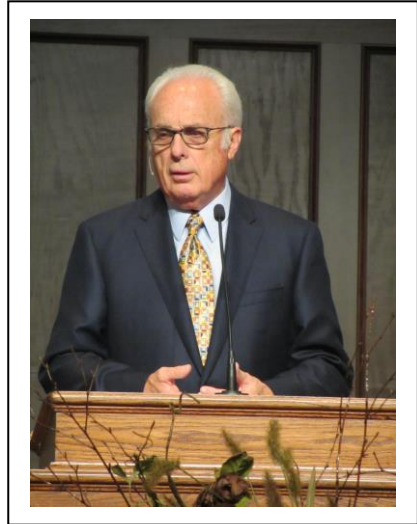


# Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

## Voices from Church History

JOHN F. MACARTHUR

Traditionally, charismatics have acknowledged that the miraculous gifts of the first-century church ceased sometime in early church history. Rather than arguing that the gifts have continued throughout the centuries, they contend instead that the gifts returned in 1901 when Agnes Ozman purportedly spoke in tongues. Those who hold to this view often appeal to “the former rain and the latter rain” of Joel 2:23, insisting that the former rain was the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost and the latter rain was a second outpouring of the Spirit in the twentieth century. What they fail to realize is that, in the context of Joel 2, verse 23 is a promise regarding literal rainfall during the millennial kingdom. The former rain refers to autumn rain, and the latter rain to spring showers. In context, Joel was explaining that on the millennial earth both of those rains will fall “in the first month.” His point was that, due to God’s blessing during that future age, crops will flourish and vegetation will grow in abundance. The following verses (vv. 24–26) make that point abundantly clear. Thus, the “former and latter rain” has nothing to do with either the day of Pentecost or the modern Pentecostal Movement. To base a whole movement on an intentional misrepresentation of a passage is onerous.



Recognizing the deception of that traditional position, other charismatics have attempted to trace a line of miraculous gifts that continued throughout the entirety of church history. To do this, they either have to redefine the gifts to make them fit historical accounts (much as they redefine the gifts to fit modern experiences), or they are forced to align themselves with fringe groups like the Montanists, the extreme radicals of the Reformation, the Quakers, the Shakers, the Jansenists, the Irvingites, or even cult groups like the Mormons. Nonetheless, some continuationists insist that the charismatic position has been normative throughout church history—and that it is the cessationists who represent a new approach to the Christian life. Some have even gone so far as to claim that cessationism itself is a product of the naturalistic rationalism of the Enlightenment.

This appendix, then, is intended to help set the record straight. Not only does it prove that cessationism was not a product of the Enlightenment, but it also demonstrates the

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way prominent church leaders throughout history have understood the biblical teaching on this important topic. What were their conclusions regarding the perpetuation of the revelatory and miraculous gifts of the apostolic age? You be the judge.

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## JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (C. 344–407)

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[Commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:] “This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.”<sup>1</sup>

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## AUGUSTINE (354–430)

“In the earliest times, the Holy Spirit fell upon them that believe and they spoke with tongues, which they had not learned, as the Spirit gave them utterance. These were signs adapted to the time. For there was this betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues to show that the gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a sign, and it passed away.”<sup>2</sup>

“For who expects in these days that those on whom hands are laid that they may receive the Holy Spirit should forthwith begin to speak with tongues? But it is understood that invisibly and imperceptibly, on account of the bond of peace, divine love is breathed into their hearts, so that they may be able to say, ‘Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.’”<sup>3</sup>

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## THEODORET OF CYRUS (C. 393–C. 466)

“In former times those who accepted the divine preaching and who were baptized for their salvation were given visible signs of the grace of the Holy Spirit at work in them. Some spoke in tongues which they did not know and which nobody had taught them,

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<sup>1</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*, 36.7. Chrysostom is commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:1–2 and introducing the entire chapter. Cited from Gerald Bray, ed., *1–2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 146.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, 6.10. Cited from Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 7:497–98.

<sup>3</sup> Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, 3.16.21. Cited from Philip Schaff, *NPNF*, 1st series, 4:443. Also see *The Letters of Petilian, the Donatist*, 2.32.74.

