⁹ Barrett defines τὸ τέλειον as complete knowledge and suggests that it is an “eschatological notion.”

The adjective (in the neuter gender, and with the article, τὸ τέλειον) rendered *totality* is fairly common in Paul; see ii. 6; xiv. 20. It takes its precise meaning from the context, and here, in contrast with *in part* (ἐκ μέρους) it means not perfection (in quality) but *totality*—in particular the whole truth about God.²¹⁰

Mare says that it is perfect knowledge and prophetic understanding in heaven.²¹¹

²⁰⁵F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 128.

²⁰⁶Clarence T. Craig and John Short, *1 Corinthians*, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, 10:1–262 (New York: Abingdon, 1953), 10:186–93.

²⁰⁷Marcus Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The Expositor's Bible*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1903), 5:692–93.

²⁰⁸F. W. Farrar, *1 Corinthians*, in *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett, n.d.), 425.

²⁰⁹G. G. Findlay, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 2:727–953 (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 2:900.

²¹⁰C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 306.

²¹¹W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin, 10:173–297 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 10:268–70. He gives four arguments for this view. 1) The concept of *canon* is foreign to the context. 2) The related words τέλος and τελέω are used in relation to the second coming. 3) ὅταν with the indicative refers to a specific time, ὅταν with the subjunctive (here) suggests an indefinite time, thus the second coming is more likely in view. 4) It is not possible to demonstrate that Paul expected to live until the coming of τὸ τέλειον—and in fact he did not if it refers to the canon, thus the statement of verse 12 more likely refers to the second coming than to the completion of the canon.

Burdick argues for complete knowledge when we see Christ and vigorously opposes using this passage to support a cessationist view—and this from one who opposes contemporary manifestations of tongues as not the same as the biblical gift and who warns of the dangers associated with such things.²¹² 1 Corinthians 13:8

does not say that tongues were to cease at the end of the apostolic age. In fact, it allows for the existence of tongues until “that which is perfect” has come (v. 10), and then “shall I know even as also I am known” (v. 12). The verb *epiginōskō* in verse 12 speaks of full knowledge, and the general sense of the verse points, not to an experience of this life of this age, but to the time when salvation is complete and we see Christ “as he is” (I John 3:2). Then there will be no more place for tongues or prophecy for knowledge will be complete. To make I Corinthians 13:8 prove that God intended glossolalia to cease at the end of the apostolic age is to violate the valid rules of biblical interpretation in the interest of a previously determined position.²¹³

Charles Smith (1973)

The position of Charles Smith is interesting in regard to the question at hand. In 1972 he published *Tongues in Biblical Perspective* in which he provided an extensive defense of the canon view. The following year, however, he issued a revised edition in which he completely rewrote the chapter dealing with the duration of tongues and adopted the eternal state view. He presents “two major considerations” that “strongly suggest that this is the correct interpretation.” First, it is the easiest and simplest interpretation and requires no “tenuous exegesis” to justify itself. By contrast the canon view requires “three distinctive interpretations” in order to stand (see below). Second, verses ten and twelve must refer to the same time: the time when τὸ τέλειον comes and the time when the believer sees face to face are the same. This is substantiated by the fact that both expressions are contrasted with ἐκ μέρους (vv. 9–10 and again in v. 12). In addition, complete knowledge (τὸ τέλειον) replaces partial knowledge (ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκωμεν) in verses nine and ten; in verse twelve full knowledge (τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην) replaces partial knowledge (ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους).²¹⁴

Smith’s objection to the canon view is, as noted above, that it requires “three distinctive interpretations.” First, τέλειος must be understood as meaning “complete.” (This translation can

²¹²Donald W. Burdick, *Tongues: To Speak or Not to Speak?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 80–89.

²¹³Ibid., 36–37.

²¹⁴Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, 2d ed., 80–81. Ronald Heine develops the close relationship of verses 10 and 12 on the basis of a structural analysis (“The Structure and Meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:8–13,” in *Increase in Learning: Essays in Honor of James G. Van Buren*, ed. Robert J. Owens, Jr. and Barbara E. Hamm (Manhattan, KS: Manhattan Christian College, 1979), 63–72.

be used with any of the interpretations.) Second, verse twelve must refer to a different time than verse ten “for the sake of consistency in logic”—the time when the face-to-face relationship at glorification. (He acknowledges that some have tried to handle this verse as relating to the same time, but concludes that it is an “inadequate explanation” that does not fit with the phrase *face to face*.) Third, καταργέω must be understood to refer to a temporary laying aside to allow for the future reactivation of prophecy during the tribulation and in the millennial kingdom according to Revelation 11:3–13 and Joel 2:28.²¹⁵ It is Smith’s conviction that although each of these are possible, that it is asking too much to insist on all three when none of the three are necessary.²¹⁶

John MacArthur (1978, 1984, 1992)

MacArthur defines τὸ τέλειον as “the eternal, heavenly state of believers.” This is established largely by the process of elimination (as he admits), though he does suggest several positive reasons. First, τέλειος is best understood as *perfection* in light of Matthew 5:48. This, he asserts, is the “plainest and simplest” meaning and is what would have been understood by the Corinthians. (No basis is given for this statement.) Second, it allows for the neuter form of τέλειον—the *state* of perfection. Third, it allows for the continuation of prophecy and knowledge during this age—though he defines those gifts as proclaiming and interpreting Scripture rather than as a means of revelation. Fourth, it also fits the context in regard to the permanence of love and the face-to-face experience when we see God. Fifth, being fully known will only be true in heaven. This eternal state does not await the completion of the millennium, but begins either at death or the rapture.²¹⁷

