

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: DEFINITIONS AND KINDS

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Noncessationism has spread rapidly in recent years, being represented in three groups: Classic Pentecostalism, the Charismatic Movement, and ThirdWave Theology. Cessationism joins the three groups in representing the fourth position on spiritual gifts. An examination of several Greek words is helpful in arriving at a definition of spiritual gifts: charisma, pneumatikos, doma, dōrea, merismos, diaireseis, diakoniai, and energēmata. Two positions on spiritual gifts exist today, one holding that all gifts are for today and the other holding that some gifts were temporary and some permanent. The latter position sees apostleship, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, faith, miracles, healing, tongues, and interpretation of tongues among the temporary gifts. Apostleship was a foundational gift for the NT church. Along with the temporary gifts, the latter position sees a number of permanent gifts: evangelism, pastors and teachers, and those with gifts of assistance, administration, exhortation, giving, and showing mercy. The primary goal of all the gifts is building up the body of Christ.

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The subject of spiritual gifts has aroused unprecedented interest in every religious circle. With almost universal appeal, the tide of charismatic theology has cut across all theological barriers and religious institutions.¹ Synan concluded that in 1995 the aggregate number of Pentecostals/Charismatics in the world numbered 463,000,000, second only to the Roman Catholic Church.² Such interest has resulted in the publication of an entire body of literature, both inside and outside the

¹Harvey Cox of Harvard University notes, "Pentecostalism is the fastest growing and most vital Christian movement on the globe today" (back dust jacket of Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism, Origins and Developments Worldwide* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997]).

²Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) ix-x.

Pentecostal tradition.³ Discerning Christians who embrace the biblical teaching of cessationism, must take this matter seriously, since almost every branch of evangelical Christianity has embraced some form of charismatic theology.

When John MacArthur published his book *Charismatic Chaos*⁴ in 1992, Robert W. Patterson offered a review featuring a contorted picture of MacArthur, holding a shield, and describing him as the last holdout and single defender of the dying cessationist view.⁵ The pursuit of charismatic theology today has all but drowned out clear biblical exposition on this vital issue. Robert Lightner pointed out that the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit suffers today from three extremes: abuse, neglect, and distortion.⁶ One has only to survey the claims that originate from within evangelicalism and Pentecostalism to see that this is so. In the early 1970s, as the Charismatic Movement was taking hold, it was confidently asserted that Jesus Christ “is using the outpouring of the Spirit to unite the Body for his return.”⁷ As the movement developed into the “new” Charismatics, it has increasingly understood itself as “restorationism,” or “Latter Rain restoration,” believing that “history is moving toward a spiritual climax where God’s power will be poured out on the church as never before.” These “restorationists believe that this new move could be the Lord’s final move; the Lord will empower the church to make the world Christian before Jesus returns.”⁸ Issues such as sound biblical hermeneutics, personal salvation, and doctrinal purity have frequently suffered neglect in this quest for the alleged “work of the Spirit.”

At the outset, the church was flooded with “little books” and short chapters on spiritual gifts. The vast majority of the titles engage in *experience-motivated* thinking without a biblical basis. Noted Pentecostal scholar, Gordon Fee, rightly observed “that in general, Pentecostals’ experience has preceded their hermeneutics. In a sense, the Pentecostal tends to exegete his experience.”⁹ In more recent years, some scholarly literature has appeared, seeking a hermeneutical and theological underpinning for charismatic theology. However, those efforts seem only to add

³See Watson E. Mills, *Charismatic Religion in Modern Research: A Bibliography* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1985); Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* 401-79.

⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

⁵Robert W. Patterson, “MacArthur’s Crusade,” *Christianity Today* 36 (1992):70.

⁶Robert P. Lightner, *Speaking in Tongues and Divine Healing* (Des Plains, Ill.: Regular Baptist , 1965) 7.

⁷Peter E. Gilquist, *Let’s Quit Fighting about the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 18.

⁸Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) xii-xiii.

⁹Gordon D. Fee, “Hermeneutics and Historical Precedent—A Major Problem in Pentecostal Hermeneutics” in *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 122.

sophistication to their experience-motivated theology.¹⁰ As Robert Thomas has well noted, discussions of 1 Corinthians 12–14 are numerous, “but detailed studies endeavoring to present a cohesive analysis of the entire passage have not been so frequent.”¹¹ The need a clear biblical study of cessationism, based on sound exegesis, is evident.

Four Groups Addressing Spiritual Gifts Today

Today’s discussions and positions on spiritual gifts fall into one of four general positions. A brief survey of positions underlines the breadth of thought and conviction about the gifts and the need for biblical clarity.

