

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT IN THE CORPORATE MEETING

James W. Garrett

TERMS REFERRING TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

doron

dorea

merismos

charisma(ta)

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James W. Garrett

In Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12-14, Paul describes *gifts of the Spirit*. The Romans passage is an exhortation to individual believers to function diligently in the *functional gifts* that each one has received. The term, *functional gifts*, refers to the spiritual equipping that has been given to each Christian, enabling him to function in a particular role in the local church. This is an equipping that continues throughout the believer's earthly life. Some call these *motivational gifts*, because they are what motivates the believer in his arena of ministry.

In I Corinthians Chapters 12-14, Paul discusses *spiritual manifestations* in the corporate meeting of the local church. These manifestations are the means whereby the Holy Spirit, through various believers, manifests Himself in the corporate meeting. These may be spontaneous occurrences or something that the Holy Spirit does in a believer prior to the meeting (a prophetic word to be presented, for example).

These two portions of Scripture (Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12-14) have become an arena of intense debate in recent decades. What one teaches on this topic can make him joyously embraced by some and excommunicated by others. Those who are committed to Our Lord and the authority of Scripture are represented on both sides of the debate.

Leaders who yearn to see the New Testament Church displayed in their own generation cannot avoid facing the questions related to this topic. In this paper we will seek to face several of the questions surrounding the gifts and seek to determine the biblical teaching concerning the multiple facets of the overall topic.

TERMS REFERRING TO SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A common Greek term for *gift*, is *doron* (δῶρον), which is used only one time in the New Testament in reference to a spiritual gift. This one instance is in Ephesians 2:8, referring to the gift of saving faith, *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*. All other occasions of the term in the New Testament refer to gifts between individuals, or offerings presented to God.

The term used for the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself is another common Greek word, *dorea* (δωρεά).¹ This term, means simply, *gift*, and is not restricted to any special usage in the New Testament. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is not within the purview of this study. The topic of this paper is the manner in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself, and the *gifts* that He bestows upon believers.

¹ Examples of such usage: John 4:10 (compare with John 7:37ff); Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17. Some also would include Hebrews 6:4 in this list.

A term that is within the purview of our study is, *merismos* (μερισμός), meaning, *distribution*. is found in the plural in Hebrews 2:4, *by various miracles and by gifts [μερισμός merismos - distributions] of the Holy Spirit, according to His will.*

The term that the New Testament uses most frequently to refer to *gifts* that the Holy Spirit bestows on believers is *charisma* (χάρισμα), which, in Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, occurs in its plural form, *charismata* (χαρίσματα). This term emphasizes the fact that something is given, as opposed to something that is due a person because he has earned it. The term excludes the idea of giving a gift to honor someone, as for example, one would give a gift to honor a king. The act of giving a *charisma* arises exclusively out of the will of the giver (as if a king, strictly out of the goodness of his heart, decided to bestow treasures upon his irresponsible subjects).

Charisma occurs seventeen times in the New Testament, therein describing a variety of *gifts*. In each passage, the context must be considered in order to determine the meaning of the term. In most instances, the meaning is quite clear. Here are the seventeen occurrences of the term and the definitions as determined by context.

- **The unique gifts that God had bestowed on Israel (listed in Romans 9:4)**

Romans 11:25-29 *For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery -- so that you will not be wise in your own estimation -- that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob... This is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins." From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the **gifts** and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

- **The gift of celibacy (free from the sexual need to be married)**

I Corinthians 7:7 *Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own **gift** from God, one in this manner, and another in that.*

- **God's favor in circumstances**

II Corinthians 1:11 *you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the **favor** bestowed on us through the prayers of many.*

- **The benefit a church receives from the general ministry of an apostle**

Romans 1:11 *For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual **gift** to you, that you may be established;*

- **The free gift of salvation**

Romans 5:15-16 *But the **free gift** is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift² by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift³ is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the **free gift** arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

- **Divinely imparted abilities to be used in ministry**

Romans 12:6-8 *Since we have **gifts** that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

1 Timothy 4:13-15 *Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. 14 Do not neglect the spiritual **gift** within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 15 Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.⁴*

2 Timothy 1:6 *For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the **gift** of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.⁵*

1 Peter 4:10 *As each one has received a special **gift**, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

² This is the Greek term, *dorea* (dwre>a).

³ ditto

⁴ Because the exhortation to not neglect the *gift* is bracketed by reference to teaching and preaching, the obvious conclusion is that the gift which Timothy received by the laying on of hands of the presbytery was that of preaching and teaching. In the NAS, the word, “spiritual,” preceding the word, “gift,” was added by the translators. All other popular versions do not have this addition. The term is not in the Greek text.

⁵ Paul’s days were numbered when he wrote this epistle. He was passing on the baton to the next generation. Timothy had been set apart to ministry by Paul and the presbyters. A spiritual impartation, equipping Timothy for the ministry to which he was being set apart, took place with the laying on of the apostle’s hands. Paul was exhorting Timothy to recommit, with fresh enthusiasm, to the ministry to which he had been set apart and for which he had been equipped by the Holy Spirit.

- **Gifts and/or Manifestations of the Holy Spirit**

1 Corinthians 1:4-7 *I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any **gift**, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,*

1 Corinthians 12:4 *Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 12:9 *to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts** of healing by the one Spirit,*

1 Corinthians 12:28 *And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then **gifts** of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.*

1 Corinthians 12:30 *All do not have **gifts** of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?*

1 Corinthians 12:31 *But earnestly desire the greater **gifts**. And I show you a still more excellent way.*

QUESTIONS

Those who seek to lead contemporary New Testament churches face many questions related to the *charismata*. The most obvious are,

- Is I Corinthians 14 a description of a normal church service in the First Century, or was this just a “Corinthian” service and not the norm for all First Century churches?
- Are the manifestations described in I Corinthians 12-14, and elsewhere, something that should be expected in every age, or were they just for the First Century?
- If the manifestations are for every age, should church leaders seek to do what they can to promote the type of meeting described in I Corinthians 14, or are Paul’s instructions more in the vein of, “if you do have these things, here is how to manage them in a God-honoring manner”?

We will research the second question first, and allow the answers to the other two questions to develop as we proceed through out study.

THE PERMANENCY OF THE CHARISMATA

Two views prevail, concerning the question of the permanency of the *charismata*. Those who hold to the cessation of the gifts argue that with the death of the apostles, supernatural ministry (including the *charismata*) ceased. Those who hold this view do not consider supernatural

ministry and answered prayer to be the same thing. Others contend that the *charismata*, as well as miraculous ministry, in some form, continues in every age. We will consider this question of permanency by first presenting the cessationist argument and then evaluating it.

THE CESSATIONIST VIEW

Miracles characterized the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. These supernatural events credentialed their teaching. Mark 16:17-18 records Jesus as declaring,

These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Mark 16:20 then reports the experience of these first generation Christians

And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.

Even if these verses were not in the original text (there is strong evidence that they were not)⁶ the fact that they were added (possibly as early as the Third Century) reflects a general understanding that this is what had happened among the early believers.

Clearly, the apostles could bestow miraculous gifts on believers, through the laying on of the apostles' hands. However, those to whom the apostles passed on miraculous gifts were not able to pass them on to the next generation. These gifts were just for the First Century when it was necessary to have the miraculous as credentials. They were intended for obsolescence. We now have the Bible whereby one is credentialed. The question today is not, "Do miracles attend his ministry," but "Is his teaching faithful to the Word?"

Cessationist argument from Acts 8

Prior to Acts 6, only the apostles are described as working miracles after Pentecost (Acts 5:12). Philip, along with Stephen and the other deacons had received a miraculous ministry through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 6). When the church was scattered, Philip went to Samaria and preached the Gospel with signs following (Acts 8:6-7) and many were saved. Because he was a second generation miracle worker, Philip was not able to pass on the miraculous Gift of the Holy Spirit, and the miraculous power that attended this gift. Only apostles could do this. Two apostles, Peter and John, came from Jerusalem and accomplished the impartation. Philip could not execute this impartation, or he would have done so.

⁶Verses 9-20 are not contained in the oldest manuscripts. Four different endings of Mark are found in various manuscript families.

Cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13

I Corinthians 13:8-12 states that the miraculous manifestations are temporary and will pass away

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Prophecy, tongues, and supernatural knowledge will cease when God's full revelation is given. The full revelation described in this passage is the Bible.

Here is how one cessationist presents this portion of the argument. His presentation is a very common one offered by those of this persuasion.

Verse 9 speaks about that which is partial, but in contrast, verse 10 speaks about that which is complete. In showing this contrast, the best way to translate *teleios* in verse 10 is "complete." Since revelation, at the time Paul wrote I Corinthians, was only partial, through the miraculous gifts of knowledge and prophecy, the perfect must refer to the finished and complete revelation of God. In other words, at that time the Christians had pieces and parts of God's revelation, but Paul was saying that there was a time coming when they would have the total...prophecies, tongues, knowledge – and all the rest of the gifts shall pass away when the "perfect" is come, namely, the gospel fully revealed and the church fully instructed. The gifts came in with the apostles and went out with them...Every other time this word [*teleios*] appears in the New Testament in the neuter gender, it refers to the will of God or the law of God (Romans 12:2; James 1:25). Thus, it is not unusual for God's revelation to be called perfect (*teleion*)⁷

Here is the argument:

- Miraculous knowledge, prophecy, tongues, etc., will be done away when *the perfect* comes.
- The Greek term translated, *the perfect*, is in the neuter gender.
- This term is used in the neuter only two other times in Scripture, and in both instances it refers to the will of God or the law of God (Romans 12:2; James 1:25).
- Thus, the term refers to the Gospel fully revealed and the Church fully instructed, i.e., the completion of the canon.

⁷ Robert B. Blazek, "The Perfect Has Come," *The Christian Standard*, July 17, 1977, page 9-10

Cessationist argument from Church History

The absence of the mention of the *charismata* in a church service is noteworthy in all of the post-biblical literature. None of the apostolic fathers mention them. Not until the writing of Tertullian, sometime after 200 AD, do we find any hint of *charismata*. Tertullian was a member of an heretical group, the Montanists, so his description cannot be construed as meaning that this is what the church at large experienced. Not only that, Tertullian's description of a prophetic manifestation does not in any way resemble Paul's I Corinthians 14 description of the *charismata*.

