

FATHERS OF THE EARLY CHURCH ON THE SPECIAL GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

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The Muratorian Canon (AD 170-200 in Rome)

The following extract shows that this author views the number and time of the apostles and prophets to be complete (cf. Eph. 2:20). It is interesting to note that *The Shepherd* of Hermas, mentioned in this text, still presupposed the existence of prophets and attempts to show how false prophets can be distinguished from true prophets (§ 11). *The Shepherd* may well have been composed in stages. The earliest parts date from the end of the first century (Clement of Rome, who lived in the first century, is mentioned).

English translation

But Hermas composed *The Shepherd* quite recently in our times in the city of Rome, while his brother, Pius, the bishop, occupied the [episcopal] seat of the city of Rome [ca. 140-54]. And therefore, it should indeed be read, but it cannot be published for the people in the Church, [it is] neither among the Prophets, since their number is complete, nor among the Apostles for it is after their time (?).

Restored Latin text

Pastorem uero nuperrime temporibus nostris in Urbe Roma Hermas conscripsit, sedente cathedra Urbis Romae ecclesiae Pio Episcopo fratre eius; et ideo legi eum quidem oportet, se publicare uero in ecclesia populo, neque inter prophetas, completum numero, neque inter apostolos, in finem temporum potest.

Unrestored Latin text

pastorem uero nuperrim ettemporibus nostris in urbe roma herma conscripsit sedente cathetra urbis romae aeclesiae pio eps fratres eius et ideo legi eum quide oportet se puplicare uero in ecclesia populo neque inter profetas completum numero neque inter apostolos in fine temporum potest.

Transl. by Theron

Hippolytus of Rome (ca. AD 170 – 236)

The following extracts are from the treatise *De Christo et Antichristo*. They show Hippolytus speaking of prophets as a past phenomenon.

2. For since the blessed prophets became eyes for us, foreseeing through faith the mysteries of the word, which they also ministered to succeeding generations, not only reporting the past, but also announcing the present and the future, so that the prophet might not appear to be one only for the time being, but might also predict the future for all generations, and so be reckoned a (true) prophet. For these (prophets) having been furnished with a prophetic Spirit, and deservedly honoured by the Word itself; and just as it is with instruments of music, having the Word always, like the plectrum, united to themselves, through which as they were moved, they announced what God willed. For the prophets were not speaking out of their own power (let there be no mistake as to that), neither were they preaching their own wishes, but first of all they were being rightly endowed with wisdom by the Word, and next they were being well taught the future by means of visions. And then, when

Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ οἱ μακάριοι προφήται ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν ἐγένοντο, προορῶντες διὰ πίστεως τὰ τοῦ λόγου μυστήρια· ἅτινα καὶ ταῖς μεταγενεστέραις διηκόνησαν γενεαῖς, οὐ μόνον τὰ παρωχηκότα εἰπόντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐνεστώτα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα ἀπαγγείλαντες· ἵνα μὴ μόνον πρὸς καιρὸν ὁ προφήτης ὡς προφήτης δειχθῆ, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσαις γενεαῖς προλέγων τὰ μέλλοντα ὁ προφήτης ὡς προφήτης σημανθῆ. οὗτοι γὰρ πνεύματι προφητικῷ οἱ πάντες κατηρτισμένοι καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου ἀξίως τετιμημένοι, ὀργάνων δίκην ἑαυτοῖς ἠνωμένοι ἔχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς αἰετὸν τὸν λόγον ὡς πληκτρον, δι' οὗ κινούμενοι ἀπήγγελλον ταῦτα ἅπερ ἤθελεν ὁ θεός. οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἰδίας δυνάμεως οἱ προφήται ἐφθέγγοντο, μὴ πλανῶ, οὐδὲ ἅπερ αὐτοὶ ἠβούλοντο ταῦτα καὶ ἐκήρυσσον, ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν διὰ τοῦ λόγου ἐσοφίζοντο ὀρθῶς, ἔπειτα δὲ δι' ὀραμάτων προεδιδάσκοντο τὰ μέλλοντα καλῶς· καὶ εἶθ'