- **Classic Pentecostalism** – The historic beginning of the modern tongues movement is traced to Bethel Bible School of Topeka, Kansas, founded in 1900 by Charles Parham (1873-1929). Parham encouraged his students to examine the apostolic age for a witness of the baptism of the Holy Spirit available today as an event subsequent to salvation. One of his students, Miss Agnes Ozman, requested that hands be laid on her to receive the Holy Spirit, and according to Parham, she responded by speaking only in the Chinese language, unable to speak her native English for the next three days. Parham considered this the restoration of the Pentecostal power of the Book of Acts.¹² Nichol points out that the significance of the Topeka event was that “for the first time the concept of being baptized (or filled) with the Holy Spirit was linked to an outward sign—speaking in tongues.”¹³ Parham began an evangelistic effort in various cities which he identified as “Pentecostal” or the “Full Gospel,” reaching as high as 25,000 Pentecostal converts in Texas alone by 1905.¹⁴ William Seymour (1870-1922) came in contact with Parham’s preaching in Houston and then was called to Los Angeles, where he led the renowned Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909). Based at the Azusa Street Mission (312 Azusa Street), Seymour spoke in tongues for the first time on April 9, 1906. Seymour’s activities associated with the Azusa Street Revival launched American Pentecostalism, and Azusa Street became a “veritable Pentecostal Mecca to which pilgrims from all over the world came and from which the news of supernatural signs and wonders was broad-

¹⁰Note the development of hermeneutics in Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* 307-25 and Fee, “Precedent” 119-32.

¹¹Robert L Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999) 7.

¹²John Thomas Nichol, *Pentecostalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 28.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 31.

cast.”¹⁵ Representatives of this position include The Assemblies of God, The Church of God in Christ, and Aimee Semple McPherson's (1890-1944) International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.¹⁶

- **The Charismatic Movement** – or *Neo-Pentecostalism*, began in the mid-1950s largely through the efforts of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International of Los Angeles, and the efforts of Assemblies of God minister David J. du Plessis (1905-1987),¹⁷ who promoted the Pentecostal experience to the non-Pentecostal denominations. On August 3, 1960, Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett (1917-) of St Marks Church in Van Nuys, California, announced in his pulpit that he had been baptized of the Holy Spirit and then went on to speak in tongues. Bennett came under immediate criticism and resigned after the third of three services the same day. The matter, however, was so widely publicized that this event is often viewed as the founding the Charismatic Movement, as it spread to every major denomination and cut across all theological boundaries.¹⁸ Dunn observed that this new Pentecostalism “has now become a movement of world-wide importance, reckoned as a third force in Christendom (alongside Catholicism and Protestantism) by not a few leading churchmen.”¹⁹ In the movement, there was less concern for the nature of the new birth and great stress was placed on Spirit baptism and tongues.²⁰ In the quest for expanded research and doctrinal respectability, the Society for Pentecostal Studies was formed in 1970. Important aspects include, Trinity Broadcasting Network, begun by Paul Crouch in 1973, The International Catholic Charismatic Conference in Rome, 1975, and the rise after 1980 of prominent televangelists, including Oral Roberts and son Richard, Kenneth Hagin, Pat Robertson, Rex Humbard, Jimmy Swaggart, Kenneth Copeland, Jim Bakker, and Benny Hinn

¹⁵Ibid., 34.

¹⁶See Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson, Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). Also note H. V. Synan, “Classic Pentecostalism,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, revised and expanded ed., edited by Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 553-55; W. J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972) 21-62.

¹⁷Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics II* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983) 59-60.

¹⁸Ibid., 59-67.

¹⁹James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM, 1970) 2.

²⁰See Dennis Bennett, *Nine O'Clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1970); also idem, *How to Pray for the Release of the Holy Spirit*. (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1971), and Dennis and Rita Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and You* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1971) 36-98.

(Miracle Crusades).²¹

- **Third Wave Theology** -- This is also known as the “Signs and Wonders” or the “Third Wave” Movement, the first wave being Pentecostalism and the second the Charismatic Renewal. This group consists of largely mainline evangelicals who did not want to be identified with the first two groups and yet believed in miraculous gifts, tongues, and healings for today. They teach that the new birth and Spirit baptism occur at the same time and give great place to the miraculous gifts, viewing them as the long-buried truth that has once again come to light, generating widespread excitement.²² The movement was started by C. Peter Wagner of the Fuller Theological Seminary missions department.²³ Also part of the Third Wave are John Wimber²⁴ of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, California and founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches, and former Dallas Seminary professor, Jack Deere.²⁵ Leaders of the movement are concerned with healing and the Christian response to demonic activity. A subset of this group is the “open but cautious” position—an expression coined by Wayne Grudem,²⁶—of noted evangelical teachers, including Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Robert Saucy, John Piper,²⁷ and Wayne Grudem himself, along with Chuck Smith and his Calvary Chapel movement. Charismatics are often openly critical of “third wavers.”²⁸

“For the past 20 years the above three groups have engaged in *charismatic*

²¹For details, see Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit, 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901-2001* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001) 428-52.