EVALUATION OF THE CESSATIONIST ARGUMENT

The argument from Acts 8

Why did Peter and John come to Samaria to impart the Holy Spirit? We are not told. Therefore, we must look for any patterns or statements that might reveal why they were the ones to participate in the impartation.

First, the statement that only the apostles could impart spiritual gifts is erroneous. Paul wrote to Timothy,

*Do not neglect the **spiritual gift** within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.* (I Timothy 4:14)

The term, *the presbytery*, (πρεσβυτέριον –*presbuterion*) occurs three times in Scripture. In addition to I Timothy 4:14, it is used twice to refer to the council of Jewish elders who lived in Jerusalem (Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5). Thus, the event to which Paul refers in I Timothy 4:14 would not be an assembly of prophets, apostles, and other first-generation trans-local leaders.⁸ It probably referred to the council of elders in Lystra, Timothy's home church, men who had been ordained by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:21-23). No doubt, when Timothy joined Paul (Acts 16:1-3), they followed the custom of laying on of hands when one was released into trans-local ministry.⁹ Be that as it may, I Timothy 4:14 clearly refers to men other than apostles, imparting a spiritual gift.

⁸ The practice in some churches of having apostles, prophets, etc. gather to have a *presbytery*, for the purpose of ordaining people to ministry or to impart gifts, etc., may not be wrong but it is not a proper understanding of what Paul describes in I Timothy 4:14.

⁹ In Acts 13 we see an example of a presbytery's laying on hands when ministers are sent forth. The prophets and teachers in Antioch comprised the leadership of the local church, which was instructed by the Holy Spirit to release Barnabas and Saul *for the work for which I have called them*. When they prayed and fasted, they laid hands on them and sent them on their way. Acts 13:4 beautifully describes the origin of their being sent, *So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit they went down to Seleucia...*

A much more likely explanation for why Peter and John made the trip to Samaria and imparted the Holy Spirit relates to Peter's role in exercising the "Keys to the Kingdom." Jesus told Peter that He had given Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Keys open doors. Peter was the one who opened the doors of heaven to the Jews (Acts 2) and opened the doors of heaven to the Gentiles (Acts 10). Because of his role, it was important that he credential the opening of the doors to the Samaritans (Acts 8). Great animosity existed between Samaritans and Jews. Samaritans were neither Jew nor Gentile, they were despised half-breeds. The Jerusalem church sent Peter and John, to look into the Gospel explosion among the despised Samaritans. Unless the Jerusalem Church had put its stamp of approval on the emerging Samaritan Church, it always would have been considered to be spurious. The fact that Peter and John imparted the Holy Spirit, caused the highest imprimatur to be put upon the reception of this hated half-breed race. This is a much more likely explanation than Philip's inability to execute the impartation.

The argument from I Corinthians 13

The First Flaw

The first thing wrong with the cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13 is the allegation made concerning the neuter gender of *teleios* (τέλειος). *Teleios* is an adjective. An adjective must agree in gender and number with the noun that it modifies. *Teleios* occurs nineteen times in the New Testament, describing various things as being *perfect* or *complete*, in each instance agreeing in gender and number with the noun that it describes or replaces (when an adjective is used in place of a noun [technically called, "substantive use of the adjective"] it is in the gender of the implied noun).¹⁰ Thus, *teleios* is found

- thirteen times in the masculine gender
- twice in the feminine
- four times in the neuter

Here are the four New Testament instances of *teleios* in the neuter gender:

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the **will** of God is, that which is good and acceptable and **perfect***

In this verse, *teleios* describes *will*, which in the Greek language is a neuter noun. Therefore, *teleios* must appear in the neuter gender.

1 Corinthians 13:10 *but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*

This the verse under debate.

¹⁰ For example, the adjective, *good*, can be used in place of *good things* (as in, "let us always seek the good") or in the place of *good men* (as in, "the good die young.").

James 1:4 *And let endurance have its **perfect result**, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Here, *teleios* describes *result* (the Greek term, ἔργον *ergon* - literally, *work*) a neuter noun.

James 1:17 *Every good thing given and every **perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

In this verse, *teleios* describes *gift* (the Greek term, δῶρημα *dorema*), which is a neuter noun.

It is obvious that the cessationist assertion is faulty. Instead of two neuter uses of *teleios*, in addition to I Corinthians 13, there are three. One of the examples cited by the cessationist (James 1:25), does not contain a neuter, but rather a masculine gender *teleios*.¹¹ Looking at the three examples of a neuter *teleios*, listed above, one would be hard pressed to find any sort of commonality in what the neuter *teleios* modifies or describes:

- In one instance it refers to the will of God which is discerned through a renewed mind
- In one instance, the term refers to the result of living through trials, i.e. a mature character
- In one instance it refers to any gift that God bestows – all perfect or complete gifts come from Him.

We can only conclude that the neuter use of *teleios* in I Corinthians 13 is of no help in determining the identity of the *perfect*.

The Second Flaw

The second thing that is wrong with the cessationist argument from I Corinthians 13 is a diminishing of Paul's statement concerning our total knowledge, when the *perfect* comes. When that happens we will know everything clearly, rather than having to be content with our present state in which all that we see is but a reflection of heavenly truth. When *the perfect* comes, we will know all things fully, even as God now knows us fully.

Today we have the Bible, the canon is complete. Untold hours are spent in meditating on Scripture as well as detailed and reverent study of the Word. Yet, can anyone honestly say that he has no questions, that we know all things clearly, that we know everything as fully as God knows us? Certainly, not. *The perfect* must refer to something other than the completed canon.

When will this perfect, complete knowledge come? We can reach but one conclusion. It will come when we die and face Our Lord, or when Jesus comes for His Church. In either of these

¹¹ The form of *teleios* found in James 1:25 is , the form of *teleios* is *teleion* (te>leion). This is the spelling of the adjective in both the neuter and masculine, singular, accusative, the forms. The reason that *teleion* in this verse must be understood as masculine, is because it modifies *nomon* (no>mon), the accusative singular form of the masculine noun *nomos* (no>mov).

cases, we no longer will need spiritual gifts because we will be experiencing full knowledge. No other option can measure up to Paul's statement concerning full clarity of knowledge and understanding.

The argument from Church History

The argument from Church History is the cessationist's strongest argument. Mention of the *charismata*, as well as the miraculous, is scanty (but present – see below) in the records of the early Church. The fact that Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius of Antioch, Barnabas, Hermas, the writers to Diognetus, and the Didache, make no mention of the phenomena, is considerable evidence in favor of the cessationist view. The strongest evidence for the cessationist argument is the writing of Justin Martyr (c.140 AD). Justin penned a detailed description of a Second Century church service and he makes no mention of *Charismata*.

Even so, the argument from Church History is not as consistent as the cessationists claim. There is evidence of miraculous activity in the post-New Testament era. First is the evidence of the longer ending of Mark 16 (verse 9 and following). If this ending were written by Mark as a part of his Gospel, then clearly the early believers did experience the phenomena described. On the other hand, if these verses were not in the original, as evidence seems to indicate, and were added a century later (c. 185 AD they were alluded to by Irenaeus in, *Adversus Haeresus*, Book 3, Chapter 10, section 6), then those who added them considered tongues to be a part of the missionary movement of the Church.

There is even more conclusive evidence in Irenaeus' writing against the heresies of his day. Sometime around 185 AD, Irenaeus wrote, *Adversus Haeresus*. In Book 2, he contrasts the magicians that were rampant in his day, with those who by the power of God perform true miracles.

...For they can neither confer sight on the blind, nor hearing on the deaf, nor chase away all sorts of demons — [none, indeed,] except those that are sent into others by themselves, if they can even do so much as this. Nor can they cure the weak, or the lame, or the paralytic, or those who are distressed in any other part of the body, as has often been done in regard to bodily infirmity. Nor can they furnish effective remedies for those external accidents which may occur. And so far are they from being able to raise the dead, as the Lord raised them, and the apostles did by means of prayer, and as has been frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity — the entire Church in that particular locality entreating [the boon] with much fasting and prayer, the spirit of the dead man has returned, and he has been bestowed in answer to the prayers of the saints...and inasmuch as those who are cured very frequently [i.e. cured by the

miraculous ministry of the Church] do not possess the things which they require, they receive them from us¹²

...Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God, in the name of Jesus Christ... directing her prayers to the Lord, who made all things, in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit, and calling upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, she has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind...the name of our Lord Jesus Christ even now confers benefits [upon men], and cures thoroughly and effectively all who anywhere believe on Him.¹³

Without any ambiguity, Irenaeus stated that in 185 AD, miraculous activity continued to the degree that the Church *has been accustomed to work miracles for the advantage of mankind*. In addition to raising the dead and casting out demons, *gifts of miracles, gifts of healings, and prophecy* are mentioned. Noticeably absent from this record is mention of *tongues*.

In Book 5, Chapter 6, section 1, of *Adversus Haereses*, Irenaeus does mention tongues as phenomena heard in his day:

For this reason does the apostle declare, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” terming those persons “perfect” who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare...

¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 2, Chapter 31, excerpts from sections 2 & 3 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

¹³ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, Book 2 Chapter 32, excerpts from sections 4 & 5. (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997). Irenaeus also commented on the phenomena in Book 5, Chapter 6, section 1: *For this reason does the apostle declare, “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” terming those persons “perfect” who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used Himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare...*

The statement that Tertullian's evidence is not valid because he was a Montanist, is inaccurate. Prior to his becoming a follower of Montanus, when he was a staunch defender of Orthodoxy, Tertullian used the contemporary existence of tongues as evidence in his argument against the heretic, Marcion.

Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his God, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God, such as have both predicted things to come, and have made manifest the secrets of the heart; let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer — only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him; let him show to me also, that any woman of boastful tongue in his community has ever prophesied from amongst those specially holy sisters of his. Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty...¹⁴

To quote Christopher Forbes,

Clearly “all these signs” which Tertullian claims he can produce with ease from the assemblies of “his side” include the “interpretation of tongues”; it is hard to see how this could be the case if glossolalia itself were not also present¹⁵.