Max Turner (1985)

Turner’s article in *Vox Evangelica*²¹⁸ has been cited frequently in recent years.²¹⁹ His work is more helpful in evaluating other views than his own, which is rather vague. After several

²¹⁵Huebner is the only writer noted who attempts to answer this objection. He argues that “1 Cor. 12, 13 and 14 speak of *gifts in the body of Christ*. There will be no gifts in the body of Christ in the millennium since that body is glorified at the rapture” (*The Word of God Versus the “Charismatic Renewal,”* 211–12, n. 13).

²¹⁶Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, 2d ed., 76–79.

²¹⁷John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 364, 366. See also idem., *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 165–66.

²¹⁸Max Turner, “Spiritual Gifts Then and Now,” *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 7–64.

²¹⁹For example, Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 68.

lengthy paragraphs critiquing the canon view and the maturity view, he summarizes his own in one sentence (as if it wins by default!): “only the *third*—the eschatological—interpretation of verses 8–12 satisfactorily accounts for Paul’s language.”²²⁰ From the tenor of his objections to the other views it appears that he would relate this in some way to knowledge in the eschaton.

Turner’s opinion of the canon view is that it is “exegetically indefensible, and is not held in serious New Testament scholarship.” His five objections to it are that, first, it cannot be demonstrated that Paul anticipated a New Testament canon (ctr. this with Thomas’ confident claims to the contrary). Second, Paul could not have expected the Corinthians to understand τὸ τέλειον to refer to the canon (though no evidence for this claim is given). Third, since the Corinthians probably had the Old Testament and likely oral traditions of Jesus’ teachings, plus the content of numerous, non-canonical prophecies, they could not be expected to realize that a completed New Testament canon would mean the end of partial knowledge and the receipt of full knowledge. Fourth, the contrast between the knowledge of the Corinthians before and after the completion of the canon is not sufficiently great as to account for the comparison of mirror knowledge versus face-to-face knowledge. (“However much we respect the New Testament canon, Paul can only be accused of the wildest exaggeration in verse 12 if *that* is what he was talking about.”) Fifth, prophecy was not an interim, authoritative revelation of theology but “had much wider content and function, much of which would not be affected in the least by completion of the canon.”²²¹

He is kinder to the maturity view, judging it to be “possible.” He has three objections. First, it “trivializes the language of verses 10 and 12” to apply it to the maturity of the church prior to the return of Christ. Second, Paul’s high regard for prophets and prophecy would not exclude them from a mature church. Third, the charismata were given to strengthen the church while she awaits the parousia.²²²

D. A. Carson (1987)

Probably the most substantial discussion that relates τὸ τέλειον to the eschaton is that of D. A. Carson who defines it as “the state of affairs brought about by the arrival of the parousia.” He adduces seven lines of argument in support of this contention—which is essentially the

²²⁰Turner, “Spiritual Gifts,” 39.

²²¹Ibid., 38–39.

²²²Ibid., 39.

majority view throughout the history of the church, though he nuances it with greater precision than many of its advocates.

First, “it is difficult to believe that Paul could have expected the Corinthians to think that by ‘perfection’ he was alluding to the cessation of the writing of Scripture.”²²³ This is perhaps the weakest of the seven arguments, though it does have some force. That there was some concept of inscripturation in process during the apostolic era is obvious from Peter’s reference to Paul’s writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15–16). That Paul was conscious of that process at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians cannot be proven, though it is not an unfeasible assumption. More speculative, though not unreasonable, is the contention that the Corinthians would have understood Paul to be referring to such a process by his use of τὸ τέλειον.²²⁴

Second, the assertion of verse twelve, that Paul expected to “know fully, even as [he was] fully known, requires a condition in which there is correspondence between Paul’s knowledge and God’s knowledge. Knowledge of this sort is found in Scripture, to be true, but it is very limited when compared with the knowledge of the believer in heaven. The analogy seems to demand something more than the canon view provides.²²⁵

Third, πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον (v. 12) is “almost a formula in the Septuagint for a theophany, and therefore almost certainly a reference to the new state brought about by the parousia.”²²⁶

²²³Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 70.

²²⁴Fee directs his primary attack against both the canon and maturity views on this basis (it is a classic “Fee-ism”). Referring to the canon view he says, “It is an impossible view, of course, since Paul himself could not have articulated it. What neither Paul himself nor the Corinthians could have understood can possibly be the meaning of the text” (*1 Corinthians*, 645, n. 23). The principle of authorial intent is crucial in such hermeneutical discussions, but it is slightly more complex than that. A flat statement that Paul “could not have articulated it” leads one to question the basis on which Fee knows such things. Why could Paul not have articulated it? Did he not understand the principle of inscripturation? His own statements in 1 Corinthians 2:12–13 suggest otherwise. Did he not understand the concept of canon? His view of the Old Testament as Scripture would argue that he did. Did he not understand that his own writings (or at least some of them) were authoritative? His frequent defense of his apostolic authority, both in person and in writing, certainly imply that this would not have been an unrealistic assumption. Without specific reasons supporting such a statement, it would seem unwise to pontificate. (Pettegrew asks a similar question: “How do these commentators know for sure that the Corinthians did not know that there would one day be a New Covenant document to complement the Old Testament?” [*New Covenant Ministry of the Spirit*, 187.]) *BAGD* (xxiv–xxv) also argues against Fee’s position.