²²Ray Stedman, in Foreword to *You and Your Spiritual Gifts* by Kenneth O. Gangel (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 5.

²³Cf. Edward F. Murphy, *Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission* (South Pasadena, Calif.: Mandate, 1975). See also C. Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Vine, 1988).

²⁴John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986).

²⁵Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). See the review of this book by Richard L. Mayhue, “Who Surprised Whom? The Holy Spirit or Jack Deere,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 5 (1994):123-40.

²⁶Wayne Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 13, 97-148. See also, idem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament Today* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988), and idem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Landham, Md.: University Press of America, 1982).

²⁷See D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984); Robert L. Saucy, “An Open But Cautious View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts* 95-148; and John A. Piper, “Signs and Wonders: Then and Now,” *Desiring God Ministries*, 1991, http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/spiritual_gifts/signs_wonders.html (31 Oct. 2003).

²⁸Note the tone of Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism* 228-45.

ecumenism, which is steadily eroding any claim the Charismatic Movement ever had to biblical orthodoxy, ”²⁹ leaving it with a legacy of chaos and doctrinal confusion.³⁰

- **Cessationism** – This is the view that the miraculous gifts ceased with, or very soon after, the ministry of the apostles to whom—and to whom only—they were given. It understands that the miraculous and non-miraculous gifts appear in the same lists in Scripture because they all came from the same source—God’s grace and the Spirit’s power—yet it recognizes that different gifts are given by God for different purposes. The view rests on a careful, non-speculative exegetical study of the Scriptures. It minimizes the element of human experience by not allowing experience to influence decisions of biblical interpretation. It is the historic position of the Calvinist Reformation,³¹ Jonathan Edwards,³² and numerous Puritans.³³ In more recent times, Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921) most ably argued this view in a series of lectures given at Columbia Theological Seminary that were published in 1918 as *Counterfeit Miracles*.³⁴ Gaffin,³⁵ Thomas,³⁶

²⁹John MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* 294.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 295.

³¹Leonard Sweetman, Jr., “The Gifts of the Spirit: A Study of Calvin’s Comments on I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11,” in *Exploring the Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. David E. Holwerda (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976) 273-303. Note also the conclusions of Paul Elbert, “Calvin and the Spiritual Gifts,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22(1979):249.

³²John D. Hannah, “Jonathan Edwards, The Toronto Blessing, and the Spiritual Gifts,” *Trinity Journal* NS 17 (1996):167-89.

³³Walter J. Chantry, *Signs of the Apostles* (London: Banner of Truth, 1973) 95-101; Dean R. Smith, “The Scottish Presbyterians and Covenanters: A Continuationist Experience in a Cessationist Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 63 (2001):39-63.

³⁴Benjamin B. Warfield, *Miracles: Yesterday and Today, True or False* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954). Many attempts have been offered to refute Warfield’s position, most attacking his position as if he were clinging to personal opinion and arbitrary commitments rather than the dictates of the biblical data. See Melvin E. Dieter, “On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic of Benjamin B. Warfield,” *Pneuma* 12 (1990):14-31; J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology, Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996) 1:164-67.

³⁵Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “A Cessationist View,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts For Today*, ed. Wayne A. Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 23-64. Also *idem*, *Perspectives on Pentecost*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

³⁶Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*.

Hoekema,³⁷ Gromacki,³⁸ and Masters and Whitcomb³⁹ effectively argue this view as well.

Needless to say, opinion on the spiritual gifts—very little of which is based on sound biblical exegesis—varies widely. Positions are frequently motivated by *experience or emotion*, and fueled by *logic-jumps*. Scholarship often assumes its outcome by adopting hermeneutical principles consistent with a preconceived bias. Serious study of the Scriptures is necessary if one is to say only what the Scriptures say about spiritual gifts. A person needs to understand correct biblical distinctions such as the nature and purpose of the gifts, and to follow biblical emphases such as identifying one's area of *giftedness* (rather than *discovering his gift*), *seeking greater gifts* that *edify* the body, and placing Christian character before spiritual gifts. This introductory article seeks to address the biblical teaching on two important issues: the definition of a spiritual gift in Scripture and the nature of the spiritual gifts, both miraculous and nonmiraculous.