Forbes also notes the geographical distribution of the evidence just noted. The longer ending of Mark is testimony from the region of Jerusalem; the statements of Irenaeus are evidence from western Europe (Lyons); Tertullian's work is evidence from North Africa.¹⁶

In 257 AD, Novatian, a Roman elder, wrote a treatise on the Trinity. In Book 29, he speaks of the Holy Spirit and the charismata.

And because the Lord was about to depart to the heavens, He gave the Paraclete out of necessity to the disciples; so as not to leave them in any degree orphans, which was little desirable, and forsake them without an advocate and some kind of protector. For this is He who strengthened their hearts and minds, who marked out the Gospel sacraments, who was in them the enlightener of divine things; and they being strengthened, feared, for the sake of the Lord's name, neither dungeons nor chains, nay, even trod under foot the very powers of the world and its tortures, since they were henceforth armed and strengthened by the same Spirit, having in themselves the gifts which this same Spirit distributes, and appropriates to the Church, the spouse of Christ, as her ornaments. This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does

¹⁴ Tertullian, *Contra Marcionem*, Book 5, Chapter 8

¹⁵ Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) page 80

¹⁶ Forbes, page 80

wonderful works, often discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts...¹⁷

Several other early writers refer to the experience of Pentecost and the cloven tongues of fire, but describe the phenomena as something that occurred on Pentecost (Acts 2), rather than something that they were experiencing in their own era. In an allegorical and poetic description of the creation, Augustine, writing near 400 AD, implied that tongues did exist in his day (born c354, died 430). Yet his statements are so veiled that not much can be made of it.¹⁸ Elsewhere, Augustine declared in unmistakable terms that Pentecostal phenomena did not exist in his day.

In the earliest times, “the Holy Ghost fell upon them that believed: and they spake with tongues,” which they had not learned, “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” These were signs adapted to the time. For there behooved to be that betokening of the Holy Spirit in all tongues, to shew that the Gospel of God was to run through all tongues over the whole earth. That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away.¹⁹

Since, therefore, the Holy Ghost is even now received by men, some one may say, Why is it that no man speaks in the tongues of all nations? Because the Church itself now speaks in the tongues of all nations. Before, the Church was in one nation, where it spoke in the tongues of all. By speaking then in the tongues of all, it signified what was to come to pass; that by growing among the nations, it would speak in the tongues of all²⁰

Augustine was a bishop in the Western Church. He knew the condition of the church worldwide, both in its Western and Eastern branches. We must accept as authoritative his statements that in his lifetime Pentecostal manifestations were unknown

¹⁷ Novatian, *de Trinitate*, Chapter 29 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 5, The Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

¹⁸“For indeed, to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, as if the greater light, on account of those who are delighted with the light of manifest truth, as in the beginning of the day; but to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, as if the lesser light; to another faith; to another the gift of healing; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues. And all these as stars. For all these worketh the one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every man his own as He willeth; and making stars appear manifestly, to profit withal. But the word of knowledge, wherein are contained all sacraments, which are varied in their periods like the moon and the other conceptions of gifts, which are successively reckoned up as stars, in as much as they come short of that splendor of wisdom in which the fore-mentioned day rejoices, are only for the beginning of the night.” Augustine, *The Thirteen Books of Confession of St. Augustine*, Book 13, Chapter 18, section 23 (The Master Christian Library, Albany, Oregon, AGES Software, 1997)

¹⁹Augustine, *Ten Homilies on I John*, Homily 6, Part 10, (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series One, as contained in Master Christian Library, Albany, OR, AGES Software, 1997)

²⁰ Augustine, *Tractates on St. John*, Tractate 32, Part 7 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Master Christian Library)

Chrysostom, one of the greatest expositors in all of Church History, was a contemporary of Augustine (born 347, died 407). He was a prelate in the Eastern Church. He wrote a series of homilies on I Corinthians. In his introduction to I Corinthians 12, he wrote,

This whole place (I Corinthians 12) 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. And why do they not happen now? Why look now, the cause too of the obscurity hath produced us again another question: namely, why did they then happen, and now do so no more?

This however let us defer to another time, but for the present let us state what things were occurring then.²¹

Augustine and Chrysostom, representing both the Western and Eastern Churches, make clear statements that the *charismata* no longer were functioning in the Church. It would be a great help to us if Chrysostom had pursued the answer to the question he raised, i.e., as to why the *charismata* were absent. Augustine argued the tongues of apostolic times were a sign that the Gospel would be preached in every language. He declared that since the Church in his day existed in many nations, and that in each of those nations a different language was spoken, that the Gift of Tongues no longer was needed as a sign that the Gospel would reach all nations. It already had done so.

There are many reports of the *charisma* in the Middle Ages, even though one might debate the reliability of the data. Several were canonized as saints, on the basis of their speaking in tongues. However, the Roman Catholic Church during this era generally regarded speaking in tongues and interpretation as a mark of demon possession. The difference between demonization and sainthood-qualifying *charismata* seemed to turn on the reputation of the individual involved.²²

There are general reports of tongues among the medieval mendicants, the Waldensians, and Albigensians, but when one seeks to identify the specific individuals among these groups about whom these claims are made, no information can be found. As Stanley Burgess has written concerning his pursuit of this information, "...we are frustrated time and again by teasing generalities, inadequate information, and unanswered questions."²³

²¹ Chrysostom, *First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* Homily 29, I Corinthians 12:1,2 (*The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series One, Master Christian Library*)

²² Stanley M. Burgess, *Medieval Examples of Charismatic Piety in the Roman Catholic Church*, in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (born 347, died 407)ism Russell P. Spittler, Editor (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1976) pages 14-26

²³ Stanley M. Burgess, *Medieval Examples of Charismatic Piety*, Part One, Chapter One, *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism*, ed. Russell P. Spittler, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1976) page 17

A popular report repeated in some Charismatic writings states that Luther spoke in tongues. However, a study of the primary Luther documents proves this to be untrue. As a matter of record, Luther seemed to be confused by the Pentecostal phenomena.²⁴ In his Commentary on Galatians, he made clear that he considered all physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit to be obsolete.

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 miracles that accompanied the gift of the Holy Ghost. Paul explained the purpose of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit in I 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.²⁵

How do the declarations of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Luther relate to our question concerning the permanence or non-permanence of the *charismata*? All that they tell us is that in 400 AD (Augustine and Chrysostom) and in the Fifteenth Century (Luther) the Church did not experience this manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Prior to the 20th Century, most American Church leaders would have said the same thing and would have found virtually no one to disagree with them.²⁶ If such a statement were made today, however, the disagreement would be huge. Since we do not know why the *charismata* were absent from the Fifth Century Church and the Fifteenth Century Church, we cannot draw any conclusion other than that they were absent. So, in order to determine if the *charismata* were only for the era of the apostles, we must look back to the data that we examined earlier and come to the only conclusion possible:

Scripture declares that the *charismata* will be obsolete when

- *the perfect comes.*
- *we see all things clearly*
- *we know God as we now are known by Him*

The only condition that meets these criteria of *the perfect* is when we meet Christ face to face, either in death or at His appearing.

It therefore is valid to conclude that we should anticipate supernatural activity in the present day Church.

²⁴ Martin Luther, *Works*, ed. Jaroslav J. Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis: Concordia 1955) XL , 142

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, comments on Chapter 4, Verse 6, translated by Theodore Graebner (Concordance of Great Books; <http://www.concordance.com/cgi-bin/1wdr.pl>)

²⁶ There would have been some who would have disagreed. See Stanley Howard Frodsham, *With Signs Following* (Springfield, Mo., Gospel Publishing House, 1946 [a revision of earlier versions published in 1926 and 1928]), for substantiated reports of tongues in the last half of the 19th Century.

AN EXAMINATION OF I CORINTHIANS 12-14

The epistle that we know as I Corinthians was Paul's third contact with the Church in Corinth. The first contact was Paul's visit to the city, resulting in the founding of the Corinthian Church (Acts 18:1-18). Paul spent at least eighteen months in this endeavor (Acts 18:11).²⁷ Only the Ephesian Church was the recipient of a longer apostolic presence.

About two years after his departure from Corinth, while he was in Ephesus, Paul received a troubling report. Certain strong, ambitious men had sought to elevate themselves over the church and the church had begun to manifest a variety of aberrant practices.²⁸ Paul wrote to Corinth, seeking to bring correction (I Corinthians 5:9-11). This was his second contact with the church. We do not know the entire contents of the letter, because it was not preserved. Even so, I Corinthians 5:11 informs us of one of the issues addressed in Paul's letter:

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler -- not even to eat with such a one.

Paul's letter was not well received in Corinth. For one thing, those who were seeking to elevate themselves to places of authority sought to discredit Paul.²⁹ They tried to make his statements appear to be absurd by interpreting his letter as saying that Christians were forbidden from having any intercourse with immoral people.³⁰ To abide by that rule, Christians would have to go out of the world. The majority of the church had come under the influence of these slanderers and thus were at odds with Paul. However, there always was a Pauline minority.

The Corinthians responded to Paul's letter by sending him a letter, delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (I Corinthians 16:17). Chloe's people also informed Paul about the Corinthian Church (I Corinthians 1:11).³¹

Even though we do not have a copy of the Corinthians' letter to Paul, his response to the letter (the epistle we call, *I Corinthians*) provides information concerning its content. The Corinthians were not asking Paul to arbitrate between various factions, as some have assumed. Paul's response implies that the letter was somewhat disrespectful, perhaps even hostile. It raised several issues concerning his authority and apostleship. One issue seems to have been whether

²⁷ Two understandings of Acts 18:11 are possible:

- The entire visit was eighteen months in length
- Eighteen months refers to the time that Paul remained in Corinth after the church was founded

²⁸ The Church in Corinth had become very carnal, suffering from internal strife and division based on personality cult, sexual misconduct of the worst type, disrespect for the Lord's table, disorder in the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, and false teaching that denied the clear doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

²⁹ I Corinthians Chapter Four reflects this condition

³⁰ I Corinthians 5:10

³¹ Chloe probably was an Ephesian business woman whose agents traveled to Corinth on business and visited the Corinthian Church while in the city. Upon their return to Ephesus, they told Paul about the divisions and aberrations that were developing in the Corinthian Church.

or not Paul was a *pneumatikos* (πνευματικός), a spiritual man.³² The Corinthians, had come to view themselves as being spiritually superior. They had become enamored of *Sophia*³³ (divine wisdom), whereas Paul, with his poor rhetoric (at least that's how they regarded it), was only capable of providing "milk." They had moved on to headier stuff.³⁴ They also challenged some of the positions that Paul had taken.