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while others performed miracles or prophesied. The Corinthians also did these things, but they did not use the gifts as they should have done. They were more interested in showing off than in using them for the edification of the church. . . . Even in our time grace is given to those who are deemed worthy of holy baptism, but it may not take the same form as it did in those days.”<sup>4</sup>

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## MARTIN LUTHER (1483–1546)

“In the early Church the Holy Spirit was sent forth in visible form. He descended upon Christ in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16), and in the likeness of fire upon the apostles and other believers. (Acts 2:3.) This visible outpouring of the Holy Spirit was necessary to the establishment of the early Church, as were also the miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained the purpose of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 14:22, ‘Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.’ Once the Church had been established and properly advertised by these miracles, the visible appearance of the Holy Ghost ceased.”<sup>5</sup>

“Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it has no basis in God’s Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil.”<sup>6</sup>

“Whatever does not have its origin in the Scriptures is surely from the devil himself.”<sup>7</sup>

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## JOHN CALVIN (1509–1564)

“Though Christ does not say exactly whether He wished [miracle-working] to be an occasional gift, or one to abide in His Church for ever, yet it is more likely that miracles were only promised for the time, to add light to the new and as yet unknown Gospel. . . . We certainly see that their use ceased not long after [the apostolic age], or at least, instances of them were so rare that we may gather they were not equally common to all ages. It was the result of absurd greed and self-seeking among those who followed on [in

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<sup>4</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 240, 243; in reference to 1 Cor 12:1, 7. Cited from Bray, *1–2 Corinthians*, ACCS, 117.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians 4*, trans. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1949), 150–72. This is from Luther’s comment on Galatians 4:6.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 23, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia: 1959), 173–74.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 36, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia: 1959), 144.

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later church history], that they made up empty fabrications in order that they should not altogether lack miracles. This threw the door wide open to Satan's lies, not only with delusions taking the place of faith, but with simple men being pulled off the right road by the pretext of signs."<sup>8</sup>

"That gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvelous forever."<sup>9</sup>

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## JOHN OWEN (1616–1683)

"Gifts which in their own nature exceed the whole power of all our faculties, that dispensation of the Spirit is long since ceased and where it is now pretended unto by any, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastic delusion."<sup>10</sup>

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## THOMAS WATSON (1620–1686)

"Sure, there is as much need of ordination now as in Christ's time and in the time of the apostles, there being then extraordinary gifts in the church which are now ceased."<sup>11</sup>

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## MATTHEW HENRY (1662–1714)

"What these gifts were is at large told us in the body of the chapter [1 Corinthians 12]; namely, extraordinary offices and powers, bestowed on ministers and Christians in the first ages, for conviction of unbelievers, and propagation of the gospel."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Calvin's Commentaries, trans. A. W. Morrison (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), III: 254. (This comment is regarding Mark 16:17.)

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536 ed., trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 159.

<sup>10</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (repr.; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1981), 4:518.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), 6:567. This comment is in Henry's introductory remarks on 1 Cor. 12:1–11.

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“The gift of tongues was one new product of the Spirit of prophecy and given for a particular reason, that, the Jewish pale being taken down, all nations might be brought into the church. These and other gifts of prophecy, being a sign, have long since ceased and laid aside, and we have no encouragement to expect the revival of them; but, on the contrary, are directed to call the Scriptures the more sure word of prophecy, more sure than voices from heaven; and to them we are directed to take heed, to search them, and to hold them fast, 2 Peter i.19.”<sup>13</sup>

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## JOHN GILL (1697–1771)

“In those early times, when the gift of doing miracles was bestowed, it was not given to all, only to some; and now there are none that are possessed of it.”<sup>14</sup>

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## JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703–1758)

“In the days of his [Jesus’] flesh, his disciples had a measure of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, being enabled thus to teach and to work miracles. But after the resurrection and ascension, was the most full and remarkable effusion of the Spirit in his miraculous gifts that ever took place, beginning with the day of Pentecost, after Christ had risen and ascended to heaven. And in consequence of this, not only here and there an extraordinary person was endowed with these extraordinary gifts, but they were common in the church, and so continued during the lifetime of the apostles, or till the death of the last of them, even the apostle John, which took place about a hundred years from the birth of Christ; so that the first hundred years of the Christian era, or the first century, was the era of miracles.

“But soon after that, the canon of Scripture being completed when the apostle John had written the book of Revelation, which he wrote not long before his death, these miraculous gifts were no longer continued in the church. For there was now completed an established written revelation of the mind and will of God, wherein God had fully recorded a standing and all-sufficient rule for his church in all ages. And the Jewish church and nation being overthrown, and the Christian church and the last dispensation of the church of God being established, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were no longer needed, and therefore they ceased; for though they had been continued in the church for

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4:ix. This comment is in Henry’s preface to his commentary on the Old Testament prophets.

