

# A Letter to John MacArthur

Dear Dr. MacArthur,

I have admired you as an able writer and speaker for years. I have not only read your book *Strange Fire* but have listened to your talks as well as the panel discussions at your recent conference. I am as Reformed theologically as you are and can say we are on the same page when it comes to many issues you address.

I was not prepared, however, for some of the things you said. I had to reread some parts to be sure you said what I thought you said. First, if your book purports the danger of offending the Holy Spirit with counterfeit worship, I fear you are in greater danger of offending the Holy Spirit by attributing His work to Satan. Does this not worry you? You are risking an awful lot by counting on cessationism to be totally true. You have tried to turn the hypothetical teaching of cessationism into dogma.

Second, surprisingly, you imply that my predecessor, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, would agree with you. A major portion of my own book *Holy Fire* is devoted to what he believed regarding the gifts, the baptism and the immediate witness of the Holy Spirit. He was no cessationist; he loathed cessationism. Nearly every Pentecostal and charismatic in Britain knew he was their friend. Not only that, but he has turned more of them into Reformed thinkers than anybody in the 20th century. He would be horrified that you dismiss as demonic all contemporary testimonies of experiencing the direct work of the Spirit. According to you, my own baptism with the Spirit was demonic even though it led me to Reformed theology without reading a single word of John Calvin.

Third, to be consistent, if you have got it right, we should counsel new Christians to disregard many Scriptures—for

example, those that encourage us to believe Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8); that He shows us when we are on the wrong track (Phil. 3:15); that the Holy Spirit can speak today as He did to Philip (Acts 8:29); or that we should covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).

I hope you will consider reading my book *Holy Fire*. It will do you no harm and, just maybe, you might hear God speak to you in a way you never thought possible. I only pray with all my heart that you have not gone too far already. In the second panel discussion at your conference, you actually said, "I know I am wrong somewhere." If so, who would you listen to? Would you not want to know as soon as possible if you have got it wrong on those matters you are so dogmatic about?

If I knew for sure it would be honoring to God, for the sake of sincere Christians who are fence-straddling on cessationism, I would ask that you and I have a civil debate, presidential style, on the issue of cessationism. Could we pray about this? *—R.T. Kendall*