In I Corinthians Paul lashed out on one hand³⁵ and wrote conciliatory words on the other.³⁶ He declared that they were a carnal church: *brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ* (I Corinthians 3:1). This is the spiritual and emotional setting that surrounded Paul's discussion of the proper conduct of the *charismata* in the assembly.

Six times in I Corinthians Paul introduces a topic with the words, *Now concerning*,³⁷ indicating that he is responding to something in their letter.³⁸ Such is the case with the discussion of the *charismata* (I Corinthians 12:1).

We now turn to an examination of Paul's statements concerning the *charismata* in I Corinthians Chapters 12-14.

Chapter 12

In I Corinthians 12 Paul tries to get the Corinthians to understand that the local church is like a human body. There is diversity, interdependency, and unity in a body. This chapter echoes the lesson of Romans 12. The particular items that Paul discusses in this chapter tend to grab our attention with such force that we are prone to miss the central truth of the section. This is much like remembering all of the funny stories that a preacher told in his sermon, but forgetting the point that the stories were intended to illustrate. We must pay attention to the point that Paul makes in this chapter.

Chapter 12 can be summarized as follows:

- The Holy Spirit imparts gifts to Christians
- These are gifts
- The Holy Spirit sovereignly chooses to whom each gift is given
- Each gift is important
- No believer has all of the gifts
- No believer should feel that his gift has made him superior
- All gifts are given for the good of the body

³² I Corinthians 2:15 seems to be a sideswipe at them, stating that the *pneumatikos* (Paul) is not subject to anyone's judgment

³³ *sofi>a*

³⁴ Thus, Paul's argument in 1:17-2:5

³⁵ Note, for example the sarcasm of 4:7-8 and 6:5

³⁶ From the sarcasm of 4:7-8, Paul moves into tender images in 4:14ff

³⁷ *peri< de*

³⁸ 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12

Verse 1

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

The challenge presented by this verse is the definition of the term translated in most of the popular versions as, *spiritual gifts*. The Greek term is *ton pneumatikon* (τῶν πνευματικῶν), the genitive, plural form of the adjective, *pneumatikos* (πνευματικός). Since the genitive plural of this adjective is spelled the same way for masculine, feminine, and neuter objects, the meaning has to be determined by the context. The term translated literally is, *the spirituals*, but that doesn't make any sense. If it is the masculine form, then the term refers to *spiritual men*. If it is the neuter form, then it refers to *spiritual things*. Paul used this term both in the neuter and masculine genders in Chapter 14 (neuter in verse 1 and masculine in verse 37).

Some would argue for *spiritual men*, since one of the conditions that Paul faced was the Corinthians' contention that they were spiritual men, whereas Paul was lacking. The repeated, *you*, of verses 2-3, and the fact that Paul speaks of, *to each one*, as he lists manifestations of the Spirit in verses 7-10, point toward *spiritual men*. Furthermore, the point of I Corinthians 12-14 is the management (not control) of these manifestations, which requires the obedience of men. The immediate context, however, would allow for *spiritual things*. Howard M. Ervin suggests, *Now concerning supernatural endowments, brethren...*³⁹ as a means of encompassing both the *spiritual things* and the *spiritual men (and women)* who were manifesting the *spirituals*.

Verses 2-3

*You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led*⁴⁰. *Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.*

As pagans, they had worshipped inarticulate idols. However, these idols did represent evil spirits (10:20-21) who spoke through their devotees.⁴¹ Thus, inspired speech was not evidence of being

³⁹ Howard M. Ervin, *These are not Drunken as ye Suppose* (Plainfield, NJ, Logos International 1963) p

⁴⁰ Verse 2 is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible, because it is an *anacoluthon* (it doesn't follow grammatically) since the "when" clause has no main verb. As Gordon Fee comments, "Either something dropped out in the transmission of the text, or else Paul himself intended his readers to supply a second 'you were' at some point in the sentence. Literally, the verse reads, *you know that when you were pagans, to mute idols whenever you would be led, being carried away*. The best solution is to repeat the verb 'you were' with the final participle 'carried away,' so that the sentence reads, *When you were pagans, you were carried away, as you were continually being led about to mute idols.*" Gordon Fee, *First Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1987) pp. 576-77.

⁴¹ One clear difference between the inspired speech of idol worshippers was the ecstatic state of idolaters, when uttering inspired speech. Idolatrous inspired speech occurred when the devotee was possessed by the spirit of the idol and spoke in an ecstatic state (not in control of himself). Paul points out that the believer is responsible for his behavior, even when speaking in tongues

led by the Holy Spirit. They already knew that from their pagan past. The cognitive content of speech was the evidence of being led by the Holy Spirit.

Many pages could be written wrestling with the various explanations of Paul's citing someone as saying, "*Jesus is cursed*" (when, where, why, who, etc.) and being able to say, "*Jesus is Lord,*" *except by the Holy Spirit*, which is something that even a hypocrite could say. One way that this could be explained is that this refers to making such a confession in truth requires revelation from the Holy Spirit (as described in 2:10-13). It is not profitable for us to get involved in this discussion here. It is important, however, that we not miss the point of this paragraph. Gordon Fee has written,⁴²

...it continues to stand as a particularly important word for the church, in which many of these spiritual phenomena are recurring. The presence of the Spirit in power and gifts makes it easy for God's people to think of the power and gifts as the real evidence of the Spirit's presence. Not so for Paul. The ultimate criterion of the Spirit's activity is the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Whatever takes away from that, even if they be legitimate expressions of the Spirit, begins to move away from Christ to a more pagan fascination with spiritual activity as an end in itself.⁴³

Verses 4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

The question has to be asked: "Are the members of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and God), each mentioned in connection with one of the three terms, *gifts*, *ministries*, and *varieties of effects*, because each of them individually is the source of the element described, or is Paul using a rhetorical device for emphasizing unity in diversity?"

If Paul meant to describe each Divine Being's part in this arena, then here is the delineation:

- The Holy Spirit bestows varieties of supernatural abilities on believers.
- The Lord determines when, where, and how these abilities are to be used.
- God the Father determines the results.

Whether or not Paul intended to make such a partitioning of roles can be debated. However, the main points of the paragraph are clear:

or when prophesying (the entire argument of Chapter 14 assumes this to be true, or else the chapter makes no sense).

⁴² Gordon Fee, one of the finest exegetical scholars of our generation is an ordained Assemblies of God minister.

⁴³ Fee, *op. cit.*, p. 582

- The *charismata* are manifestations of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the manner in which the Holy Spirit ministers to the Church is through human instruments who have control over their own behavior.
- There is unity (the Divine source) in diversity (different believers manifest different *charismata*);
- The purpose of the *charismata* is to bless the corporate church.

Verses 8-10

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

Because the Corinthians were experiencing the nine manifestations listed, and probably even more than nine, Paul is not concerned with the question as whether or not the manifestations were valid. What Paul is moving toward is the conclusion that there should be unity in diversity. Because in our day there is confusion and controversy concerning the nine listed gifts, it is fitting for us to consider them individually.

- *The Word (Logos) of Wisdom (Sophia): literally, Utterance of Wisdom*

The phrase means either, *an utterance conveying wisdom* or *an utterance originating in wisdom*. It is significant that this *gift* does not occur again in any other list or discussion. The reason seems rather clear. The language points back to the earlier portion of the epistle in which Paul addresses their viewing of *wisdom* (as characterized by the Greek Gnostic understanding of the term) as a mark of spiritual superiority. Because of this, many rejected Paul's Gospel (1:17-2:16). Paul defined true *wisdom*, not as some special understanding or deeper mystery (as the Greek Gnostics would define it), but the recognition that *Christ crucified* is the true wisdom of God (1:30-31; 2:6-9). Paul wrote in 2:10-13 that this revelation (more than mere intellectual acceptance of facts) can come to us only by the Holy Spirit. So, any spiritual utterance that declares what God has done in Christ fits Paul's description of *an utterance of wisdom*.

However, can the term be limited to this? The question is not easy to answer. Since the gift of wisdom occurs only here, and is not included in the spontaneous *charismata* described in Chapter 14, we are not compelled to consider it as something restricted to the occasional manifestations described in that chapter. Personally, I have known individuals who have wisdom beyond their years. They could not have gained it from experience, the normal source of wisdom. An example is Bruce Clutter, one of the elders at TCF. Bruce was ordained an elder in September, 1983, one week before his 29th birthday. Even though a young man, Bruce at that time had the wisdom of a man who was in his senior years. I believe that this wise man is a gift of wisdom to the church.

- *Word (Logos) of Knowledge (Gnosis)*

In the opening paragraph of the epistle, Paul had thanked God that the Corinthians *in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge* (1:5). *Speech* and *knowledge*, the Greek terms *logos* and *gnosis*, are the same the terms that describe this *charismata*. It seems that this is another effort by Paul to rescue them from their Greek fascination with *wisdom, knowledge, and rhetoric* (the point of 1:18-2:16), as well as confronting the pride that accompanied these obsessions.

How this gift differs from *revelation* is not clear. In 14:6 this gift is listed between *revelation* and *prophecy*, so it is clear that the *word of knowledge* and *revelation* cannot be the same thing. This also is one of the gifts that Paul states will cease when the perfect comes (13:8). Some have argued that since *gnosis* (knowledge) is in the descriptive genitive case, that this refers to the Holy Spirit's imparting of insight into Scripture. However, because of its location in the lists just cited, it usually is understood to mean more than this.