they were thus sent, they were speaking these things which had been revealed to them alone by God. For with what reason will the prophet be called a prophet, unless he by the Spirit foresaw the future? For if the prophet spoke something of any chance event, he would not be a prophet then in speaking of things which all had seen with their own eyes. But one who sets forth the future in detail was rightly judged a prophet. Wherefore prophets were with good reason called from the very first “seers.” And hence we, too, who are rightly instructed in what was declared aforetime by them, speak not of our own capacity. For we do not attempt to make any change, but we bring again to light those words spoken of old beforehand, which the Scriptures have set forth, to those who are able believe rightly, in order that common benefits may accrue to both parties: for him who speaks in having held sway by memory over rightly expositing the (Scriptures) laid before him; and for him who hears, in giving attention to the things spoken.

Since, then, there is a common labour assigned to both parties together, viz., to him who speaks, that he speak forth faithfully without regard to risk, and to him who hears, that he receive in faith that which is spoken, I encourage you too, O Theophilus, to strive together with me in prayer to God.

...

31. Which of you, then, shall I love more than you? Yet Jeremiah, too, is stoned. But if I should love Jeremiah more, yet Daniel too has his testimony. Daniel, I praise you above all; yet John too gives no false witness. With how many mouths and tongues shall I praise you (pl.); or rather the Word which was spoken in you! For you died with Christ; but you will live in God. Hear and rejoice. Behold the things spoken by you have been fulfilled in their time. For you saw these things yourselves first, next you thus preached the oracles of God to all generations, you served all generations. You were heralded as prophets, that you might be able to save all. For then a prophet truly becomes a prophet, when, having announced beforetime things about to be, he afterwards demonstrates that they have actually happened. You all became the disciples of a good Master. These words I address to you as if alive, and with propriety. For you hold already the crown of life and immortality which is laid up for you in heaven.

Transl. Roberts-Donaldson (revised R.D.A.)

οὕτως πεμπόμενοι ἔλεγον ταῦτα, ἅπερ αὐτοῖς μόνοις ἦν ὑπὸ θεοῦ ἀποκεκαλυμμένα. ἐπεὶ κατὰ τίνα λόγον ὁ προφήτης προφήτης λεχθήσεται, εἰ μὴ ὅτι πνεύματι προεώρα τὰ μέλλοντα; εἰ γὰρ περὶ συμβεβηκότος τινὸς πράγματος ἔλεγέ τι ὁ προφήτης, οὐκ ἂν ἦν προφήτης, ταῦτα λέγων ἅπερ πάντες ὑπ' ὀφθαλμὸν ἦσαν τεθεαμένοι, ἀλλὰ τὰ μέλλοντα ἐκδιηγούμενος δικαίως προφήτης ἐκρίνετο. διὸ καὶ εὐλόγως οἱ προφῆται ἀπ' ἀρχῆς “οἱ βλέποντες” ἐκαλοῦντο. ὅθεν καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ ὑπ' αὐτῶν προειρημένα ... καλῶς μαθητευθέντες, λέγομεν οὐκ ἐξ ἰδίας ἡμῶν ἐπινοίας. οὐδὲν γὰρ καινοτομεῖν ἐπιχειροῦμεν, ἀλλ' ἢ τὰ πάλαι προειρημένα ῥητά, ὧν τὰ ἔγγραφα ἐκτιθέντες εἰς φῶς ἀνάγομεν τοῖς ὀρθῶς πιστεύειν δυναμένοις, ὅπως γένηται ἀμφοτέροις κοινὴ ὠφέλεια, τῷ μὲν λέγοντι τὸ διὰ μνήμης κρατήσαντι ὀρθῶς ἐκθέσθαι τὰ προκείμενα, τῷ δὲ ἀκούοντι τὸ ἐπιστῆσαι τὸν νοῦν πρὸς τὰ λεγόμενα.

ἐπεὶ οὖν κοινὸς ὁ κάματος ἀμφοτέροις πρόκειται, τῷ μὲν λέγοντι τὸ ἀκίνδυνον ἐξεπιεῖν, τῷ δὲ ἀκούοντι τὸ πιστῶς ἀκούσαντι καταδέξασθαι τὰ λεγόμενα, παρακαλῶ καὶ σέ, ὦ Θεόφιλε, συναγωνίσασθαί μοι ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν δεήσει,

...