<sup>14</sup> John Gill, *Gill’s Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), VI:237. Gill is commenting on 1 Cor. 12:29.

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so many ages, yet then they failed, and God caused them to fail because there was no further occasion for them. And so was fulfilled the saying of the text, 'Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.' And now there seems to be an end to all such fruits of the Spirit as these, and we have no reason to expect them anymore."<sup>15</sup>

"The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, such as the gift of tongues, or miracles, or prophecy, &c., are called extraordinary, because they are such as are not given in the ordinary course of God's providence. They are not bestowed in the way of God's ordinary providential dealing with his children, but only on extraordinary occasions, as they were bestowed on the Prophets and Apostles to enable them to reveal the mind and will of God before the canon of Scripture was complete, and so on the primitive church, in order to the founding and establishing of it in the world. But since the canon of the Scripture has been completed, and the Christian church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased."<sup>16</sup>

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## JAMES BUCHANAN (1804–1870)

"The miraculous gifts of the Spirit have long since been withdrawn. They were used for a temporary purpose. They were the scaffolding which God employed for the erection of a spiritual temple. When it was no longer needed the scaffolding was taken down, but the temple still stands, and is occupied by his indwelling Spirit; for, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' (1 Cor. iii. 16)."<sup>17</sup>

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## ROBERT L. DABNEY (1820–1898)

"After the early church had been established, the same necessity for supernatural signs now no longer existed, and God, Who is never wasteful in His expedients, withdrew them. . . . Miracles, if they became ordinary, would cease to be miracles, and would be referred by men to customary law."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruits* (New York: Robert Carver & Brothers, 1854), 447–49.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 42–43.

<sup>17</sup> James Buchanan, *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Robert Carver, 1847), 67.

<sup>18</sup> Robert L. Dabney, "Prelacy a Blunder," in *Discussions: Evangelical and Theological* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1891), 2:236–37.

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## CHARLES SPURGEON (1834–1892)

“Dear brother, honour the Spirit of God as you would honour Jesus Christ if he were present. If Jesus Christ were dwelling in your house you would not ignore him, you would not go about your business as if he were not there. Do not ignore the presence of the Holy Ghost in your soul. I beseech you, do not live as if you had not heard whether there were any Holy Spirit. To him pay your constant adorations. Reverence the august guest who has been pleased to make your body his sacred abode. Love him, obey him, worship him!

“Take care never to impute the vain imaginings of your fancy to Him. I have seen the Spirit of God shamefully dishonoured by persons—I hope they were insane—who have said that they have had this and that revealed to them. There has not for some years passed over my head a single week in which I have not been pestered with the revelations of hypocrites or maniacs. Semi-lunatics are very fond of coming with messages from the Lord to me, and it may spare them some trouble if I tell them once for all that I will have none of their stupid messages. . . . Never dream that events are revealed to you by heaven, or you may come to be like those idiots who dare impute their blatant follies to the Holy Ghost. If you feel your tongue itch to talk nonsense, trace it to the devil, not to the Spirit of God. Whatever is to be revealed by the Spirit to any of us is in the word of God already—he adds nothing to the Bible, and never will. Let persons who have revelations of this, that, and the other, go to bed and wake up in their senses. I only wish they would follow the advice, and no longer insult the Holy Ghost by laying their nonsense at his door.”<sup>19</sup>

“They had attained the summit of piety. They had received ‘the powers of the world to come.’ Not miraculous gifts, which are denied us in these days, but all those powers with which the Holy Ghost endows a Christian.”<sup>20</sup>

“The works of the Holy Spirit which are at this time vouchsafed to the Church of God are every way as valuable as those earlier miraculous gifts which have departed from us. The

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Spurgeon, sermon entitled “The Paraclete,” October 6, 1872, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1984), 18:563. Italics in original.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Spurgeon, sermon entitled “Final Perseverance,” April 20, 1856, *The New Park Street Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 2:171.