Most would consider this gift to refer to manifestations such as Peter's knowledge of the misdeeds of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), or Jesus' knowledge of Nathaniel's whereabouts before they met (John 1:47-50).

- *Faith*

Elsewhere, Paul speaks of saving faith as being the work of the Spirit.⁴⁴ Here, however, as confirmed by reference to this gift in 13:2, this is the gift of faith *to move mountains*. Jesus spoke of mountain moving faith on two occasions:

⁴⁴ The Greek word, *pi>stiv* (*pistis*) is the word that we translate as, *faith*. Note that in each of the following passages, *faith* has a different meaning.

Galatians 1:23 *but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."* In this sentence, *faith* means the Gospel

Romans 14:23 *But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.* In this context, *faith* refers to the conviction that this is what God wants me to do.

1 Timothy 5:11-12 *But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.* (KJV) In this passage, *faith* refers to a pledge or a promise made to the Lord. In both the NIV and the NAS, the "dynamic equivalency" style is used in this verse. Therefore, neither of these versions have the word, *faith*, in their translations. The NAS says, *pledge*; the NIV *first pledge*. In the Greek, however the word is *faith* (*pi>stiv*)

1. Matthew 17:20, after casting out a demon
2. Matthew 21:21, after cursing the fig tree (also reported in Mark 11:22).

This measure of faith is a *gift*, something imparted by the Holy Spirit. This not something that can be worked up or volitionally exercised. In Romans 12:3, as a prelude to a discussion of functional gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote of God's having *allotted to each a measure of faith*. We readily think of men such as George Mueller, to whom God gave faith for providential provision for the care of thousands of orphans and the legendary Smith Wigglesworth who seemed to know in various situations what God was doing and in that knowledge ministered supernaturally.

- Gifts of Healings

In the Greek text, both *gifts* and *healings* are plural. This guides our understanding of this manifestation. Often people pray for *The Gift of Healing*, as if they can become endowed with the ability to heal. The terminology here is better understood as describing a group of healing gifts that the Holy Spirit presents to a particular believer for him to distribute to others. God stays in control. He hands the person chosen to administer these gifts, a gift of healing to be given to this sick person, and another gift of healing to be given to that sick person. The one to whom the *Gifts of Healings* are given has the privilege of dispensing the gifts. A sick person may come to the servant of God chosen to distribute the gifts, receive the laying on of hands, and not be healed. Our Sovereign God had not given His servant a *Gift of Healing* for that particular individual. If someone, with all good intentions, approaches church leadership, asking for the laying on of hands in order to receive the *Gift of Healing*, the appropriate question should be, "Why, are you sick?"

- The Effecting of Miracles (Literally: *operations of powers*)

In II Corinthians 12:12, Paul wrote of himself,

The signs (semeia - σημεῖα) of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs (semeia - σημεῖα) and wonders (terata - τεράτια) and miracles (dunamis - δύνამεις).

It is interesting to observe that in this self-description Paul made a distinction between *signs*, *wonders*, and *miracles*. The term translated *miracles* is the common Greek word for *power*. Once again we must note that both terms, *operations* and *powers*, are in the plural. This would imply that there are varying operations of powers. Certainly this would include supernatural healing, exorcism, and any of the broad range of events that we would call, *miraculous*. Jesus' ministry was filled with such manifestations. In the post-Pentecostal apostolic ministry, most miracles were healing miracles. One has to ask if the healings resulting from this gift are a different manifestation than the *gifts of healings*. It would seem to be so. For example, cloths that had touched Paul's body were distributed in Ephesus and everyone who touched the cloths were healed (Acts 19:11-12).

Peter and the apostles had such a flamboyant and consistent healing season in Jerusalem, that sick people were placed beside the path, hoping that Peter's shadow would fall on them (Acts 5:12-16).⁴⁵

Be that as it may, Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit gives to certain ones the *operations of powers*. This can only describe a ministry that is characterized by supernatural activity.

- Prophecy

After the close of the Old Testament canon (Malachi), prophecy ceased in Israel.⁴⁶ On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that prophecy was restored, in fulfillment of Joel's prediction (Acts 2:16-18).

... but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My male slaves and My female slaves, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy.

The Greek term, *propheteia* (προφητεία), refers to speech that emanates from divine inspiration and declares the purposes of God. It can include prediction, but that is not the essential nature of *prophecy*. Joel declared that when God's Spirit was poured out, prophecy would not be restricted to prophets but that it would become a widespread phenomenon among God's people.

- The Distinguishing of Spirits

The Greek term rendered, *distinguishing* or *discerning*, is the term, *diakrisis* (διάκρισις), which has as its primary meaning, *a separation*, thus, *a judging*. Since the term is in the plural, a literal rendering is *discernments of spirits*.

Interestingly, the term rendered *discernments* is the noun form of the verb used in 14:29, which speaks of judging whether or not prophecy is from God. Thus, *discernments of spirits* must include judging of prophecy. I Thessalonians 5:19-21 and I John 4:1 ff fit into this category.

⁴⁵ The Western Text of this verse 15 concludes with, "for they were being set free from every sickness, such as each of them had."

⁴⁶ Here are some quotes from I Maccabees, the most reliable history book of the Jews, written during the inter-testamental period:

*4:46 and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill **until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them.***

*9:27 Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been **since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them.***

*14:41 And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, **until a trustworthy prophet should arise...***

I Thessalonians 5:19-21a *Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully.*

1 John 4:1 *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

In II Thessalonians, Paul declared the necessity of judging the spirit behind both doctrinal teaching and miracles: *that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, ... that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders* (2 Thessalonians 2:2-3, 9)

Thus, Paul states that some believers will be given the ability to discern spirits, whether it be the spirit behind a prophecy, a teaching, or a miracle.

- Various Kinds of Tongues

The Greek terminology is important. *Gene glosson* (γέννη γλωσσῶν), translated literally, *families of languages*, fits the Acts 2 experience, in which the disciples *began to speak with other tongues* (languages that were not their native tongue) and were understood by visitors from various countries. The term refers to actual languages, not just ecstatic utterances, a phenomenon seen in pagan rites.⁴⁷ Because of the terminology, we must conclude that *tongues* refers to a language spoken somewhere in the world, or formerly was spoken somewhere in the world, or a language spoken by angels (13:1). It is neither gibberish, nor uncontrolled mutterings.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Many modern commentators have sought to demonstrate that the expression, *tongues*, refers to the ecstatic speech or unintelligible speech, found in the Greek religions. In a very detailed scholarly work, Christopher Forbes has demonstrated that this is not case: Christopher Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (Peabody, Mass., Hendrickson Publishers, 1997)

⁴⁸ The renowned scholar, A.T. Robertson makes the following comment: Acts 2:4 - **With other tongues** (εἰτε>ραῖν γλω>σσαῖν) Other than their native tongues. Each one began to speak in a language that he had not acquired and yet it was a real language and understood by those from various lands familiar with them. It was not jargon, but intelligible language. Jesus had said that the gospel was to go to all the nations and here the various tongues of earth were spoken. One might conclude that this was the way in which the message was to be carried to the nations, but future developments disprove it. This is a third miracle (the sound, the tongues like fire, the untaught languages). There is no blinking the fact that Luke so pictures them. One need not be surprised if this occasion marks the fulfillment of the Promise of the Father. But one is not to confound these miraculous signs with the Holy Spirit. They are merely proof that he has come to carry on the work of his dispensation. The gift of tongues came also on the house of Cornelius at Caesarea (Ac 10:44-47; 11:15-17), the disciples of John at Ephesus (Ac 19:6), the disciples at

This manifestation never was used for preaching or proclamation of the Gospel. It always was manifested in praise or prayer. Interestingly, in the earliest days of the Pentecostal movement, the belief persisted that God would give earthly languages to baptized believers so they could quickly evangelize the world. Those who went to foreign fields with this expectation experienced failure.⁴⁹

In this present era, there are many credible reports of the Holy Spirit's bestowing a "foreign" language upon a believer, which was understood by an auditor. Dr. Howard Ervin, a respected scholar whom I know personally, has written of his own experience in this realm. We include this extensive quote because of the controversy over this point.

In our own day, there is an increasing number of testimonies by Christians who have spoken known languages "in the Spirit." On one occasion the present author was participating in a healing service in a church on the West Coast of the United States. As he prayed in tongues, an Armenian Baptist woman listened to his "tongue," and identified it as prayer in Russian. Again while praying with a small group for the healing of a missionary who speaks Spanish fluently, the missionary identified his "tongue" as a Spanish dialect. The vocabulary was clearly identified, but the inflections were strange to her. On another occasion, while praying for the healing of the little daughter of a Japanese Buddhist woman, he spoke a "tongue" she later identified to mutual friends as Japanese. Still more recently, in a ministry service in his own church, an Armenian man, for whom he prayed, identified two foreign languages spoken in prayer. The one was a dialect spoken by the Indian colonial troops of the British Empire which he had heard as a young man in the seaport cities of the

Corinth (1Co 14:1-33). It is possible that the gift appeared also at Samaria (Ac 8:18). But it was not a general or a permanent gift. Paul explains in 1Co 14:22 that "tongues" were a sign to unbelievers and were not to be exercised unless one was present who understood them and could translate them. This restriction disposes at once of the modern so-called tongues which are nothing but jargon and hysteria. It so happened that here on this occasion at Pentecost there were Jews from all parts of the world, so that some one would understand one tongue and some another without an interpreter such as was needed at Corinth. The experience is identical in all four instances and they are not for edification or instruction, but for adoration and wonder and worship. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 Volumes, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932) III Page 22

⁴⁹ Charles Parham, first advocated this view. The leaders of the Azusa Street revival also had this expectation. These sent out missionaries based on this premise. However, they found difficulties when putting the belief into practice. For example, A.G. Carr, the first white man to speak in tongues at Azusa, went to India, expecting the Spirit to enable him to speak Hindi. When this didn't happen, Garr and his wife moved to China and studied Chinese. The consistent experience of the early Pentecostal missionaries was that if foreigners did understand them, it was a rare exception, rather than the rule.