31 τίνα οὖν ὑμῶν πλείω ἀγαπήσω ἢ σέ; ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἰερემίας λιθάζεται. ἢ Ἰερემίαν μᾶλλον; ἀλλὰ καὶ Δανιὴλ μαρτυρεῖ. Δανιὴλ, ὑπὲρ πάντας ἐπαινῶ σέ; ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἰωάννης οὐ ψεύδεται. πόσοις ὑμᾶς στόμασι καὶ γλώσσαις δοξάσω· μᾶλλον δὲ τὸν ἐν ὑμῖν λαλήσαντα λόγον. ἀπεθάνετε γὰρ σὺν Χριστῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσετε ἐν θεῷ. ἀκούσατε καὶ χαρῆτε. ἰδοὺ τὰ ὑφ' ὑμῶν λελαλημένα κατὰ καιροὺς πεπλήρωται. εἶδατε γὰρ αὐτὰ πρῶτον, εἴθ' οὕτως ἐκηρύξατε πάσαις γενεαῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγια, διηκονήσατε πάσαις γενεαῖς. προφῆται ἐκηρύχθητε, ἵνα πάντας σῶσαι δυνηθῆτε. τότε γὰρ ὄντως ὁ προφήτης προφήτης γίνεται, ὅταν τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι προκηρύξας, ὕστερον συμβάντα αὐτὰ ἐπιδείξῃ. καλοῦ διδασκάλου οἱ πάντες ἐγένεσθε μαθηταί. ταῦτα ὑμῖν ὡς ζῶσιν ἀξίως ἐπιφέρω· ἔχετε γὰρ ἤδη τὸν τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἀφθαρσίας ἀποκείμενον ὑμῖν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς στέφανον.

Victorinus of Pettau (fl. ca. AD 270, probably died in 303)

In the following quotation Victorinus makes it clear that he does not believe that there are special prophecies anymore and that the signs and wonders of the apostles ceased after they died. He interprets the prophets of 1 Corinthians as interpreters of Scripture (*In Apocalypsin* 10.3).

3. “Seven thunders uttered their voices.”] The seven thunders uttering their voices signify the Holy Spirit of sevenfold power, who through the prophets announced all things to come, and by His voice John gave his testimony in the world; but because he says that he was about to write the things which the thunders had uttered, that is, whatever things had been obscure in the announcements of the Old Testament; he is forbidden to write them, but he was charged to leave them sealed, because he is an apostle, nor was it fitting that the grace of the subsequent stage should be given in the first. “The time,” he says, “is at hand” (Rev. 1:3; 22:10). For the apostles, by powers, by signs, by portents, and by mighty works, have overcome unbelief. After them there is now given to the same completed Churches the comfort of having the prophetic Scriptures subsequently interpreted, for I said that after *the apostles* there would be interpreting prophets.

For the apostle says: “And he placed in the Church indeed, first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers,” [Eph. 4:11] and the rest. And in another place he says: “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge” [1 Cor. 14:29]. And he says: “Every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, dishonours her head” [1 Cor. 11:5]. And when he says, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge,” he is not speaking in respect of the general prophecy of things unheard and unknown, but of things both announced and known. But let them judge whether or not the interpretation is consistent with the testimonies of the prophetic utterance. It is plain, therefore, that to John, armed as he was with superior virtue, this was not necessary, although the body of Christ, which is the Church, adorned with His members, ought to respond to its position.

John Chrysostom (ca. AD 347 – 407)

John Chrysostom was a very important church father and renowned preacher who served many years in the churches of Antioch and Constantinople. His treatises and sermons were and are still widely influential. In two sermons for the feast of Pentecost Chrysostom addresses the question of the special gifts of the Spirit and the “problem” of the fact that they were no longer evident among the Christians of his day.

