

## **Continuing Revelation and the Noetic Effects of Sin**

**Question #3:** Describe your position on the nature of continuing revelation (i.e., prophecy, tongues, words of knowledge). In particular, explain whether you believe prophecy is a present gift in today's church. Explain the relationship between your understanding of the gift of prophecy and the sufficiency of Scripture.

### **What is Continuing Revelation**

- Continuing Revelation refers to the belief that God continues to communicate new information or insights to believers beyond what is written in Scripture.
- This concept is particularly associated with charismatic movements, where it often takes the form of prophecies, tongues, visions, or direct messages from God.
- There are generally two views about continuing revelation:
  - Continuationism—holds that certain spiritual gifts, such as prophecy and tongues, continue in the church today.
  - Cessationism—believes the Holy Spirit no longer sovereignly gives individual Christians the temporary sign gifts, also known as the miraculous gifts, described in the New Testament (e.g., prophecy, tongues, word of knowledge).
  - Cessationism is not a debate on whether God still works miracles, but whether the same phenomena of miraculous spiritual gifts seen in the early New Testament church are normal for the entire church age.
- The Charismatic Movement is based on the idea that the Holy Spirit's work in Acts is His normal mode of operation at all times. Acts 2 is not descriptive of events but prescriptive in this view. The historical Movement has its roots in events occurring at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Charismatics claim to have played a key role in the "revitalization" of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the twentieth century and argue that certain gifts and ministries of the Spirit have been restored to the church, resulting in deeper levels of intimacy and greater supernatural experiences.

### **Purpose of Miraculous Signs**

- The primary purpose of miraculous sign gifts is to confirm the credentials of a divinely appointed messenger (e.g., Moses & Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus & the Apostles). The Lord communicates this to Moses (Ex. 4:6-9).
- Moses's miracle working power served as visible, tangible evidence that marked him as a true prophet.
- "Jehovah touches the mouth [of the prophets] and puts the words there, and they acquire the effect of divine words." – Geerhardus Vos. See Jer 1:9.
- Miracles cannot bring anyone to salvation—it is only through the Word of God and the Spirit of God that anyone can be saved (John 1:1-8; James 1:18).
- The signs of John's Gospel – Purposes statement given in John 20:30-31 cf. John 2:11.
- The miraculous gifts entrusted to the apostles were intended to confirm that they were God's genuine instruments of revelation—in the likeness of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus.
- This apostolic gifting ended with the Apostles.
- Now, as the Apostle Peter states: "we have the prophetic Word made more sure" (2 Pet 1:19).

- The Apostles and prophets are identified as the foundation of Christ's church (Eph 2:20-22 cf. 1 Cor 3:9-11).

### **Criteria for a true prophet**

- A prophet's predictions always come true. (Deut 18:21-22).
- A prophet's message must always be in complete agreement with previous revelation (Deut 13:1-5).
- A prophet would be empowered to perform miracles (Deut 13:1-5).
- Note: The NT uses the word signs. Signs point to something. They point to the one who has the word of God in His mouth (John 20:30-31 cf. John 2:11).

### **Sufficiency of Scripture**

- If the Bible is being supplemented by ongoing revelations today, it is, in that respect, an insufficient revelation.
- Through the Scriptures, God has provided everything necessary to create, sustain, and nurture spiritual life (2 Pet 1:3-4).
- Experiences by believers are never as sure as the Word of God (2 Pet 1:19-21).
- Sufficiency means that Scripture has the comprehensive ability, when illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to save sinners and to fully sanctify believers (2 Tim 3:16-17).
- Because Scripture is sufficient, we must make it the focus of both our preaching and our teaching (2 Tim 4:1-5).
- The final chapter of Revelation ends with an admonition not to add anything to this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

#### **Historical note:**

The testimony of church history overwhelmingly supports that Scripture teaches the miraculous gifts ceased with the apostles.

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- Lambert, Heath. *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2016.

#### **For Further Reading:**

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- Pennington, Tom. *A Biblical Case for Cessationism: Why the Miraculous Gifts of the Spirit Have Ended*. Douglasville, GA: G3 Press, 2023.

## **The Noetic Effects of Sin and Biblical Counseling**

**Question #6:** Explain the doctrine of the noetic effects of sin as it relates to the limitations of secular psychologists in understanding true information about the human condition.

### **What is Noetics**

- It is from Gk. νοητικός [noētikos], 'pertaining to the mind or intellect'.
- Noetics - A branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of knowledge and intellect, often discussed in Christian philosophy in relation to divine wisdom and human understanding

### What Are the Noetic Effects of Sin?

- “Sin impacts how our minds work. This refers to the spiritual function of cognition. Because of our sinfulness, we do not think as we should. Paul says that we were once “alienated and hostile in mind” (Col. 1:21; cf. Rom. 1:18ff; Eph. 4:17–18). Theologians sometimes refer to this as the “noetic effects of sin.” The Fall of Adam resulted in a radical change that affects the whole person—including their thinking (Rom 5:12).
- “In the perverted and degenerate nature of man there are still some sparks which show that he is a rational animal, and differs from the brutes, inasmuch as he is endued with intelligence, and yet, that this light is so smothered by clouds of darkness that it cannot shine forth to any good effect.” –John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.2.12, 233.
- Colossians 1:21 - And although you were formerly alienated and **hostile in mind**, *engaged* in evil deeds,