²²⁵Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 70.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, 71. Carson quotes both Calvin’s and Turner’s confident (and perhaps somewhat overstated) assertions on the certainty of this identification. Both statements have been included in the relevant sections above. The same or equivalent phrases (πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον; πρόσωπον κατὰ πρόσωπον; and the similar ἐνώπιος ἐνωπίω*) in the LXX are found in Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:11*; Deut. 5:4; 34:10; Judg. 6:22; and Ezek. 20:35.[The reference to the

Fourth, McRay's suggestion that τὸ τέλειον refers to the union of Jew and Gentile in one body based on the parallel with Ephesians 4 is excluded out of hand as "irrelevant in the context of 1 Corinthians 13." (It would have been helpful if Carson had dealt with the proposed parallels between these two texts as proposed by both McRay and Thomas.) Taking his cue from Turner (or perhaps Grudem), he also notes that "any preparousia maturity simply trivializes the language of verse 12."²²⁷

Fifth, the contrast of verse eleven's illustration of βήπιος ... ἄνηρ requires a much sharper contrast than that of gradual growth and development (as argued by those defending a maturity view). The figure can imply that, but the use here involves baby talk and reasoning (ὅτε ἡμην νήπιος, ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐλογιζόμην ὡς νήπιος) in contrast to the speech and reasoning of an adult (ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου). The structure of ὅτε ... ὅτε and the perfect tenses mark this as a sharp contrast rather than an imperceptible progression. "To argue that the spiritual experience and maturity of the early church before the canon's completion are to the experience of maturity of the postcanonical church just what the experience of an infant's talk and understanding is to that of an adult is historical nonsense." In other words, there was not the sharp cleavage in maturity before and after John penned the last words of the New Testament.²²⁸

Sixth, although τέλειος is never used elsewhere to describe the Christian's condition following the parousia, the word is elsewhere used as an adjective; only here is it a (neuter, articular) substantive, "probably created precisely to serve as a contrast to 'the partial' or 'the imperfect.'"²²⁹

Seventh, it is the assumption that prophecy has the same revelatory authority as Scripture that generates the theological pressure to find a one-verse theological proof-text that eliminates prophecy in the post-canonical era. Rejecting that assumption negates the perceived

αἴνιγμα (mirror) probably alludes to Num 12:6–8. There is a large body of literature in the journals relating to this (enigmatic?) figure.]

²²⁷Ibid. Turner ("Spiritual Gifts," 39) and Grudem ("Gift of Prophecy," 216) both make very similar statements.

²²⁸Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 71.

²²⁹Ibid., 72. The word τέλειος does occur as a substantive one other time (1 Cor 2:6), though there it is masculine. Many of the adjectival uses function syntactically as predicate adjectives. It would have been very helpful if Carson had discussed the semantic question in greater detail, especially since this is one of the major arguments used by both canon and maturity view advocates. His explanation noted above may be adequate, but it does run counter to the more customary Pauline use of τέλειος.

theological pressure. (Carson generally follows Wayne Grudem’s view of prophecy in this regard, though with “mild dissent” at several points.)²³⁰

Roy Huebner (1988)

One of the most recent discussions of 1 Corinthians 13:10 comes from the pen of Roy Huebner who includes an appendix devoted to this passage.²³¹ His position is that τὸ τέλειον refers to the “perfection of glory” that the saints receive at the rapture. “The perfect does not directly mean the Rapture, but it does so indirectly. It refers to the glory. It refers to the arrival of the state of glory at the resurrection and Rapture of the saints who compose the church. This is brought in at the Rapture.”²³² Huebner never provides a positive listing of reasons for his view (though some can be gleaned from his rebuttal of other views); he assumes that by disproving the others his is established.

Although he does not distinguish clearly between the canon view and the mature church view (as summarized in this paper), he does offer a helpful critique that relates to these views. First, Paul would have been in error if he claimed that he would know as he was known when the perfect came, but died before the completion of the canon. Second, the view implies that Paul’s knowledge was “childish” in contrast to our adult knowledge—a somewhat arrogant claim! Third, it seems incongruous that Paul, who rebukes the Corinthians for their pretensions to knowledge, would imply that they would have even more knowledge upon completion of the canon. Fourth, it is contrary to Paul’s ministry of completing the Word of God (implied in 2 Tim 1:11; Col 2).²³³ Fifth, The expression *face to face* must refer to seeing Jesus Christ. Sixth, the use of ἄρτι/νυνί and τότε in verses twelve and thirteen relate to the period before τὸ τέλειον comes (ἄρτι/νυνί) and after that time (τότε). “Verse 13 is a summary statement; and it connects especially with v. 8.” Seventh, the failure of the church by the time of the completion of the canon, evidenced in the false teaching and departure from the truth, argues against viewing the

²³⁰Ibid. His comments on Grudem’s view of prophecy may be found on pages 94–99.