The following quotation comes from *De Sancta Pentecoste* I¹

I. ... Why then, he says, do signs not arise nowadays? [459] Τίνας οὖν ἔνεκεν, φησὶ, σημεῖα οὐ γίνεται

¹ For notes on the Greek text see ‘John Chrysostom: Extract from *De Sancta Pentecoste* I’ at <http://anderson.modelcrafts.eu/ancient-greek/>

Pay attention to me at this point accurately, for I hear this from many, and it is continually and always being inquired into. Why at that time were all who were being baptised speaking in tongues², but now no longer?

Let us learn before that what speaking in tongues is, and then we will also state the reason.

What then is speaking in tongues? The person being baptised was immediately making utterance in the language of the Indians, that of the Egyptians, that of the Persians, that of the Scythians, that of the Thracians, and one man was receiving many tongues, and you would hear those who live now, if they had been baptised then, immediately making utterance in various languages. For in fact “Paul,” he says, “found some who had been baptised with the baptism of John, and says to them: ‘Tell me whether you received the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ They say to him: ‘But we have not heard whether there is a Holy Spirit’. And immediately he ordered them to be baptised. And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were all speaking in tongues.” (Acts 19:1-6)

Why then is this gift nowadays wrapped up and removed from men? It is not that God is dishonouring us, but rather honouring us exceedingly. How? I will tell you. Men were at that time rather more ignorantly disposed, having just been delivered from idols, and their mind was still rather thick and imperceptive, and they were excited and had gaped at all material things, and they had never yet given a thought to non-material gifts, nor did they understand what a gift perceivable by the mind³ could possibly be, that is, (a gift) that is contemplated by faith alone. Because of this signs arose. For while some of the spiritual gifts are unable to be seen and are grasped by faith alone: others are demonstrated as a perceivable sign for the assurance of unbelievers. I give an example: forgiveness of sins is a matter of the mind, it is an unseen gift. For we do not see with the eyes of the flesh how our sins are cleansed. Why, do you suppose? Because it is the soul which is cleansed, but the soul is not seen by the eyes of the body. So then the cleansing of sins is a gift perceivable by the mind which is not able to be observed by the eyes of the body. But speaking in various tongues is on the one hand itself an activity of the Spirit perceived by the mind, however the sign provides perceptibility (by the external senses), even something easily able to be seen by unbelievers. For I speak of the activity within, arising in the soul, which is invisible, the exterior tongue which is heard is a certain manifestation and proof. For this reason Paul also says: “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each unto his

νῦν; Ἐνταῦθά μοι μετὰ ἀκριβείας προσέχετε· παρὰ πολλῶν γὰρ ἀκούω τοῦτο, καὶ συνεχῶς καὶ ἀεὶ ζητούμενον· διὰ τί τότε γλώσσαις ἐλάλουν πάντες οἱ βαπτίζομενοι, νῦν δὲ οὐκέτι;

Μάθωμεν πρότερον τί τὸ λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, καὶ τότε ἐροῦμεν καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν.

Τί οὖν ἐστὶ γλώσσαις λαλεῖν; Ὁ βαπτίζομενος εὐθέως ἐφθέγγετο τῇ τῶν Ἰνδῶν φωνῇ, τῇ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων, τῇ τῶν Περσῶν, τῇ τῶν Σκυθῶν, τῇ τῶν Θρακῶν, καὶ εἷς ἄνθρωπος πολλὰς ἐλάμβανε γλώσσας, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ νῦν εἰ ἦσαν τότε βαπτισθέντες, εὐθέως ἂν ἤκουσας αὐτῶν διαφόροις φθεγγομένων φωναῖς. Καὶ γὰρ ὁ Παῦλος, φησὶν, εὗρέ τινας βαπτισθέντας ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι Ἰωάννου, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Εἰ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες; Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ εἰ ἔστι Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἠκούσαμεν· καὶ εὐθέως ἐκέλευσεν αὐτοὺς βαπτισθῆναι· Καὶ ἐπιθέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Παύλου τὰς χεῖρας, ἦλθεν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, καὶ ἐλάλουν ἅπαντες γλώσσαις.