The Definition of a Spiritual Gift

The most important issue in understanding spiritual gifts is their biblical definition. An examination of the literature on gifts makes it quite apparent that false assumptions inevitably lead to unwarranted conclusions. Several areas are vital in arriving at the definition.

Significant Greek Words

The NT uses many Greek words to speak of “gifts.” It is necessary to discuss the meaning and use of these words as they relate to the subject at hand. It seems best to understand the different words as stressing various aspects of gifts.

The Use of *χάρισμα* (*charisma*, “gift”)

The terms most often associated with spiritual gifts today is *charisma* or *charismatic*. The common meaning given this word in English translation is important. “Since the days of Tertullian, western theological language has used *charisma* and its vernacular derivatives in a sense that the Biblical and early post-

³⁷Anthony A. Hoekema, *What About Tongue-Speaking* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

³⁸Robert Glenn Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967).

³⁹Peter Masters and John C. Whitcomb, Jr. *The Charismatic Phenomenon* (London: Wakeman Trust, 1988).

Biblical usage . . . does not support. That is, . . . as the generic term for the extraordinary and at times miraculous.”⁴⁰ The idea of the miraculous is also inherent in the modern day title *Charismatic Movement*. It is significant, however, that the Greek word transliterated here does not have this meaning.

Charisma comes from the verb *χαρίζομαι* (*charizomai*, “I show favor”), which is derived from the noun *χάρις* (*charis*, “grace”). This common word is often found in the Septuagint and elsewhere in the sense of “favor” or “beauty.” In the NT it is used in the subjective sense of “favor toward men” and in the objective sense as the result of a gracious action, best understood as “grace.”⁴¹ The verb *charizomai* means simply “to say or do something agreeable” and, more specifically in the NT, “to give graciously or cheerfully.”⁴² “Χαρίζομαι, therefore, means ‘to give,’ with special reference to the grace, favor and kindness which inspire and accompany the gift.”⁴³ *Charisma*, having the *-ma* ending, looks to the result of the action.⁴⁴ *Charisma* is the result of the action of *charizomai*—a gift freely and graciously given or a “gift of grace.”

In the NT *charisma* is used exclusively by Paul except for Peter’s reference to gifts in 1 Pet 4:10. As used in Rom 5:15, 16 and 6:23, it is translated “gift,” referring to the gift of eternal life. *Charisma* also occurs in 1 Cor 7:7, referring to the state of celibacy as a special grace from God. All other uses clearly refer to grace-gifts in a more technical sense. Those include 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6, Rom 12:6 ff., and those occurrences in 1 Cor 12:4. Though it is not certain that Paul was the first to give the term this meaning,⁴⁵ it is from Paul that *charisma* first takes on the sense of God’s gifts of grace in Scripture. Post-biblical usage of the word in the Apostolic Fathers reflects similar understanding.⁴⁶

To summarize, the word *charisma* means a free and undeserved gift, an

⁴⁰Arthur C. Piepkorn, “Charisma in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers,” *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 42 (1971):370.

⁴¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000) 1078-81.

⁴²Cf. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940) 1978.

⁴³David L. Baker, “The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12–14,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 46/4 (October-December 1974):225.

⁴⁴F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961) 59.

⁴⁵P.W. Schmiedel, “Spiritual Gifts,” *Encyclopedia Biblica*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1899) 4:4756.

⁴⁶See the development of Piepkorn, “Charisma” 373-74.

unmerited gift from God's grace. It has been called a "particular actualization of this grace of God"⁴⁷ and thus can be referred to any grace or endowment from God. To insist that the word implies miraculous grace-gifts is unwarranted. In the words of one able scholar, "It includes all spiritual graces and endowments."⁴⁸

The Use of πνευματικός (*pneumatikos*, "spiritual")

The term occurs often in the NT and almost always refers to the divine πνεῦμα (*pneuma*, "Spirit"), "caused by or filled with the Spirit, pertaining or corresponding to the Spirit." It could best be translated "spiritual."⁴⁹

Important to this discussion is Paul's use of *pneumatikos* in Romans 1:11 where it is linked with *charisma*. Also significant are the occurrences in 1 Cor 12:1 and 14:1. In these last two instances the genitive plural *pneumatikōn*, may be either masculine or neuter. In arguing for the masculine (spiritual persons), Bruce sees these as persons endowed with spiritual gifts, as those in 2:15 and 3:1.⁵⁰ Parry suggests that the Corinthians were using this word to mean the gift of tongues in particular and that Paul used it to speak of spiritual things in general in 12:1 and 14:1.⁵¹ This understanding avoids a host of proposed explanations and additions.⁵² Thus Paul has in mind spiritual gifts; which would include the men who exercised the gifts. The term is a parallel to *charisma*, yet it contributes to the description of a gift.