Orient. The second language he described as Kurdish, a language he himself speaks. Most recently of all, in fact just a few weeks ago, the phenomenon repeated again. While praying with a young man, acquainted with both Spanish and Portuguese, the writer prayed in a language identified by the young man as Portuguese. When asked what was said, he replied: "You told God my need in high Portuguese." Needless to say all of these languages are unknown to the writer, and consequently were spoken "as the Spirit Himself gave utterance."

The same author identified the last sentence of a song sung "in the Spirit" as Biblical Greek, although the man who was singing knows no Greek. A Norwegian woman received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at a service in the present writer's church. The next day she prayed in tongues in the presence of some Italian friends who identified the "tongue" speaking as Italian, a language with which she is not conversant. In charismatic services in the author's church, other languages have been identified on several occasions. It is also significant to note that each participant in these services prays in a distinctive and clearly recognizable tongue. Vocabulary, inflections, intonations are all distinctive and clearly distinguishable.⁵⁰

We have to disagree with those who speak of a "prayer language" as something other than the same manifestation as was experienced on Pentecost (see footnote 20).

- The Interpretation of Tongues

Those who claim that *tongues* are ecstatic utterances, rather than genuine languages, argue that *tongues* require *interpretation*, rather than, *translation*.⁵¹ This is a faulty argument. The Greek term, *ermeneia* (ἑρμηνεία), can mean either *interpretation* or *translation*. It is much the same in idiomatic English. When a missionary travels among people whose language he does not know, he works with an *interpreter*, whom the missionary trusts to *translate*.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ervin, *op. cit.* pages 127-128

⁵¹ Paul's statements in Chapter 14, which instruct tongues speakers and those prophesying to regulate their activity, clearly speak against an ecstatic state.

⁵² Kittel cites all of the possible understandings of ἐρμηνεία. He then concludes that in this passage, it must mean *interpretation* rather than *translation*, since tongues speakers are in an ecstatic trance when manifesting a *tongue*. He argues that tongues are "non-speech." This violates the Paul's description of the phenomenon as argued above. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) Volume 1, pages 661-665

Thus, we have to conclude that this manifestation is an Holy Spirit given ability to translate/interpret the languages being spoken by the tongues speakers. This becomes more evident and crucial in Chapter 14.

Verse 11

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

The three truths of this verse are foundational to our understanding of this section:

- The Holy Spirit is the source of the *charismata*
- The Holy Spirit gives *charismata* to individual Christians
- The choice of the *charismata* that is given and the choice of the individual to whom it is given rests solely in the will of the Holy Spirit.

This verse is a verse of great hope. As Gordon Fee has written, *The hope, of course, lies with verse 11, that the one and the same Spirit will do as He pleases, despite the boxes provided for Him ...*⁵³

Verses 12-26

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

⁵³ Fee, p. 600

Much could be written concerning the controversies that have arisen over verse 13, *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.* The questions raised by these expressions are not the topic of this study. Be that as it may, the point of this paragraph is quite apparent. Paul is arguing for unity in diversity and in this section, he emphasizes diversity. The Holy Spirit has given diverse manifestations to diverse individuals, and each of these manifestations has been given for the good of the church. No one “has it all.” Each one is deficient without the others. This is by Divine design. Realizing our common origin, the common possession of the Holy Spirit which makes us one, and the common source of our gifts, there should be no division among us. When we care for one another and rejoice when one of our members is honored, either by God or man, we really are caring for and rejoicing for ourselves – for all of us constitute the body. This paragraph is a virtual summary of Romans 12 (or *vice versa*).

Verse 27

Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it

- *You* (plural – the local church at Corinth) *are Christ's body*;
- *Individually* (focusing on each individual Christian) *are members of it*

Verse 28

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

Paul continues to emphasize the diversity. The first three, apostles, prophets, and teachers, he ranks, one, two, three. Paul saw these as the order of precedence in founding and building up the church.

Miracles and *gifts of healings* are in the reverse order of Paul's previous list, thus suggesting the irrelevancy of rank in the list from this point on.

Helps and *administrations* are not mentioned in the list of *charismata*, nor are they mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Kube>rnhsiv, here translated as *helps*, means to govern, or to offer wise counsel. A related word from the same root, kubernh>thv, means *helmsman* or *sailing-master*. This is a different term from the one used in Romans 12:8, proista>menov which means, *the one taking the lead*.

Ajnti>lhyiv, here translated, *administrations* does not occur in any other New Testament passage. However, it is found in the Septuagint with the meaning of *aid* or *help*. Romans 12 has a different term, diakoni>a, which conveys a similar idea. Because Romans 12:7 uses the term, diakoni>a some argue that this is referring to the work of deacons. Although this may include the work of deacons, it certainly cannot be limited to deacons.

Paul ends the list with *various kinds of tongues*. It is not surprising that he lists tongues last, since this *charismata*, and the pride associated with it, was the source of controversy in Corinth.

The manner in which Paul constructed this list, mixing *charismata* with ascension gifts (Ephesians 4:11), listing things not listed elsewhere, and listing them in a different order from the other lists in this section, emphasizes the point that he is making – diversity.

Verses 29-30

All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?

The rhetorical questions in verses 29-30 are questions to which Paul anticipated a negative answer. We know this by the manner in which he asked the questions. In Greek one can ask a question in a manner that indicates whether the questioner anticipates a “yes” or a “no.” If a “yes” is anticipated, the question begins with *ou* (οὐ). If a “no” is expected, the question begins with *me* (μή). By using this technique, Paul thus stated that not everyone is an apostle, not everyone is a prophet, not everyone is a teacher, not everyone works miracles, not everyone has gifts of healings, not everyone speaks in tongues, and not everyone interprets tongues. God determined that it should be so.

Paul made these statements for one purpose – to emphasize the diversity in God’s design and the mutual dependency of believers. Paul declared that this is so because of the will of the Holy Spirit. This is God’s deliberate decision. For our era, his statements are important for an additional reason. The contemporary assertion, made by some Pentecostals and Charismatics, that everyone can and should speak in tongues flies in the face of Paul’s argument. If everyone could or should, then Paul’s argument that God willed this diversity, would be a failed argument.

Of special interest is the inconsistency in the lists found in Chapter 12.

- Paul lists nine *charismata* in verses 8-10
- He presents a mixed list in verse 28, including two that are not found elsewhere
- In the rhetorical questions in verses 29-30, the list is different from the previous two lists.

Because of this, we should not assume that any of the lists exhausts the manner in which the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the Church.

Verse 31

But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

What are the greater gifts? Dr. Ervin, argues that the greater gifts are those enumerated in verse 28, *God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, etc.*

It intimates that when he said, “*first* apostles, *secondly* prophets, *thirdly* teachers,” he was expressing a value judgment upon this specific category of gifts. The apostles therefore are possessors of the most important spiritual gift...⁵⁵

Dr. Ervin’s position doesn’t fit the context of Paul’s discussion in Chapters 12-14. Paul is correcting and instructing the church concerning the manifestation of gifts in the public service. Exhorting all of them to have an earnest desire to become apostles would be totally irrelevant and even contradictory to the point that he is making. It also would be contrary to the heart attitude of any true apostle.⁵⁶

Much more appropriate is the traditional understanding of *the greater gifts*, i.e., those mentioned in Chapter 14 as being more beneficial to the church in its public meeting.

CHAPTER 13

Chapter Thirteen is an interlude in the discussion, yet an important one. The essential point is that unless love is the motivation and the atmosphere in which one ministers a gift, the ministry is of no benefit to anyone, including the minister himself. This point is not a part of the focus of this paper, beyond the fact that the point is made. The material in this chapter that is relevant to our discussion (*tongues of men and of angels* and the duration of the gifts) have been addressed earlier.

CHAPTER 14

The statements made in Chapter 14 bring us to the heart of the matter. From Paul’s statements in this section it becomes apparent that the Sunday meeting must have been some sort of a vocal melee.

- Tongues speakers were exercising this gift in the meeting without interpretation

⁵⁵ Ervin, p. 141

⁵⁶ Paul consistently made the point that he did not choose to function as an apostle, but that such was God’s sovereign choice:

2 Corinthians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...*

Galatians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),*

Ephesians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...*

Colossians 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God...*

1 Timothy 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus, who is our hope,*

2 Timothy 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,*

- Given Paul's statements at the close of Chapter 12 and the entire argument of Chapter 13, we can only conclude that there was controversy over the hierarchy of gifts. Pride was rampant.
- There was general disorder in the meeting. More than one person was speaking at the same time: prophets prophesying, tongues speakers praying out loud, a general noise without any edification of the general body taking place.
- Some were trying to silence the tongues speakers, fearing that they might be blaspheming God

The point of this chapter is that all things done in the meeting should be for the edification of the gathered body, not for the edification of the individual exercising his gift.

Verse 1

Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

The imperatives in this verse serve as a transition from the previous arguments to the matter at hand, which is the abuse of tongues. They should seek to be vessels of love, yet they also should seek to function in a manner that benefits the body. For that reason they are exhorted to *desire, earnestly, spiritual gifts*.

The term translated, *spiritual gifts*, is the same word that Paul used in the beginning of this section in 12:1, *pneumatikos*. Here, since it clearly is referring to the topic of *gifts*, as is seen in the following verses, it is *neuter* in gender, and refers to *things*, rather than, *men*. Given the context, *spiritual gifts* is the best rendering.

A second question: is the exhortation distributive or collective? If it is distributive, Paul urged each individual believer to earnestly desire to prophesy. If it is collective, he is urging the Church to desire that prophesy be fluent in their gathering. Nothing in the Greek leans one way or the other. However, since the balance of the chapter addresses the performance of individuals, it is best to understand this as an exhortation to individual believers to desire to receive gifts that bless the gathered church, of which prophesy is the prime example. Chapter 12 always must be in the forefront of their desire: the Holy Spirit will distribute manifestations as He wills.

Verses 2-5

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

These verses set forth the basic contrasts and the central themes of what follows.

- The concern is for edification (vv. 3-5)
- The issue is intelligibility.