Τίνος οὖν χάριν συνεστάλη, καὶ ἀνηρέθη ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἡ χάρις αὕτη νῦν; Οὐχὶ ἀτιμάζοντος ἡμᾶς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ σφόδρα τιμῶντος. Πῶς; ἐγὼ λέγω. Ανοητότερον οἱ ἄνθρωποι διέκειντο τότε, τῶν εἰδώλων προσφάτως ἀπηλλαγμένοι, καὶ παχυτέρα καὶ ἀναισθητοτέρα αὐτῶν ἡ διάνοια ἔτι ἦν, καὶ πρὸς τὰ σωματικὰ πάντα ἐπτόηντο καὶ ἐκεχίγησαν, καὶ οὐδεμία αὐτοῖς οὐδέπω ἔννοια δωρεῶν ἀσωμάτων ἦν, οὐδὲ εἶδεν τὴν ποτὲ ἐστὶ νοητὴ χάρις, καὶ πίστει μόνῃ θεωρουμένη· διὰ τοῦτο σημεῖα ἐγίνετο. Τῶν γὰρ χαρισμάτων τῶν πνευματικῶν τὰ μὲν ἀόρατά ἐστι, καὶ πίστει καταλαμβάνεται μόνῃ· τὰ δὲ καὶ αἰσθητὸν ἐνδείκνυται σημεῖον πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀπίστων πληροφορίαν. Οἷόν τι λέγω· ἀμαρτιῶν ἄφεσις νοητὸν ἐστὶ πρᾶγμα, ἀόρατόν ἐστι χάρισμα· πῶς γὰρ καθαίρονται ἡμῶν αἱ ἀμαρτίαι, οὐχ ὁρῶμεν τοῖς τῆς σαρκὸς ὀφθαλμοῖς. Τί δήποτε; Ὅτι ψυχὴ ἐστὶν ἡ καθαιρομένη· ψυχὴ δὲ ὀφθαλμοῖς σώματος οὐχ ὁρᾶται. Ἡ μὲν οὖν κάθαρσις τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων νοητὴ δωρεὰ τίς ἐστὶν ὀφθαλμοῖς οὐ δυναμένη σώματος γενέσθαι φανερά· τὸ δὲ γλώσσαις διαφόροις λαλεῖν ἐστὶ μὲν καὶ αὐτὸ νοητῆς ἐνεργείας τοῦ Πνεύματος· αἰσθητὸν μέντοι παρέχεται τὸ σημεῖον, καὶ τοῖς ἀπίστοις εὐσύνοπτον. Τῆς γὰρ ἔνδον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γινομένης ἐνεργείας, τῆς ἀοράτου λέγω, ἡ ἔξω γλῶττα ἀκουομένη φανέρωσις τίς ἐστὶ καὶ ἔλεγχος. Διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ Παῦλος λέγει·

² In Greek, this use of the word ‘tongues’ implies *foreign* languages.

³ With νοητός Chrysostom means a gift only able to be perceived by the mind and not the external senses.

benefit” (1 Cor. 12:7).

Therefore I, for my part, do not now need signs. Why? Because even without the gift of a sign I have learned to believe in the Master. For the unbeliever has need of a pledge, but I who believe do not need a pledge or a sign. Yet even if I should not speak in a tongue, I know that I was cleansed from my sins. Those people at that time would not believe, unless they received a sign. On account of this signs were being given to them as a pledge of the faith which they were believing. Therefore signs were being given not as to the believers, but as to the unbelievers, in order that they might become believers. Thus Paul also says: “The signs are not for the believers, but for the unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22). Do you see, that the wrapping up of the demonstration of the signs is of God who is not dishonouring us, but honouring us? For he has done this wishing to demonstrate our faith, that we believe him without pledges and signs. For while those people, unless they had first received a sign and a pledge, would not believe him concerning the things unseen, yet I, even without this, demonstrate all faith. This is therefore the reason that signs do not exist nowadays.

I was desiring also to speak about the concrete occasion of the feast, and to demonstrate what Pentecost is, and why the gift is given at this feast, and why it was given with fiery tongues, and why it occurred after ten days. But I see my teaching extending for a long time. Therefore I will stop the sermon after having added a few remarks.

“When the 50 days were completed ... tongues as if of fire appeared being distributed to them.” (Acts 2:1, 3) Not “of fire,” but “as if of fire”, in order that you should not suspect anything perceivable (by the external senses) concerning the Spirit. For just as at the Jordanian waters a dove did not descend, but ‘in the form of a dove’: so also here not ‘fire’, but ‘in the form of fire’. ...