²³¹Roy Huebner, “Does 1 Cor. 13 Speak of the Close of the Canon and the Maturation of the Church?” Appendix 7 of *The Word of God Versus the “Charismatic Renewal”* (Morganville, NJ: 1988), 203–12.

²³²Ibid., 209.

²³³This particular argument is based on Huebner’s understanding of Paul’s role in relationship to the present dispensation—perhaps as “steward” (though he does not use that terminology here). He does not mean that Paul wrote the final portion of the New Testament canon. It would have been helpful if this point had been spelled out in more detail.

church as mature at that time. Eighth, the canon view “has direct tendency to support clerisy and one-man ministry” by concluding that the gifts of prophecy and knowledge are no longer present in the church—their lack being made up by the dominance of professional clergy.²³⁴

He also responds to other views that take an eschatological approach. That τὸ τέλειον could refer to the believer’s experience at death is rejected on two bases: in the intermediate state the believer is not yet perfect, not having his resurrected body; and second, his knowledge is not complete, for he will learn throughout eternity. These objections imply two different meanings for τέλειος (“perfect” and “complete”).²³⁵

Other commentators

Several writers relate this state of perfection to the church corporately rather than individuals. In many ways this is similar to the mature body view, the difference being that the maturity is related strictly to a future condition following the parousia rather than having any historical fulfillment. Lowery, e.g., describes it as “the state of the church when God’s program for it is consummated at the coming of Christ.”²³⁶ McFadyen’s position is similar.

Paul is apparently referring to the coming of Christ, the great hope of the church, when aspiration would be fulfilled. That coming ushered in the perfect age, and everything preparatory to it was necessarily partial and incomplete. Prophecy was only valid until then; and our present knowledge would give place to perfect knowledge (ver. 12).

So the church, in the present age, is in its minority, and its gifts are suitable to its condition; but, in the age to come, she will have attained, and the ways and the helps of her childhood will be left for ever behind. There is a great contrast between the *now*, with partial states, and the *then* with its perfection (ver. 10).²³⁷

Other modern commentators who have espoused a position related in one way or another to an eschatological context include the following (arranged alphabetically).

Raymond Brown, *1 Corinthians*, in *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, 10: 287–397 (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 374 (“when life is known with God unhindered by the complexities of this age”).

²³⁴Ibid., 204–07. The last argument depends on viewing prophecy and knowledge as non-revelatory gifts

²³⁵Ibid., 210.

²³⁶David K. Lowery, “1 Corinthians,” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. Zuck, 2:505–49 (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1983), 2:536. He suggests that the perfect γέγονα in verse 11 is proleptic. The chief objection to the canon view, in Lowery’s evaluation, is the context, especially verse 12. In favor of a view related to the maturity of the church are the illustrations of growth & maturity in the following verses.

²³⁷John Edgar McFadyen, *The Epistles to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 184.

- John Burr, *The Lordship of Love: Studies in First Corinthians, Chapter XIII* (London: James Clarke, n.d.), 245 (full knowledge in that “future eternal freedom”).
- Charles W. Carter, *I Corinthians*, in *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, ed. Charles W. Carter, 5:101–245 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 213 (“when knowledge is perfected it will be divine wisdom” [= complete knowledge?]).
- Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia, transl. J. W. Leitch, ed. G. W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 226 (“The nature of the eschatological state, that is, of perfection, is to be defined by the Pauline conceptions of the future world: immortality, *δόξα, πνεύμα*, etc.”).
- H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen, 1903), 120 (“the kingdom of God in its perfect development at the Second Coming of Christ”).
- F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 309–10 (the zenith, the end, the culmination, the acme [though he is not very explicit when this is!]; apparently this is when “this dispensation comes to an end”—presumably at the return of Christ, though he does not mention this event—the “period of perfection”).
- James Hastings, “The Partial and the Perfect,” in *The Great Texts of the Bible*, 15:365–90 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 15:367ff (Does not comment specifically on the phrase “the perfect” [which is surprising given the title of his essay], but it is clear that he understands the time of cessation to be the time when we see God face to face, the illustrations of vv. 11–12 clarifying the statements of vv. 8–10).
- John Heading, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Kansas City: Walterick, 1965), 221 (heaven).
- Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1962), 141–42 (“So prophecies and glossolaly will be abolished. When and how? Could Paul have been thinking about the future of the history of the Church, as Godet supposes? In this case the Apostle’s forecast might very largely have been achieved, since ‘inspired’ people are becoming rarer and rarer. But the Apostle reckoned with the early return of the Lord. It is better to think of the consummation of all things in the Kingdom of God. Then the imperfect forms of relationship between man and God will end. Then our partial and obscure knowledge of God will give place to a vision ‘face to face’, as 13¹² expresses it”).
- Carl Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Living Word Commentary (Austin, TX: Sweet, 1979), 174 (“The end is never referred to in the New Testament as ‘that which is **perfect**’ [*to teleion*]; the common word for ‘end’ [*telos*] belongs to the same word-family, but it is not the term used here. Usually, *to teleion* denotes a ‘moral state,’ used to describe persons and personal conduct [1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; cf. Matt. 5:48; 19:21; Heb. 5:14; James 1:4; 32; 1 John 4:18; cf. Heb. 6:1]. The verb form, however, can be used to describe the Christian’s ‘perfected state’ at the coming of the Lord [cf. Phil. 3:12]. Read in this way, verse 10 would describe the mature state to which Paul is urging the Corinthians, in which prophecies, knowledge, and tongues will no longer be the decisive criteria among them”).
- Wilbert F. Howard, “First and Second Corinthians,” in *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, ed. F. C. Eiselen, E. Lewis, and D. G. Downey, 1169–1206 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1929), 1188 (immediate communion in God’s presence).