Scripture always emphasized the contrast between the spiritual (*pneumatikos*) and the natural.⁵³ This is evident in the contrast of the spiritual man and the natural man (1 Cor 2:14-15), the spiritual body with the natural body (1 Cor 15:46), and spiritual food and drink with that which is ordinary (1 Cor 10:3). Gifts are said

⁴⁷A. M. Hunter, *Probing the New Testament* (Richmond: Knox, 1971) 89.

⁴⁸J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London: Macmillan, 1904) 148. Contrary to this note, the definition of Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 667.

⁴⁹BDAG, 837, note Eph 6:12 as the only exception. Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aids for Students of the NT Greek* (Princeton, N.J.: Theological Book Agency, 1972) 43, notes the suffix -ικός expresses the idea of belonging to, pertaining to, with the characteristics of, in this case, πνεῦμα.

⁵⁰F. F. Bruce, *First and Second Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971) 116-17.

⁵¹John Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: University Press, 1926) 174.

⁵²Such as that of Earle E. Ellis, "Christ and Spirit in 1 Corinthians," in *Christ and Spirit in the NT*, eds. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smally (Cambridge: University Press, 1973) 269ff.

⁵³Edward Schweizer, "πνεῦμα, πνευματικός," *TDNT*, vol. 4, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 436-37.

to be spiritual or divine abilities. Many writers have concluded, that this means “that the whole idea of spiritual gifts necessitates a supernatural work of God quite distinct from the natural powers of man, or even from any spiritual qualities which are universal among the saved.”⁵⁴ In doing so, the term *supernatural* is used to designate the miraculous in contrast to normal divine activity in which God makes use of natural means. Such a connotation differs from referring the term to the realm of the spiritual or divine that goes beyond the realm of sense experience and human reason.⁵⁵ Though no one would deny that gifts are supernatural in that they are received from God, to insist that because gifts are termed *pneumatikos*, they are inherently supernatural, meaning miraculous is reading too much into the word. The meaning of τῶν πνευματικῶν (*tōn pneumatikōn*) is simply “that which pertains to the Spirit,” indicating the source or realm of these gifts.⁵⁶ This does not imply that the gift must be supernatural, non-miraculous, or miraculous. It only denotes the source and the realm.

The Use of δόμα (*dōma*, “gift”)

Dōma comes from δίδωμι (*didōmi*, “I give”) and simply means “gift.” The -μα suffix, with its stress on result,⁵⁷ leads Vine to observe that *dōma* lends greater stress to the concrete character of the gift than to its beneficent nature (Matt 7:11, Phil 4:17).⁵⁸

It is important to note this descriptive emphasis with *dōma* in several passages. In Luke 11:13, earthly δόματα (*dōmata*, “gifts”) are contrasted with the gift of the Father, namely πνεῦμα ἅγιον (*pneuma hagion*, “the Holy Spirit”). Several other passages in John mention this gift of the Spirit as well. John 7:39 speaks of *tou pneumatos*, “whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Spirit is mentioned in John 14:26, 15:26-27, and 16:7-13.

Luke uses the same expression, *pneuma hagion*, in his description of the

⁵⁴John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1958) 164. So also Howard M. Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken As Ye Suppose* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1968) 122-28, 227-33, translates πνευματικός as “supernatural” in every NT occurrence. This is not convincing as he confuses the issue by lowering the meaning to “spiritual” in most contexts. On few occasions πνευματικός does mean “supernatural” in contrast to “spiritual” (1 Cor 15:44a), but Scripture does not indicate that this is inherent as Ervin would insist (233).

⁵⁵Note J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962) 1:24.

⁵⁶Readily admitted by Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* 164.

⁵⁷Blass and Debrunner, *Greek Grammar* 59.

⁵⁸W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of NT Words*, 4 vols. in one (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1952) 2:147.

gift given at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:5, 2:4, 2:33, 2:38) in fulfillment of Luke 24:49 (cf. Acts 1:8). It seems probable that the *doma* mentioned by Jesus in Luke 11:13 refers at least to the activity of Acts 2 where the giving of the coming of *pneuma hagion* results in divine manifestations and the giving of gifts. It is the first gift of the Spirit that makes possible the giving of other gifts. It should be observed that the gift of the Spirit is connected with the gift giving activity of Christ to the church.