Transl. R.D.A.

That prophecy and tongues no longer exist is also stated in the treatise *De incomprehensibili dei natura I* from which the following quotation is taken.

... “And if there are prophecies they will be done away, if tongues they will cease, if knowledge it will be done away. But there remain faith, hope, love, these three. And the greater of all these is love” (1 Cor. 13:8, 13). But the discourse on love has not introduced a random inquiry for us. For on the one hand the doing away of prophecy and ceasing of

Ἐκάστῳ δὲ ἢ φανέρωσις τοῦ Πνεύματος δίδεται πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.

Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν νῦν χρεῖαν οὐκ ἔχω σημείων. Τίνος ἔνεκεν; Ὅτι καὶ χωρὶς σημείου δόσεως πιστεύειν μεμάθηκα τῷ Δεσπότη. Ὁ γὰρ ἀπιστῶν ἐνεχύρου δεῖται· ἐγὼ δὲ πιστεύων οὐ δέομαι ἐνεχύρου οὐδὲ σημείου· ἀλλὰ κἂν μὴ λαλήσω γλώσση, οἶδα ὅτι ἐκαθάρθην ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. Ἐκεῖνοι δὲ τότε οὐκ ἐπίστευον, εἰ μὴ ἔλαβον σημεῖον· διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῖς ἐδίδοτο σημεῖα, ὥσπερ ἐνέχυρον τῆς πίστεως ἧς ἐπίστευον. Ὡστε οὐχ ὡς πιστοῖς, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀπίστοις ἐδίδοτο τὰ σημεῖα, ἵνα γένωνται πιστοί· οὕτω καὶ Παῦλός φησι· Τὰ σημεῖα οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις. Ὁρᾶτε, ὅτι οὐχὶ ἀτιμάζοντος ἡμᾶς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ τιμῶντός ἐστι τὸ συστεῖλαι τὴν τῶν σημείων ἐπίδειξιν; Βουλόμενος γὰρ δεῖξαι τὴν πίστιν ἡμῶν, ὅτι χωρὶς ἐνεχύρων καὶ σημείων αὐτῷ πιστεύομεν, τοῦτο πεποιήκεν· ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ εἰ μὴ ἔλαβον πρῶτον σημεῖον καὶ ἐνέχυρον, οὐκ ἂν αὐτῷ ἐπίστευον περὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν· ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ χωρὶς τούτου πᾶσαν ἐπιδείκνυμι πίστιν· τοῦτο οὖν αἴτιον τοῦ μὴ γίνεσθαι σημεῖα νῦν.

Ἐβουλόμην καὶ περὶ τῆς ὑποθέσεως τῆς ἑορτῆς εἰπεῖν, καὶ δεῖξαι τί ποτέ ἐστι πεντηκοστή, καὶ διὰ τί ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ ταύτῃ τὸ χάρισμα δίδεται, καὶ διὰ τί ἐν γλώσσαις πυρίναις, καὶ διὰ τί μετὰ δέκα ἡμέρας· ἀλλ’ ὁρῶ πρὸς μῆκος τὴν διδασκαλίαν ἐκτεινομένην· διὸ ὀλίγα προσθεὶς καταπαύσω τὸν λόγον·

Ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς πεντηκοστῆς ὄφθησαν αὐτοῖς διαμεριζόμεναι γλώσσαις ὡσεὶ πυρός· οὐχὶ πυρός, ἀλλ’ ὡσεὶ πυρός, ἵνα μηδὲν αἰσθητὸν ὑποπτέυσης περὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος. Καθάπερ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν Ἰορδανείων ρείθρων οὐχὶ περιστερὰ κατέβη, ἀλλ’ ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς· οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα οὐχὶ πῦρ, ἀλλ’ ἐν εἴδει πυρός.

«Ἐἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι καταργηθήσονται, εἴτε γλώσσαις παύσονται, εἴτε γνώσις καταργηθήσεται· μένει δὲ πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ πάντων ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη.» Ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐ τὸ τυχόν ἡμῖν ζήτημα ὁ περὶ τῆς ἀγάπης ἐπεισήγαγε λόγος. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ προφητεῖαν

tongues is not difficult. For these gifts were for a season in our midst with respect to their need, and having ceased nothing will be able to harm the word. In any case see now that there is no prophecy, nor the gift of tongues, and the word of reverence has not been hindered. But on the other hand knowledge is to cease. This is what needs examination. For having said: "If there are prophecies they will be done way, if tongues they will cease", he added: "if knowledge it will be done away." If indeed then knowledge will cease in the future, matters will proceed not for the better, but for the worse. ...

Transl. R.D.A.

In his 29th homily on 1 Corinthians, introducing his discussion of chapter 12, Chrysostom also makes the point that the special gifts have ceased.

This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced both by our ignorance of the matters referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity has produced for us again another question: namely, why did they occur at that time, and now no longer? This however let us defer to another time, but for the present let us state what things were occurring then.

Transl. Roberts-Donaldson (revised R.D.A.)

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354 – 430)

Augustine was an African bishop was not only very influential in his own time, but particularly in the time of the Reformation. He wrote in Latin. In his treatise on baptism he mentions the fact that in his time the special gifts of the Spirit have passed away (*De Baptismo* 3.16).

For the Holy Spirit is not given by the laying on of hands amid the testimony of temporal sensible miracles, as He was given in former days to be the credentials of a rudimentary faith, and for the extension of the first beginnings of the Church. 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?⁴

καταργηθῆναι καὶ παύσασθαι γλώσσας, χαλεπὸν οὐδέν· εἰς καιρὸν γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα ταῦτα τὴν ἑαυτῶν χρείαν παρασχόντα ἡμῖν, καὶ παυσάμενα παραβλάψαι τὸν λόγον οὐδὲν δυνήσεται· ἰδοὺ γοῦν νῦν προφητεία οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδὲ γλωσσῶν χάρισμα, καὶ ὁ τῆς εὐσεβείας οὐδὲν ἐνεποδίσθη λόγος· τὸ δὲ γνῶσιν παύσασθαι, τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ζητούμενον. Εἰπὼν γάρ· «Εἴτε προφητεῖαι καταργηθήσονται, εἴτε γλῶσσαι παύσονται», ἐπήγαγεν· «Εἴτε γνῶσις καταργηθήσεται.» Εἰ δὴ οὖν μέλλοι ἢ γνῶσις παύεσθαι, οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον ἡμῖν προκόψει τὰ πράγματα· ...

Τοῦτο ἅπαν τὸ χωρίον σφόδρα ἐστὶν ἀσαφές· τὴν δὲ ἀσάφειαν ἢ τῶν πραγμάτων ἄγνοιά τε καὶ ἔλλειψις ποιεῖ τῶν τότε μὲν συμβαινόντων, νῦν δὲ οὐ γινομένων. Καὶ τίνας ἔνεκεν οὐ γίνεται νῦν; Ἴδου γὰρ καὶ ἡ αἰτία πάλιν τῆς ἀσαφείας ἕτερον ἡμῖν ζήτημα ἔτεκε. Τί δήποτε γὰρ τότε μὲν ἐγίνετο, νῦν δὲ οὐκέτι; Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν εἰς αὐθις ἀναβαλλώμεθα, τέως δὲ τὰ συμβαινόντα τότε λέγωμεν.

Neque enim temporalibus et sensibilibus miraculis attestantibus per manus impositionem modo datur Spiritus sanctus, sicut antea dabatur ad commendationem rudis fidei et Ecclesiae primordia dilatanda. Quis enim nunc hoc exspectat, ut ii quibus manus ad accipiendum Spiritum sanctum imponitur, repente incipiant linguis loqui?

⁴ Tertullian (*On Baptism* 7-8) describes the custom of baptism in the (African) church known to him. After immersion in water the person is anointed with oil on the basis of the Old Testament anointing of high priests. Thereupon there is a blessing spoken over him with laying on of hands on the analogy of Jacob blessing his sons in old age. It is said that at this moment the Holy Spirit comes upon the person. No mention is made of special gifts however.