- Richard Kugelman, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, 2:254–75 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2:271 (an “expression of eschatological hope”).
- R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1937), 566 (“a complete state” that arrives at the Parousia resulting in “an entirely new way of apprehending, of seeing, and of knowing”).
- George Lyons, *1 Corinthians*, in *Asbury Bible Commentary*, 999–1020 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 1012 (the future age, “all that is partial and imperfect will disappear when the age to come dawns in perfection”).
- Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (Chicago: W. P. Blessing, n.d.), 187 (Verse 8 “has been misunderstood as if it amounted to a declaration that the miraculous gifts in the early Church were intended to be of brief duration. However true that may be, it is not what Paul means here. The cessation to which he refers is their cessation in light of the perfect Future”).
- Julian C. McPheeters, *The Epistles to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 62 (“The limited knowledge of man will be supplanted by the perfect knowledge of eternity”).
- Donald S. Metz, “I Corinthians,” in *Beacon Bible Commentary*, ed. A. F. Harper, et. al., 8:293–486 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1968), 8:444 (perfect knowledge at “the final consummation of redemptive history”).
- James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), 201 (“the direct, distinct vision which will be ours when we are changed in the risen life to come”).
- Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, *International Critical Commentary* (2d ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 297 (heaven and/or second advent).

Conclusion

The preceding survey has demonstrated that the vast majority of biblical commentators throughout the history of the church have understood the expression τὸ τέλειον to be related in some way to the eschaton. Both the canon view and the mature body view are relatively recent interpretations that have developed out of the controversy over contemporary manifestations of the miraculous gifts. Both can be traced only to the mid or early twentieth century, though there were apparently some antecedents to both in the nineteenth century.

The recency of a view does not necessarily disprove its hermeneutical legitimacy, but it should serve as a caution to the interpreter to be sure that there is an adequate and valid exegetical basis for it. Too often views have been adopted because they provide the “right answer” to controversial issues. It may well be that controversy stimulates a greater attention to a passage than had previously been given. The result may be greater theological precision. That was certainly true of the Christological controversies of the early centuries—though no new interpretations of problem passages resulted from the deliberations of the councils.

Although the purpose of this paper has not included an exegetical evaluation of 1 Corinthians 13:10 in its context, it may be helpful to make some general observations on each of the three views based only on the arguments summarized above. In that regard, it would appear that the canon view is the weakest of the three. Not only does it labor under the cloud of recency, but it also requires one of two strategies to make sense of the passage. Either the time referred to in verse ten must be differentiated from verse twelve, or it is necessary to provide creative reinterpretations of verse twelve to harmonize it with a past (or perhaps gnomic) event. Both of these alternatives appear to be strained exegesis. None of the commentators surveyed above who have defended the canon view have provided an exegetical basis for either of these options. That does not mean that it could not be done, but until it has been provided the canon view should be regarded as a hypothesis rather than as an established position.

The mature body view, in any of its forms, ought probably to be rated as the next most viable option—between the canon view and the eschatological view. Although it is perhaps of even more recent provenance than the canon view, it has offered an exegetical basis that is significantly broader. The crux of the position, however, hinges on the validity of the close association of 1 Corinthians 13 and Ephesians 4. Numerous parallels have been cited, but it does not appear to be clear that these go beyond verbal similarities. The contexts of 1 Corinthians 13

and Ephesians 4 seem to be much different, requiring major assumptions to reconcile. Although the background of the two epistles does have a common setting in Paul's ministry, and thus provides a possible conceptual link, that potential does not seem to be fulfilled in the actual statements of 1 Corinthians 13. It might also be asked why the passage should be understood in a corporate sense (maturity of the *church*) rather than individually (*we know, I became a man, I will know...*, etc.).²³⁸

The popularity of both these views has probably been a desire to establish a straightforward, single-passage proof text for the cessation of tongues in response to the abuses and extremes of the contemporary charismatic movement.²³⁹ Unless a more adequate exegetical basis for these views is forthcoming, however, it would appear that advocates have been inclined to be selective in their use of the text—the very thing for which the charismatics are often faulted.²⁴⁰

Those views which associate τὸ τέλειον with an eschatological event or condition not only have historical preponderance, but have far fewer exegetical problems and require fewer theological twists to harmonize the context. Although the absence of an exegetical examination in this paper makes it a precarious endeavor, the general parameters of the eschatological views ought to be briefly delineated to provide direction for further study. The fact that most of the writers surveyed have not worked from a dispensational framework also complicates the following suggestions.