The Use of δωρέα (*dōrea*, “gift”)

The word *dōrea* is derived from *didōmi*, as is *doma* above. Its use seems to be a more legal term than δῶρον (*dōron*, “gift”) and denotes formal endowment, while the latter is used of men’s gifts to one another.⁵⁹ A careful study of *dōrea* in the NT reveals two important matters. First, *dōrea* in Acts and the epistles is used chiefly of gifts given by God to authenticate the apostles and their witness.⁶⁰ The idea of legal endowment is clearly seen. Secondly, the use of *dōrea* to denote a “free gift” of God is seen in its association with *charis* (“grace”) in such passages as Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17, and 2 Cor 9:15. These verses use *dōrea* as the “free gift” of God coming from His grace.⁶¹ Owen terms this giving as “a participation of a gracious favor with respect to an especial end.”⁶² (See Eph 3:8; also Rom 15:10, 15; Gal. 2:9; especially Rom 12:6). Thus *dōrea* adds the aspect of formal endowment and gracious giving to the spiritual gifts.

The Use of μερισμός (*merismos*, “division, distribution”)

This word is seldom found in the NT and takes its derivation from μερίζω (*merizō*, “I divide”). It can mean “division” or “distribution.”⁶³ In Heb 2:4 *merismos* is used to speak of the distributions of *pneumatōs hagiou*. This passage makes clear that God used distributions of the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit to authenticate His message to men in Apostolic times.

⁵⁹Fredrich Buchsel, “δίδωμι, κ.τ.λ.,” *Theological Dictionary of the NT*, vol. 2, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 166-67.

⁶⁰Ardel B. Caneday, “A Study of New Testament Gifts, Their Nature and Continuance,” (unpublished seminar paper, Winona Lake, Ind.: Grace Theological Seminary, 1975) 10-11. Note Acts 2:38; 8:12-20; 10:45; Eph. 3:7; Heb. 6:4.

⁶¹Other passages include Eph 3:7, 4:7 and Heb 6:4. It should also be observed that the accusative δωρέαν is used as an adverb with the meaning of “gratis” or “undeserved,” BDAG 266. See also R. Martin Pope, “Gifts,” *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, ed. James Hastings, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915) 1:449.

⁶²John Owen, “Discourse of Spiritual Gifts,” in vol. 4 of *Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1965) 487.

⁶³BDAG, 633.

Summary

From this survey of significant Greek words, various aspects of spiritual gifts are evident. *Charisma* means a free and undeserved gift, an unmerited grace-gift from God's grace. From *pneumatikos* one sees that the realm and source of the gifts is the Spirit. *Doma* stresses concrete character and *dōrea* stresses gracious giving while adding the aspect of formal endowment. The word *merismos* denotes the aspect of distribution of the Spirit. One should include the significance of all these words in coming to a definition of a gift, because a gift possesses all these aspects.

Threefold Diversity

First Cor 12:4-6 speaks of the διαίρεσεις (*diareseis*, “distributions, differences”) of gifts, ministries, and activities or effects, and provides important characteristics of spiritual gifts.

Distributions

In his description in vv. 4-6, Paul uses the word *diareseis*, which occurs nowhere else in the NT. *Diareseis* can mean either “distributions” (apportionings) or “differences” (distinctions). The context supports both “distribution” (see v. 11, and also *merismos* in Heb. 2:4) and “distinction” (note the antithesis between *diareseis* and τὸ αὐτό [*to auto*, “the same”] or ὁ αὐτός [*ho autos*, “the same”]). The question that arises is whether Paul has in mind distributions of gifts among individuals or distinctions in the kinds of gifts. Edwards suggests both meanings are likely and concludes, “It signifies ‘a distribution of gifts involving diversity of gifts.’”⁶⁴

Designations

The three terms used here are considering the same gifts from three points of view. They are seen as “proceeding from the Spirit, as advancing the cause of Christ, and as giving effect to the will of God.”⁶⁵ Three designations then develop what is involved in *pneumatikos*. *Charismata* are specific capacities or abilities granted to believers, διακονίαι (*diakonai*, “ministries”) are spheres in which the gifts are exercised (places and times in the church when gifts become visible in actual use and practice), and ἐνεργήματα (*energēmata*, “effects”) are happenings

⁶⁴T. C. Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897) 310.

