

## Cessation and the Completed Canon: An Argument in Favor of interpreting the “Perfect” in 1 Corinthians 13:10 as the Completed Canon of Scripture

By James Moriello, Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket, RI, 2017

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (NKJV): “Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.”

What is the “perfect” in verse 10? Is it the Eternal State or the Completed Canon? The continuationist view is that it is a reference to the eternal state. Cessationists, however, are split on its meaning, but it is not essential to the cessationist position. Some cessationists, John MacArthur for one, take the eternal state view. Others, such as myself, take the completed canon view. The reasons for my position are as follow.

1. “Perfect” in the Greek is “teleion”, Strongs 5046: **Short Definition:** perfect, full-grown **Definition:** perfect, (a) complete in all its parts, (b) full grown, of full age, (c) specially of the completeness of Christian character. So it does not signify perfect in the sense that we use that word in English. Our starting point is that it is possible that it can mean either the eternal state or the completed canon. This is used in the sense of maturity (not absolute perfection) in 1 Corinthians 2:6, 1 Corinthians 14:20, Ephesians 4:13, Hebrews 5:14, and James 1:4
2. Prophecies, tongues, and knowledge disappear at different times. The three different verbs used teach us this. How can that happen at one time? The eternal state is a sudden change, whereas the completion of Scripture took place over time. Grammatically, the verb tenses argue for the completed canon view.

3. Sign gifts (prophecies, tongues, knowledge) were connected with the infancy of the church, for the purpose of validating the Christian message in the absence of the full New Testament (Acts 2:22; Hebrews 2:3-4). The language of growth from childhood is used here in the passage. A similar analogy is used in 1 Peter 2:2 and Hebrews 5:12-14, spiritual growth through revelation being the context.
4. Until the Christian message was completed, it was obscured to a point, but in its completion, God's truth is perfectly clear. The mirror analogy is also found in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and James 1:23-25. Spiritual growth through the agency of the Word of God is in view in these passages. The "mirror" could be seen "dimly" in the sense that God's revelation to men was not complete at time of writing. That is, the canon of Scripture was not complete.
5. Partial knowledge and partial prophecy was the order of the day. But complete knowledge (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and complete prophecy would eliminate the need for further prophecy (Revelation 22:18-19).
6. Faith and hope "abide", or continue, until the eternal state. Faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "Hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" (Romans 8:24). The gifts in the passage are not said to "abide", but to "cease", "vanish away", and "be done away" at different rates and times.
7. Even if one takes the view that the "perfect" is the eternal state, as some cessationists do, points 2,3,5, and 6 still remain as evidence for the cessationist position.