²³⁸The context of 1 Corinthians 12–14, though including corporate elements (*the body*, 12:12; *the church*, 14:4; *if the whole church comes together*, 14:23; *when you come together*, 14:26), also addresses individual believers (and, of course, their relationship to the local church): *to each one*, 12:7ff; *many parts*, 12:12; *the members of the body*, 12:24; the personal note of 13:1–3 (*I*), etc. The corporate focus does not appear to be emphasized until part way into chapter 14. The focus of the second half of chapter 13 seems still to be on more individual matters.

²³⁹“The notion that all the charismata have ceased is extremist, as is the idea that today we have all of the charismata is extremist in the opposite direction. Both views also undermine the operations of the Spirit of God” (Huebner, *The Word of God Versus the “Charismatic Renewal,”* 208).

²⁴⁰Although it is perhaps more caustic and blunt than is appreciated, Marsh's observation in regard to the canon view may be closer to the truth than many cessationists would like to admit. It may not be true of all who espouse the canon view, but this writer would have to acknowledge that the motivation was once true in his own treatment of the issue. “To suggest that *the perfect* refers to the completion of the Canon of Scripture fails to find any support in the biblical usage of *perfect*, or in any of its cognate forms. Such an interpretation exists only by virtue of the need to explain the absence of certain *charismata* in many churches today.” Paul W. Marsh, *I Corinthians*, in *A New Testament Commentary* ed. G. C. D. Howley, 373–415 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 404. (Marsh writes from the perspective of the Christian Brethren Church.) See also the comments by (noncharismatic) Burdick cited earlier in this paper.

To identify τὸ τέλειον as the person of Jesus Christ would appear to be exegetically indefensible, despite the creative explanations that a few have offered. Also problematic would be the suggestion that it refers to the rapture (assuming a dispensational, pre-tribulation rapture scenario), for a resurgence of prophecy appears to be predicted as part of the ensuing events. More feasible is the appeal to eternity, though if this is understood to begin at the end of the millennium, it too would have difficulties. Perhaps it would be best to view τὸ τέλειον as referring to a condition rather than a specific time. This condition would begin at different times for different believers of the present dispensation: either at death or at the rapture. This might be referred to as the *eternal state* (assuming that the believer's condition at either of those times would be essentially the same as it will be for all eternity) or perhaps even better, *final maturity*.

The question that is immediately raised by someone from a noncharismatic, cessationist background who considers such a view relates to the theological adjustments that might be necessary in regards to tongues and prophecy. Does a final maturity view demand that tongues and prophecy be allowed as legitimate expressions of the Spirit's work until the return of Christ? The answer would appear to be that Paul's purpose in 1 Corinthians 13 does not relate to specifying *when* tongues and prophecy will cease.²⁴¹ To insist that this passage must answer that question is asking too much of the text. Tongues and prophecy, if invalidated as legitimate expressions for today, must be invalidated on another basis than 1 Corinthians 13:10.²⁴²

Carson agrees with this conclusion.

None of this, of course, suggests Paul is interested in establishing the ideal relative frequency of prophecy in the church; nor have we yet mentioned historical objections that argue the gifts of prophecy and tongues actually did cease. At the moment, such matters are irrelevant. In these verses Paul establishes the end of the age as the time when these gifts must finally be abolished.²⁴³

²⁴¹Charismatics, of course, would argue otherwise. In his popularization of the Vineyard movement's position, Jack Deere uses this passage to argue that all the gifts must continue until the return of Christ (*Surprised by the Power of the Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 140–43). See also the comments of Wayne Grudem cited earlier.

²⁴²This writer does hold a cessationist view of tongues and prophesy. This paper is not the place to develop the arguments for such a position, but would include the overall biblical portrait of miracles, their authenticating and foundational purposes, the finality of New Testament revelation in Christ, and the historical evidence (both biblical and extrabiblical) that tongues and prophecy as portrayed in the New Testament, did, indeed, cease in the experience of the early church.

²⁴³Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 72. A few pages later he says, "There does not appear to be biblical warrant, at least from this chapter, for banning contemporary tongues and prophecies on the grounds that Scripture anticipates their early demise. This does not mean, of course, that everything that passes for prophecy or the gifts of tongues is

genuine” (Ibid., 75, emphasis added). Carson’s final conclusion regarding tongues is slightly more tolerant than this writer’s, yet the validity of his statements cited here is accepted.

Others who concur with this conclusion are as follows. “The Apostle is saying nothing about the cessation of *χαρίσματα* in this life: prophesyings and knowledge might always be useful. All that he asserts is, that these things will have no use when completeness is revealed; and therefore they are inferior to Love” (Robertson and Plummer, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 297). “Paul did not write 1 Corinthians 13:8–13 for the purpose of telling exactly *when* the gift of tongues would cease. His emphasis is merely that tongues and the other gifts he named *would* cease because they were temporary as contrasted with love, in particular, which is permanent” (Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective*, 2d ed., 73). Also see the comments of Bloomfield, Beet, and Godet cited earlier in the paper.

Appendix A: William Burkitt

Burkitt, William. *Expository Notes with Practical Observations, on the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. 13th ed. London: R. Ware, et. al., 1752), 499–500.