Ephesians 4:17–18: <sup>17</sup> So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in **the futility of their mind**, <sup>18</sup> being **darkened in their understanding**, excluded from the life of God because of **the ignorance that is in them**, because of the **hardness of their heart**;

- Unregenerate persons simply do not think God’s thoughts after Him (Isaiah 55:8, 9).
- This affects man’s acknowledgment of the existence and belief in the Creator-God. Rom 1:18–25.
- According to this passage, the unrighteous
  - suppress the truth of God (verse 18)
  - refuse to believe that which has been revealed to them (verse 19)
  - are without excuse (verse 20)
  - refuse to honor or give thanks to their Creator (verse 21)
  - are futile in their thinking (verse 21)
  - have foolish, darkened hearts (verse 21)
  - are fools who profess to be wise (verse 22)
  - are prone to idolatry (verse 23)
  - are given to various lusts that dishonor their mortal bodies (verse 24)
  - prefer lies to truth (verse 25). Sanctification is a cooperative effort (Work of God and Duty of Man).
- The unbelieving world does not have the Helper –
  - He is Spirit of Truth (John 14:16–18).
  - The Holy Spirit is the One convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8–12)
  - He discloses truth to the believer and glorifies Christ (John 16:13–15).
  - In sum, the noetic effects of sin cause man to suppress the truth.

### How Does Man Overcome the Noetic Effects of Sin?

- Our redemption overcomes the noetic effects of sin to a very great degree. We are released from a captive condition. Col 1:21 cf. Rom 3:24; 2 Tim 2:24–26.
  - We now have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16, Phil 2:3–5).
- We have the Spirit of God – 1 Cor 2
  - Different from the Spirit of the world (v.12)
  - We can now know the things freely given to us by God [grace enabled] (v.12).
  - We are no longer taught by human wisdom (v.13).

- The Spirit teaches us, combining spiritual thought with spiritual words (v.13).
- We cannot discern the things of God without the Spirit of God (v.14).
- To the natural man the things of God are foolishness (v.14).

### **Does the Doctrine of Common Grace Allow for the Integration of Secular Methodologies?**

- **Common Grace defined**
  - Common grace is the grace that refers to the good kindness of God He shows to all people regardless of whether they have experienced salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone (Acts 14:16–17).
  - We cannot understand the common grace of God until we understand the sinfulness of humanity. (recall Eph 4:18).
  - Common grace guarantees that we will experience tremendous good in this broken world (James 1:17).
  - The tension created by the coexistence of common grace and the noetic effects of sin means the thinking, discoveries, and products of sinful humanity will be mixed. (Consider the tongue as described by James (Jas. 3:10)).
  - Common grace is not a guarantee that any thought, discovery, or product of anyone is necessarily correct.
- **Faulty Argument for Integrating Secular Methodologies.**
  - Comprehensive vs. exhaustive. Scripture is sufficient not because it is exhaustive, containing all knowledge, but in that it rightly aligns a coherent and comprehensive system of counseling that is radically at odds with every a-theistic model.
  - Common grace does not and cannot supply the strategy for or the content of counseling conversations. That role is reserved for special grace and the Holy Scriptures. They alone are sufficient for that.
  - No one knows God except through Scripture and that even understanding the natural world correctly requires a biblical perspective—Cornelius Van Til.
  - “The marks of truth as Christianly conceived, then are that it is:
    - Supernaturally grounded, not developed with nature,
    - Objective and not subjective,
    - It is a revelation and not a construction,
    - It is discovered by inquiry and not elected by a majority vote,
    - It is authoritative and not a matter of personal choice.” —Harry Blamires from *The Christian Mind*
- **Humility**
  - Scripture does not give us an exhaustive understanding of our bodies. Even the best medical researchers cannot explain many of the body’s complex functions. For instance, while science has made great strides, there is much we do not understand about the way the brain works. – See Ecclesiastes 11:5.
  - Ultimately, while we can affirm the presence of the body, we cannot feign to understand all of its complexities. We are indeed “remarkably and wondrously made” (Ps 139:14).
  - Counselors should remember that while there might be a biological factor at play in any counselee’s situation, there is always a spiritual component.
- **Conclusions**

- Not everything is physical, but everything is spiritual, i.e., how the counselee will respond to his current situation.
- The sufficiency of Scripture – the backbone of biblical counseling.
- Unlike secular psychologists, biblical counselors view the consideration of God as critical in developing a proper view of human nature, and they recognize that the source from which to draw an understanding of God is made possible primarily through the sacred Scriptures. The Bible, therefore, is the ultimate source of knowledge (not pseudoscience, as is the case in secular psychology). Succinctly stated, the Bible is the epistemological basis from which biblical counselors develop their presuppositions regarding all aspects of counseling.

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#### For Further Reading:

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