⁶⁵Ernest F. Scott, *The Spirit in the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923) 113. See also Robert Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody, 1972) 133.

or effects that occur when gifts are employed.⁶⁶

As to the nature of these three designations, *charismata* was seen earlier to mean a grace-gift from the Lord. *Diakoniai* is best rendered, “the activities of service” or “ministries,” and does not imply a technical sense of “office.” Beyer notes that “a decisive point for understanding the concept is that early Christianity learned to regard and describe as *diakonia* all significant activity for the edification of the community (Eph 4:11 ff.), a distinction being made according to the mode of operation.”⁶⁷ The third term, *energēmata*, relates to the verbs ἐνεργέω (*energēō*) in vv. 6 and 11 and to *energeia* in verse 10. The basic meaning of the verb is to be “active” or “energetic.” *Energēmata* are thus “activities,” “workings,” “effects,” or “energizings.” In this passage and almost exclusively in the NT, it is used of divine work.⁶⁸ As Morris terms it, this is “God’s power in action.”⁶⁹ Similar activity may be seen in Gal 2:8, 3:15, Eph 3:7, and Col 1:29. God is the one who energizes all things (1 Cor 12:7, see also the energizings or effects of the Spirit in 12:10, 11). It is also significant that prophecy and knowledge are said to “de-energize” (καταργέω, *katargeō*, 1 Cor 13:8), the direct opposite of earlier energizing. Thus, such “activity” or “energy” is an important aspect of spiritual gifts.

The three words describe spiritual gifts from different points of view. The analogy of the Godhead in this context shows that the three terms go together to make up a whole, as is also the case with the Trinity. A spiritual gift includes a grace-gift, a ministry, and effects. Sometimes the names given to the biblically mentioned gifts view only one of these aspects, and imply the other two aspects. In 1 Cor 12:8-10, 1 Pet 4:10, and Rom 12:6-8, effects or activities are in view. In 1 Cor 12:28-30 and Eph 4:11 ministries are in view.

Further Considerations

Several important biblical considerations should be noted that cannot be fully developed in this article. Each adds to a proper definition of a spiritual gift.

Parallels Outside the Church Age

It is important to note the close parallels between the Spirit’s work through spiritual gifts in the church and His enabling or empowering ministry in the OT, the Gospels, and the end times. Among the various ministries of the Spirit in the OT are His enabling and empowering of individuals for service. Some have sought to

⁶⁶Richard C. Oudersluys, “The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts,” *The Reformer Review* 18 (1975):12ff.

⁶⁷Hermann W. Beyer, “διακονέω, κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT* 2:87.

⁶⁸Georg Bertram, “ἐργον, κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT* 2:652-53.

⁶⁹Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1958) 169.

correlate such incidents directly with NT *charisma*.⁷⁰ Others note the common activity of God, through the Holy Spirit's enabling, equipping and often authenticating men for service, yet they see slight differences. Oehler writes,

In the Old Testament, the Spirit's work in the divine Kingdom is rather that of *endowing the organs of the theocracy with the gifts required for their calling*, and those gifts of office in the Old Testament are similar to the gifts of grace in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians XII ff.⁷¹

Hill also notes a close correlation when he writes concerning Paul's conception of special gifts (e.g., prophecy, knowledge). He states that there is essential "harmony with OT and Jewish ideas of Charismatic endowment from God."⁷²

In a helpful survey of Holy Spirit empowering in the OT, Leon Wood notes four classes. The Spirit came upon *judges* (e.g., Gideon, Judg 6:34); *craftsmen* (e.g., Bezaleel, Exod 31:3, 35:31); *prophets* (temporary, e.g., Zechariah of the reign of Joash, 2 Chr 24:20; continuously, e.g., Elijah, 2 Kgs 2:9, 15, 16, and Micah, Mic 3:8); and *civil administrators* (e.g., Moses, in Num 11:17, and Joshua, Num 27:18).⁷³ With respect to the above, Wood writes, "All four classifications of people . . . were thus equipped to do their work in the best proper manner."⁷⁴ Thus it is clear that the Spirit empowered the individual with the ability to accomplish the given task.

Parallels to the Spirit's gift-giving activity are also found in the Gospels. These accounts reveal the Holy Spirit as empowering and enabling men for service. Christ Himself is said to cast out demons by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28). Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies in Luke 1:67ff. The Spirit gives direct revelation to Simeon in Luke 2:26. It is also the power of the Spirit that is manifested in Luke 9:1 as it came from Christ. Again in these passages, the Spirit gives empowerment or enablement to individuals before the church age. The theme is also strongly seen in Christ's parables of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the pounds (Luke 19:11-27).⁷⁵ Admittedly, the parables communicated truth concerning

⁷⁰Alfred Wikengauser, *Pauline Mysticism* (New York: Herder and Herder, n.d.) 78-79. Also, this seems to be the view of Wick Broomall, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963) 114.