Uninterpreted tongues (v. 5) is not understandable (v. 2) hence it cannot edify the church (v. 4). Prophecy is addressed to people precisely for their edification (v. 3) and in that sense it is the greater gift.⁵⁷

Notice the contrast displayed in these verses:

- The one who speaks in tongues speaks *not* to people, but to **God**
He speaks *mysteries* by the Spirit
- The one who prophesies speaks to **people**
(he speaks) *edification*
(he speaks) *encouragement*
(he speaks) *comfort*
- The one who speaks in tongues *edifies himself* (because he is praying)
- The one who prophesies *edifies the church* (because he brings the word of God)⁵⁸

Even though Paul seeks to decrease their zeal for congregational tongues speaking/praying, he is not demeaning the gift itself. He states three positive things about tongues.

- The tongues speaker is communing with God. Paul understands the phenomena to be a form of prayer and/or praise
- The content of the tongues can be *mysteries*. The Greek term translated, *mysteries*, is the term, *musterion* (μυστήριον). This term refers to something that God has revealed and it could only be known by revelation. So, the one praying in tongues may be speaking truths that could only be revealed by the Spirit.
- Tongues speech (prayer) is edifying to the one manifesting the tongue. This is not a negative thing, it is just not the purpose of manifestations in the meeting. This is appropriate for one's private devotions, but not for a public gathering.

The edifying benefit of prophecy is in the flow of Chapter 13. Love is expressed by our serving one another through those things that build each other up.

The two words translated *exhortation and comfort*, are quite synonymous. The first of the two, *paraklesis* (παράκλησις) can be rendered, *encouragement, comfort, exhortation, or appeal*. The second term, *paramuthia* (παράμυθία) may be rendered, *comfort or consolation*. So, by using these three terms in this fashion (*edification, encouragement, comfort*), Paul describes prophecy as a rather full-orbed love gift from God.

When Paul states that *the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues*, this is because of the intelligibility of prophecy in the language of the audience. When one prays in a tongue and it is interpreted, then the congregation can say, "Amen." So, it would seem that this would refer to a public prayer in tongues that is a prayer on behalf of the congregation (much as the public prayer offered in a traditional service today), and it then is interpreted so that the

⁵⁷ Fee, *op.cit.* page 653

⁵⁸ Adaptation of Fee, page 655

congregation can affirm what has been spoken in the prayer. The next paragraph expands this thought.

Verses 6-12

But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

Much could be noted here concerning how this paragraph relates to the Corinthians' attitude toward Paul, but this is not the goal of our study. The only thing to note here is Paul's emphasizing the importance of intelligibility in verbal elements of a meeting. We also could involve ourselves in seeking to determine the meaning of *revelation* and how it differs from *prophecy*, but whatever conclusion we reached could only be speculation.

Since Paul continually presents tongues speaking as communication between the believer and God, we must conclude that his comment about coming to them with revelation, prophecy, or teaching in tongues is an hypothetical statement, an argument by analogy. He uses this common debating technique to advance his point concerning intelligibility. To decide otherwise would force us to go against everything else he has said in this section concerning the use of tongues. The point of the paragraph is that unintelligible speech/prayer is of no profit to the Church.

Throughout this section Paul keeps emphasizing the purpose of a gathering of believers. It is to edify one another. This emphasis is presented strongly in Hebrews 10:23-26

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...

The meeting is not convened so that people can exercise their gifts, but rather so that saints can edify one another. Exercise of the gifts is one way that this is done, but it is a means, rather than an end in itself.

Verse 13-19

Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

This paragraph continues the argument of the previous one. Here, Paul becomes more specific concerning corporate worship. Several things catch our attention.

- This is the first time that we are advised of the possibility that one who speaks/prays in a tongue also may interpret – should the Holy Spirit grant that *charismata*. The reason for a tongues speaker to pray for the ability to interpret is so that he can bless his fellow believers in the corporate meeting. Otherwise, he is out of the loop as far as public ministry is concerned.
- The particular faculties that are in operation when one is praying in a tongue or in one's known language are the spirit of the one praying or the mind of the one praying. So, when one is praying in tongues he is praying *with* his human spirit. When one is praying in his known language, he is praying *with* his human mind. This is not the same thing as saying that one is praying *in* the Holy Spirit. The difference between these concepts is seen in the following passages:

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. (I Corinthians 14:14-16.)

Paul speaks here of the human spirit and the human mind (i.e., *my spirit, my mind*). He states that when he prays in a tongue, his human spirit is praying. When he prays in a language that his mind understands, his mind is involved in the prayer. He makes the same statement about singing. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in these verses. The key term is, "with." The next verse [16] speaks of blessing "in spirit." Since the definite article is missing, and this is in the context of the previous two verses, it is obvious that Paul is speaking of a prayer of blessing in tongues.

... "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. (Jude 17 -21)

After reminding the believers that there is a world full of those who are devoid of the Holy Spirit, Jude highlights the blessing of praying *in* the Holy Spirit; he states that this is one of the activities related to our remaining strong and faithful in the faith. This reminder clearly refers to "praying *in* the Holy Spirit." As contrasted with I Corinthians 14:14-16, the human spirit is not referenced by Jude.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18)

Paul states that all prayer and petition (all kinds of prayer) are to be prayed *in* the Spirit. This clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, because of the use of the definite article and the preposition, *in* (consistent with the exhortation of Jude). Thus, we conclude that all prayer at all times is to be prayed *in* the Holy Spirit, whether it is with the human spirit (tongues) or with the human mind (known language). It also is possible to pray in tongues or to pray with the human mind and not be, "*in* the Spirit."

Whether one is praying with his mind or his spirit, all prayer should be in the Holy Spirit. Failure to recognize this has resulted in an inappropriate elevation of tongues. Paul does not present such an hierarchy.

- Paul continues to present tongues as being addressed to God, but in this paragraph he also presents praise, in addition to prayer, as something that can be done in tongues. This is seen in his mention of singing, and blessing. Yet, he restricts his singing in tongues to a private activity, not something to be done in a gathering of the Church – unless interpreted.
- Paul continues to emphasize that uninterpreted tongues, of any type, is inappropriate in a church meeting unless interpreted. What takes place in the gathering of the church should be intelligible.

Verse 20-25

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written,

"By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord.

So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.

Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

This paragraph is one of the most misunderstood sections of Scripture. There seems to be a contradiction between the statement *tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers* and the following warning on the impact on unbelievers who enter a meeting in which uninterpreted tongues are being manifested, *will they not say that you are mad?* How can tongues on one hand be a sign to unbelievers and on the other hand be something that will drive unbelievers away? The question is answered clearly and easily when we take note of the passage that Paul quotes in his argument.

The passage is Isaiah 28:11-12. These verses are in a section of Isaiah in which there are many Messianic promises and glowing words about the future remnant. However, woven among these glorious promises are gloomy scenes of judgment. In Chapter 28:1-13, Yahweh condemns the drunken excesses of the rulers and religious leaders of Judah. They reel and stagger about like men at their wits end. They befoul the tables of Yahweh with their vomit and then wallow in their filth. They make sport of the prophet whom God has sent to rebuke their sin. In the Hebrew their drunken song has an insulting lilt. The Smith-Goodspeed translation tries to convey the mocking of God in the drunkards' insulting song:

*To whom would he impart knowledge,
To whom would he explain the message?
Babes just weaned from milk,
Just drawn from the breasts?
For it is rule by rule, rule by rule,
Line by line, line by line,
A little here and a little there.*

Yahweh had sent them clear, pleading words by the prophet, but they did not listen. Therefore, God declared that he would send different words to them. These would be the words spoken in languages that they did not understand. These tongues would be spoken by the nations that would conquer them. When they heard these tongues, they would know that they were under judgment.

As a part of his argument for the restriction of uninterpreted tongues, Paul employs this judgmental promise to Israel. In essence, he states that the only time that God will send messages in a language that cannot be understood is when He is judging those among whom He sends these tongues. If God Himself sent a flurry of tongues activity into the Corinthians' midst and withheld interpretation, that would be a sign that He considered the Corinthians to be unbelievers. It would be a sign of judgment. To conclude anything other than this is to ignore the message of his quote from Isaiah 28. Intelligible prophecy, on the other hand, is something that God sends to believers (following the figure of Isaiah 28).

Therefore, there is no contradiction between this declaration and Paul's next argument for banning uninterpreted tongues from the meeting, i.e., the impact uninterpreted tongues will have on strangers who might enter their meeting. Those who are uninformed about manifestations of the Holy Spirit, or unbelievers, will be repulsed by uninterpreted tongues – they will say that you

are insane.⁵⁹ In contrast, prophecy understood by the hearers might be a word bringing them under conviction.

Verse 26-33

What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation.

Let all things be done for edification.

If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

What is the outcome then, indicates that Paul is tying up all that has been said thus far. The emphasis of this paragraph are two:

- Everything should be done in a manner that edifies the church
- A God approved meeting will be one that reflects God's orderly character

There is the implication that some may come to the meeting with a song, a prophecy, etc., already received or prepared, planning to present it in the meeting.

Paul does not instruct them to speak in a tongue and then wait to see if someone can interpret, a common practice today. His instruction is that if a known interpreter is not present in the meeting, then tongues speakers/prayers should remain silent.

Neither tongues nor prophecy should dominate the meeting. The usual understanding of Paul's guideline is that only two or three of each should be allowed to speak in a meeting, and they should speak only one at a time. However, some hold that Paul is saying that two or three should speak, then some discernment should be pronounced on what has been spoken thus far, then two or more can speak, etc.

Although Paul used the term, *prophets*, in the expression, *let the prophets speak* (verse 29), he probably wasn't referring to the Ephesian 4:11 category of prophet. He probably was referring

⁵⁹ The term Paul employs in verse 23, *mainomai* (mai>nomai), is a term used to describe the ecstatic state of various pagan oracles when they delivered their sayings, as well as the ecstatic state of worshippers of various pagan gods. That being true, Paul seems to be urging them to avoid behavior that was the same as worshippers of pagan gods. For comment on this term, see H. Preisker, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 1967) Volume IV, page 360

to those members of the church through whom prophecy was manifested in a given meeting. This seems apparent from the fact that throughout this section he continually uses the term, *all*, referring to the entire church.