Comment on v. 8:

Charity never faileth. Holy Love is an everlasting Quality and Employment; it shall not fail at Death, as other Graces do, but be perfected at Death: Repentance should accompany us to the Gates of Heaven, but Repentance ceases for ever in Heaven; for no need of Repentance where there is entire Innocence. Faith is swallowed up in Vision, and Hope in fruition; but Love is then and there in its Exhaultation. Thus *Charity never faileth*, but all other Gifts will fail; Prophefying, Languages, Sciences, and all artificial Knowledge, will cease for ever; Knowledge itself in Heaven shall vanish away: But how vanish! The Meaning is, that such Knowledge as we have now shall vanish then; that imperfect Knowledge we have now will cease, and be uselefs then; our present Knowledge is attained with much Labour and Study, but it shall be no more difficult to know in Heaven, than it is for the Eye to open and see: The beautiful Face of Truth shall in a Moment be unveiled to us in Heaven, and the Curtain drawn away by the Hand of God which interposed between us and the Light. Again, Knowledge of so imperfect a Degree, as now it is of, shall vanish away: Here we know in part; and we prophefy by Inspiration, but in part.

[No comment on v. 9]

Comment on v. 10:

As the imperfect Twilight is done away by the opening of the perfect Day; so at Death, when that which is perfect takes place, then that which was imperfect shall be done away. Blessed be God for the Hopes of that blessed Place and State, where all Imperfections shall cease, especially the Imperfection of our Knowledge. Alas! here all that we know, either of the Word or Works of God, is but a Part, a little Part; and blessed be God that this perfect State doth not succeed the imperfect aon after a long Interval, (at the Refurrection and Reunion of the Body) but the imperfect State of the Soul immediately is done away by the coming of the perfect one; the Glass is laid by as uselefs, when we come to see Face to Face, and Eye to Eye. O happy and vast Difference between the Christian's present and future State! True he now begins to know, he knows in part here: but verily what he here knows is little of that others know, little of that he desires to know, and little of that he shall know, when he comes to Heaven; then all Imperfections *shall be done away, when that which is perfect is come*.

Comment on v. 11:

Here the Apostle compares the Christian's imperfect State of Knowledge and Holiness in this Life to a State of Childhood, his perfect State of Holiness and Happiness in Heaven to a State of Manhood. As a Child conceives, thinks, and speaks of things suitably to his childish State; but when he comes to manly Perfection, and to the full Use and Exercise of his Reason, he then puts away childish Conceptions and Things: thus it is with the best of

us in this Life, like Children we conceive and think, we discourse and speak of spiritual Things in a confused and imperfect manner; but when we arrive at our State of manly Perfection in Heaven, we shall have Knowledge and all other Graces perfected. *Learn* hence, That Christians must stay for perfect Knowledge, till they come to Maturity and Ripeness of Age; Children must not expect to know what Men know: *Solomon's* Knowledge on Earth, so famously celebrated, we be but Ignorance, compared with the Knowledge and Enlargements which the Saints have in Heaven; there in Natural Things they shall be exact Philosophers, in Spiritual Things complete Divines; all dark Scriptures shall be clear to them, all the knotty Intrigues of Providence wisely resolved; in a word, there they shall know God himself perfectly, tho' they can never know him to Perfection.

Comment on v. 12:

As if the Apostle had said, Now in our Minority we see Divine Revelations, as the Prophets did of old in a dark enigmatical Manner, and by symbolical Representations of things upon the Fancy, as in a Glass; but then in the adult State of the Church we shall see them after the *Mosaic* Manner, in a way more accommodate to human Nature, and as it were Face to Face; we shall see clearly, immediately; not by Reflection, but by Intuition. These Adverbs, *now* and *then*, distinguish the twofold State of glorious Souls; and shew what they are whilst confined to the Body, and what shall be when emancipated and freed from the Body, that Clog of Mortality which now hangs upon them. *Observe* here, 1. That our imperfect Knowledge of God is set forth by seeing in a Glass, because it is a weak and imperfect Vision; a Glass gives but a weak and languid Representation of the Face that is seen in it; and because it is a vanishing and transient Vision, a man having looked in a Glass, presently forgets what he saw there; and because it is no immediate Sight, but *mediante speculo*, by the Glass of his Word and Ordinances we see and understand something of God's Nature and Will; though after all our Searchings here to find out what God is, we rather know what he is not, than are able to declare what he is. *Observe*, 2. That such as have seen God here, as in a Glass, in the Glass of his Ordinances and Providences, in the Glass of his Word and Works, shall see him Face to Face, and fix their Eye upon him in Heaven to all Eternity: when once the pious Soul is unheathed from the Body, it glitters gloriously; as soon as the Cage is open, the Bird soars aloft, and sings melodiously. It is Death's Office to beat down the Partition-Wall, a gross earthly Body; and then the glorified Soul shall have a clear and perfect Vision, an immediate and possessive Vision, a satisfying and Soul-transforming Vision, a permanent and eternal Vision of the Holy and Blessed God, which the Apostle here calls *seeing Face to Face*.

Appendix B: Transcription of letter from Roy Huebner

Roy Huebner, Morganville, NJ, letter to Rodney J. Decker, 29 July 1994.

July 29, 1994

1-908-591-1120

Dear brother Decker,

I have not come across the “canon” view in any early, or other, brethren writers of last century. I add that I do not know the views of B. W. Newton on that subject. From before 1835 he was undermining, & in 1847 it came to light that he was teaching that Christ was, in His life, at a “circumstantial distance” from God, & etc.