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work of the Holy Spirit, by which men are quickened from their death in sin, is not inferior to the power which made men speak with tongues."<sup>21</sup>

"As a result of the ascension of Christ into heaven the church received apostles, men who were selected as witnesses because they had personally seen the Saviour — an office which necessarily dies out, and properly so, because the miraculous power also is withdrawn. They were needed temporarily, and they were given by the ascended Lord as a choice legacy. Prophets, too, were in the early church."<sup>22</sup>

"We must have the heathen converted; God has myriads of His elect among them, we must go and search for them somehow or other. Many difficulties are now removed, all lands are open to us, and distance is almost annihilated. True, we have not the Pentecostal tongues; but languages are now readily acquired, while the art of printing is a full equivalent for the lost gift."<sup>23</sup>

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## GEORGE SMEATON (1814–1889)

"The supernatural or extraordinary gifts were temporary, and intended to disappear when the Church should be founded and the inspired canon of Scripture closed; for they were an external proof of an internal inspiration."<sup>24</sup>

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## ABRAHAM KUYPER (1837–1920)

"The charismata must therefore be considered in an economical sense. The Church is a large household with many wants; an institution to be made efficient by the means of many things. They are to the Church what light and fuel are to the household; not existing for themselves, but for the family, and to be laid aside when the days are long and warm. This applies directly to the charismata, many of which, given to the apostolic Church, are not of service to the Church of the present day."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Charles Spurgeon, sermon entitled "Receiving the Holy Ghost," July 13, 1884, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1985), 30:386.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Spurgeon, sermon entitled "The Ascension of Christ," March 26, 1871, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1984), 17:178.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Spurgeon, "Forward!" in *An All-Around Ministry* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2000), 55–57.

<sup>24</sup> George Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1882), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri De Vries (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 182.



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## WILLIAM G. T. SHEDD (1820–1894)

“The supernatural gifts of inspiration and miracles which the apostles possessed were not continued to their ministerial successors, because they were no longer necessary. All the doctrines of Christianity had been revealed to the apostles, and had been delivered to the church in a written form. There was no further need of an infallible inspiration. And the credentials and authority given to the first preachers of Christianity in miraculous acts, did not need continual repetition from age to age. One age of miracles well authenticated is sufficient to establish the divine origin of the gospel. In a human court, an indefinite series of witnesses is not required. ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses,’ the facts are established. The case once decided is not reopened.”<sup>26</sup>

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## BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD (1887–1921)

“These gifts . . . were part of the credentials of the Apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confined them to distinctively the Apostolic Church and they necessarily passed away with it.”<sup>27</sup>

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## ARTHUR W. PINK (1886–1952)

“As there were offices extraordinary (apostles and prophets) at the beginning of our dispensation, so there were gifts extraordinary; and as successors were not appointed for the former, so a continuance was never intended for the latter. The gifts were dependent upon the officers: see Acts 8:14–21; 10:44–46; 19:6; Rom. 1:11; Gal. 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:6. We no longer have the apostles with us and therefore the supernatural gifts (the communication of which was an essential part of ‘the signs of an apostle:’ 2 Cor. 12:12) are absent.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1888), 2:369.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1918), 6.

<sup>28</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *Studies in the Scriptures* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2005), 9:319.

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D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899–1981)

“Once these New Testament documents were written the office of a prophet was no longer necessary. Hence in the Pastoral Epistles which apply to a later stage in the history of the Church, when things had become more settled and fixed, there is no mention of the prophets. It is clear that even by then the office of the prophet was no longer necessary, and the call was for teachers and pastors and others to expound the Scriptures and to convey the knowledge of the truth.

“Again, we must note that often in the history of the Church trouble has arisen because people thought that they were prophets in the New Testament sense, and that they had received special revelations of truth. The answer to that is that in view of the New Testament Scriptures there is no need of further truth. That is an absolute proposition. We have all truth in the New Testament, and we have no need of any further revelations. All has been given, everything that is necessary for us is available. Therefore if a man claims to have received a revelation of some fresh truth we should suspect him immediately. . . .

“The answer to all this is that the need for prophets ends once we have the canon of the New Testament. We no longer need direct revelations of truth; the truth is in the Bible. We must never separate the Spirit and the Word. The Spirit speaks to us through the Word; so we should always doubt and query any supposed revelation that is not entirely consistent with the Word of God. Indeed the essence of wisdom is to reject altogether the term ‘revelation’ as far as we are concerned, and speak only of ‘illumination’. The revelation has been given once and for all, and what we need and what by the grace of God we can have, and do have, is illumination by the Spirit to understand the Word.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 189–91.

<sup>30</sup> MacArthur, J. F. (2013). *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship*. Thomas Nelson.