There should be a careful weighing of what has been said prophetically. Note that this is not required of interpreted tongues, because tongues are used for prayer and not prophetic messages. The verb used here is the same one used in 12:10, *distinguishing of spirits*. There are scant guidelines as to how this to be done. A view that has become quite popular is that prophets are to be the one's doing this discerning. If that is the case, then the term, *prophets* (verse 29), would refer to Ephesians 4:11 prophets, not to the general membership through whom prophecy was manifested in a given meeting. As stated above, such a conclusion is outside of the flow of Paul's earlier statements, which refer to the general congregation and the manifestation of gifts through the general membership.

The phrase, *for you can all prophesy one by one*, in the context of the rest of the chapter and the points made in Chapter 12, could not mean that all will or do prophesy. It refers to Paul's focus on the church as a whole, not just on a group of prophets, and that an orderly conduct of the meeting will allow members to move in the manifestation of the gift, in their proper turn. The sense is that all who have a prophetic word, if they conduct themselves in an orderly fashion, will have opportunity to deliver their word. There is no need for many to be speaking at once.

Three other points stand out in this paragraph:

- Those who receive a manifestation are not possessed by it and unable to restrain themselves, i.e., they are not in an ecstatic state, they have their wits about them.
- Just because a prophecy is received, doesn't mean that it has to be delivered.
- God is a God of order and a meeting of the Church should reflect that order. Corinthian disorder was an aberration, since order characterized the meetings of all other churches.

Verses 34-35

The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

Because of the controversy surrounding these verses, and because we have given them extensive treatment in an earlier conclave paper, we will not comment on these verses here. To do so would draw us away from the focus of the paper. However, these verses cannot mean that women cannot prophesy. Otherwise, Paul's comments on female attire when prophesying would be meaningless (I Corinthians 11:5).

Verses 36-40

Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.

Paul's long response to their letter concerning spiritual things now draws to a close. The basic issue was the Corinthian's view that to be *spiritual* was to speak in tongues. For this reason, they had great zeal for this gift. They insisted that it be practiced in the assembly. Paul informed them that he was a frequent tongues speaker, so he was not opposed to tongues because there were benefits attached to the exercise of this gift. He was opposed to prayer and praise in tongues in a congregational setting, unless it were accompanied by interpretation.

In Chapter 12 he had urged them to realize that being spiritual recognized a great variety of gifts and ministries in the church. In Chapter 14 he pointed out that the purpose of having church gatherings is for the edification of the congregation. Doing this is an expression of love.

In these verses (36-40), he used some very strong language. First, he hit them with a verbal put-down, a bit of sarcasm, *Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?* In other words, "Who are you to tell the rest of us how it should be done? Is Corinth an exception to the rules that govern all of the other churches?"

Then, he declared that the instructions that he gave are not his, but that they are God's command, given through Paul. This is followed by a prophetic sentence of judgment, *But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized* (the thought is very close to his statement in 8:2-3). Paul is not going to try to convince them, or waste time arguing the point. He is going to ignore them. If they don't recognize his commandment as being from God, they will deal with God, not Paul.

The closing exhortation is to conduct an orderly service, and to not forbid spiritual manifestations. These two verses (39-40) hit both the groups that want no spiritual manifestations in their midst and those who want nothing but these manifestations without guidelines.

So, we return to our two unaddressed questions:

1. Is I Corinthians 14 a description of a normal church service in the First Century, or was this just a "Corinthian" service and not the norm for all First Century churches?

This question cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. The only description that we have of such a service is in the Corinthian letter and the Corinthian Church certainly was not a model church.

A very telling item is the fact that the rather complete description of a church service given by Justin Martyr (c140 AD), and passing accounts by the other early Second Century writers, make no mention of such manifestations in their meetings (this is treated more fully in the paper, *The Meeting*, from the 1999 conclave).

Yet, even though there is no record of *charismata* in any other New Testament Church, or in the very earliest of the post-biblical writings (prior to 185 AD), this proves nothing. If the Corinthian Church had been handling things properly, we would not have Paul's extensive discussion of the *charismata* in I Corinthians. Paul clearly stated that all of the

other churches practiced order in their services. With the exception of Justin Martyr's detailed description (which presents itself as a very detailed record of all that went on in a church meeting), it could be argued that the reason there is no mention of *charismata* in the earliest post-biblical writing is because there was no need to bring any correction in this area.

We are led to ask, "Why did the Holy Spirit and the early Church choose to preserve Paul's comments on the *charismata*?" The most obvious answer is because the churches of that age needed and the Church in all ages will need these guidelines.

2. If the manifestations are for every age, should church leaders seek to do what they can to promote the type of meeting described in I Corinthians 14, or are Paul's instructions more in the vein of, "if you do have these things, here is how to manage them in a God-honoring manner"?

Frequently, we hear leaders in Charismatic churches stating something to the effect that we need to, "stir up the gifts." There is no exhortation anywhere in the New Testament to that effect. Timothy was urged to *kindle afresh* (KJV – *stir up*) the gift that was in him (II Timothy 1:6) and to *not neglect* the spiritual gift that was in him (I Timothy 4:14). However, the context of these exhortations makes it clear that Paul is referring to the gifts (and calling) that were given to Timothy for the special ministry to which he had been called, especially that of preaching and teaching. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is closer to the functional gifts referred to in Romans 12, where Paul urges diligence in the fulfilling of these spiritual enablements. This is not the same thing as stirring up the *charismata* in a corporate gathering of the Church.

Two extremes are possible, neither of which fits Paul's guidelines:

- a meeting that is so ordered and controlled that there is no opportunity for the *charismata* to function, should the Holy Spirit desire to manifest Himself. This certainly is far from the picture that Paul paints of a meeting in which the Holy Spirit is present and active.
- a meeting in which there is little of substantive value, but a weekly parade of folks popping up and speaking whatever comes to their mind, and calling it prophecy, or "a word." This cheapens the entire concept of prophecy, etc.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS

Conclusion #1

The Holy Spirit will manifest Himself throughout the Church Age. He may manifest Himself in one way here, and in another manner there, but manifestations always will be present in the Church. When God rings down the curtain on the present age, these things no longer will be taking place, because the need for them will be gone.

Conclusion #2

Individual Christians and the corporate meeting are unlike anything else in the world. The living presence of God dwells within. Prior to His departure, Jesus did not dictate a host of rules and religious ceremonies which His followers had to obey in their own strength and discipline. Instead, He promised an ongoing living relationship, to be experienced through the presence of the Holy Spirit within each believer and manifested through the *charismata* in the corporate meeting. A church meeting is not just a group of people with a common faith and purpose. It is a time in which believers encourage and edify one another, but it is even more than that. A church meeting is a time when Our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, ministers to His people.

Conclusion #3

The Holy Spirit imparts various abilities to various individuals, enabling them to be instruments of edification to the church. These abilities are freely given gifts, which the Holy Spirit dispenses according to reasons within himself. Not everyone will manifest every gift. Some may manifest more than one. We do not have in the Bible a single exhaustive list of the ways in which the Holy Spirit will manifest Himself.

Conclusion #4

It is appropriate for believers to have a passion for blessing the corporate gathering. One way that this is done is through prophecy. Therefore, if the motivation is to be a blessing to the body, a desire for the gift of prophecy is appropriate.

Conclusion #5

Church leaders should not control a service to the point that there is no liberty for the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself through various members of the congregation. A service constructed in a manner that forces everyone to be a spectator is not the New Testament model. This does not mean that the meeting cannot be planned or organized, but flexibility is important.

Elders should realize that they are responsible for overseeing the service, but that the service does not belong to them. It belongs to Our Lord. Statements such as, “Holy Spirit, we invite your presence here,” and “Jesus we invite you to move among us,” imply that the meeting is ours and we are inviting Him to attend. He clearly said that when we meet in His name, He will be in our midst (Matthew 18:20). A better perspective is that this is God’s meeting, and we thank Him for allowing us to come into His presence.

Conclusion #6

Regardless of what the elements of a service might be, all things should be done in an orderly manner. God is a God of order; disorder neither represents Him nor glorifies Him. A meeting that is a disordered cacophony is exactly what Paul proscribes in I Corinthians 14.

Conclusion #7

Prayer in tongues is praying in a legitimate language, spoken somewhere on the globe, either in the past or in the present, or a language spoken by angels. Tongues truly are, “prayer language.”

Conclusion #8

Tongues are given for the purpose of communicating with God. Tongues are not for communicating with the church. One should not pray out loud in tongues in the corporate gathering unless a known interpreter is present. Only one person at a time should pray in tongues and then be interpreted, so that the congregation can “amen” the prayer.

Conclusion #9

Praying *in the Spirit*, and *praying with the spirit* do not mean the same thing. Praying in the Spirit means praying at the impulse and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Praying with the spirit is praying in tongues. All prayer at all times is to be prayed *in* the Holy Spirit, whether it is with the human spirit (tongues) or with the human mind (known language).

Conclusion #10

Tongues, and perhaps all *charismata*, may function apart from the Holy Spirit. This is seen from the following:

- *Charismata* should be ministered in a manner that edifies the body, as an expression of love.
- Paul’s corrective statements make it obvious that some of the Corinthians were seeking to elevate themselves through the public display of tongues, which was neither edifying to the body, nor an expression of love
- The Holy Spirit would not motivate anyone to exercise a *charismata* in order to build someone’s fleshly pride or to display an attitude of competition.
- The one exception would be in a case of judgment on the church. If the Holy Spirit motivated a plethora of tongues speakers to display uninterpreted tongues in the corporate meeting, this would be a sign of judgment on the church.
- Since God was not pronouncing judgment on the Corinthian Church, and the Holy Spirit was not motivating those who were displaying the gift of tongues in a divisive manner, then those who were speaking/praying in uninterpreted tongues were functioning apart from the Holy Spirit.

A Word of Advice

Elders should teach on this topic so that the people will be informed, including God’s guidelines and restrictions as presented in I Corinthians 14. In small group meetings, church members should grow and mature in their expressions of the Holy Spirit. They thus can learn the difference between a manifestation of the Holy Spirit that is growing within them on one hand, and when it is something of their own soul, on the other. By being taught and growing in the exercise of their gifts, members can be a blessing in larger gatherings.