Govett, as you probably know, was opposed to Darby on many matters. I would hardly expect Darby to have held the “canon view.”

I have a friend, who will be back from England in three weeks, who has numerous original copies of Govett’s papers. I will ask him if he has Govett’s The Church of Old, 1850, and check your reference to the Schoettle copy. Mr. Schoettle photo-offset prints from early copies. You might also contact him.

I have the impression that I would want to purchase a copy of what you are writing when it is completed. Please keep me in mind for this when it is available.

Yours in Him,

Roy Huebner

Appendix C: Chronological Listing of Works Surveyed

Church Fathers	1557	Valdés, J.	1869	Kelly, W.
Irenaeus, A.D. 120–202	1649	Roberts, F.	1875	Whedon, D.
Tertullian, A.D. 145–220	1656	Trapp, J.	1882	Beet, J.
Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 153–217	1680?	Baxter, R.	1883	Clarke, A.
Origen, A.D. 185–254	1685	Poole, M.	1884	Barnes, A.
Cyprian, A.D. 200–258	1704	Locke, J.	1884	Meyer, H.
Eusebius, A.D. 260–340	1708	Henry, M.	1884	Pendleton, J.
Archelaus, A.D. 277	1738	Doodridge, P.	1885	Edwards, T.
Methodius, A.D. 260–312	1746	Gill, J.	1886	Lias, J.
Athanasius, A.D. 296–373	1752	Burkitt, W.	1887	Ellicott, C.
Basil, A.D. 329–379	1754	Wesley, J.	1888	Sadler, M.
Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 330–391.	1773	Bengel, J.	1888	Smith, T.
Gregory of Nyssa, A.D. 330–394.	1806	MacKnight, J.	1889	Godet, F.
Ambrose, A.D. 340–397.	1820	Haweis, T.	1890	Geikie, C.
Chrysostom, John, A.D. 347–407	1821	Scott, T.	1900	Findlay, G.
Jerome, A.D. 345–420	1823	Locke, J.	1903	Dods, M.
Augustine, A.D. 354–430	1828	Bloomfield, S.	1903	Goudge, H.
Theodoret, A.D. 393–453	1828	Simeon, C.	1903?	Maclaren, A.
Leo the Great, A.D. 390– 461	1837	Billroth, G.	1905	Garrison, J.
John of Damascus, A.D. 675–749	1850	Darby, J.	1911	McFadyen, J.
Medieval & Modern Writers Cited (Some dates are approx.)	1849	Alford, H.	1912	Hastings, J.
1496 Colet, J.	1850	Govett, Robert	1913	Carroll, B.
1499 Ficino, M.	1851	Olshausen, H.	1913?	Moffatt, J.
1546 Calvin, J.	1857	Hodge, C.	1914	Robertson and Plummer
	1858	Stanley, A.	1918	Warfield, B.
	1859	Robertson, F.	1929	Howard, W.
	1861?	Shore, T.	1937	Lenski, R.
	1864	Faussettt, A.	1947	Schmidt, J.
	1868	Kling, C.	1950	Laurin, R.
	1869	Blackley, W.		

1951	Vine, W.	1968	Metz, D.	1978	Judisch, D.
1953	Craig, C.	1969	Blair, J.	1978	MacArthur, J.
1953	Grosheide, F.	1969	Marsh.	1979	Holladay, C.
1958	Luck, G.	1970	Brown, R.	1982	Grudem, W.
1960	Hughes, P.	1971	Boyer, J.	1983	Lowery, D.
1962	Héring, J.	1971	Bruce, F.	1984	Martin, R.
1962	Johnson, S.	1971	McRay, J.	1984	Rothhaat, J.
1963	Applebury, T.	1971	Unger, M.	1985	Turner, M.
1963	Hoyt, H.	1971	Wilson, G.	1986	Barnett J.
1963	Toussaint, S.	1973	Smith, C.	1987	Carson, D.
1964	McPheeters, J.	1974	Thomas, R.	1987	Fee, G.
1965	Carter, C.	1975	Clark, G.	1987	Schatzmann, S.
1965	Heading, J.	1975	Conzelmann, H.	1988	Huebner, R.
1967	Gromacki, R.	1975	Dillow, J.	1992	Lyons, G.
1968	Barrett, C.	1976	Chantry, W.	1993	Pettegrew, L.
1968	Blaiklock, E.	1976	Mare, W.		
1968	Kugelman, R.	1977	Gromacki, R.		

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Note: This pdf version of the paper was produced in 2009—15 years after it was originally written. No changes in the content were made from the original doctoral course for which it was written. All the Greek text has been converted to Unicode from the original legacy font used. I have not verified all the diacritics, transposing from memory from the original legacy encoding to Unicode. I may have miss-typed a few accents. A few other minor formatting tweaks were made for consistency. Also note that the old English initial/medial ‘s’ has been printed as written in some of the works cited: ſ. (If you find an ‘f’ in one of these sections that seems like it should be an ‘s,’ it’s likely an initial or medial ‘f’ that I missed; they were originally typed with ‘f’ due to font limitations at the time.) The pagination given in the Table of Contents is incorrect; the revised formatting in 2009 changed most of the page numbers and MS Word declines to update them from the original document; there was not time to redo the entire Contents.]

RD, 3/2009