⁷¹Gustav Friedrich Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament*, rev. George E. Day (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884) 141.

⁷²David Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meaning* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967) 208.

⁷³Leon Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 41-52. See also Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968) 138-45, esp 138.

⁷⁴Wood, *Holy Spirit* 63.

⁷⁵That these are not the same parable is forcefully argued by Henry Alford, *New Testament for English Readers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1868) 1:415.

the kingdom,⁷⁶ yet their timeless truths speak precisely about the gifts men receive from above.

Strong examples of divine empowerment and enablement will also exist in the end times. During the tribulation period the two witnesses will prophesy (Rev 11:3). They will engage in the very same activity that took place in the first century. A careful study of Revelation and other prophetic portions reveals other miraculous activity given by the Spirit. As with similar activity in OT times, these are very close to the idea of spiritual gifts in NT epistles and Acts. Conclusions about spiritual gifts should recognize the Spirit's similar activity in other ages.

Parallels with Human Natural Abilities

Many insist that the gifts are distinct from natural abilities. McRae states, "[T]alents may and ought to be dedicated to the Lord to be used for His glory and in His service, but they must always be considered consecrated talents, not spiritual gifts."⁷⁷ In an accompanying chart McRae notes that spiritual gifts are different from natural talents in that they are independent of hereditary considerations, are probably possessed from conversion, and are given for the purpose of benefiting mankind on the spiritual rather than the natural level.⁷⁸

Other writers seek to contrast the general ability of teaching, which most all are said to possess, with the spiritual gift of teaching.⁷⁹ Some will even call *all* gifts miraculous.⁸⁰ A typical emphasis is that the Spirit often sovereignly picks out the most unlikely child of God and gives him a gift so that he is lifted above all the natural ability he ever had.⁸¹ This position basically understands spiritual gifts as special abilities that are in addition to and beyond natural abilities.

The above description and distinction between natural abilities and spiritual gifts fits well in the context of the miraculous empowering gifts such as those in 1 Cor 12:8-10. Difficulties come, however, when the above criteria is applied to non-miraculous enabling gifts such as "helps" or "administrations" (1 Cor 12:28). It appears that a "theology" of the gifts has been developed from an inspection of the

⁷⁶Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1968) 340, 355.

⁷⁷William J. McRae, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 20-21.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁹John F. Walvoord, "Contemporary Issues in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit; Part IV: Spiritual Gifts Today," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (1973):316. Note also Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* 167, when he states that "spiritual gifts must not be regarded, then, as an enlargement of natural powers."

⁸⁰Edward F. Murphy, *Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission* (South Pasadena, Calif.: Mandate, 1975) 106. John Rea, *The Layman's Commentary on the Holy Spirit* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1974) 132-35. Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken* 123.

⁸¹J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Divine Comforter* (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1963) 170.

miraculous gifts and made to apply to all the gifts. As noted in earlier discussion on *pneumatikos*, the term simply relegates gifts to what “pertains to the spiritual”—context must determine whether a gift is “supernatural” or “extraordinary.”

The important aspect of Paul’s argument, often overlooked, is the connection between the miraculous (the extraordinary) and the non-miraculous gifts. The point in 1 Cor 12:4-11 and in the illustration of the body (vv. 12-30) is that the gifts have a common source. There are various distributions and effects, but one God works in all (v. 6). *Charismata* and *pneumatikos* unite the giving activity, source, and realm of spiritual gifts, but they do not give them a common level of empowerment or purpose. Non-miraculous gifts are not defined by the character of miraculous gifts, so non-miraculous gifts are not separate from dedicated talents.

Schewizer offers a more convincing explanation:

[To Paul] . . . the manifestations of the Spirit do not have to be extraordinary. Thus, in distinction from the Corinthians, he reckons among such manifestations ἀντιλήψεις [“helps”] and κυβερνήσεις [“administrations”], or διακονίαι [“services”] and ἐλεεῖν [“acts of mercy”], μεταδίδοναι [“contributions”] and προΐστασθαι [“championing”], R. 12:7f. An even more vital point is that Paul obviously plays down speaking with tongues, which was for the Corinthians the most striking and hence the most important of the gifts of the Spirit. This shows that the criterion of the extraordinary was fundamentally irrelevant. . . . The criterion by which the worth or worthlessness of the gifts of the Spirit is to be measured is confession of the κύριος Ἰησοῦς [“Lord Jesus”], and therewith the οἰκοδομή [“edification”], the συμφέρον [“profit”] of the community.⁸²

This view understands that activity does not have to be supernatural or miraculous to be a gift. The Spirit can also work through the believer’s natural talents. When used by the Holy Spirit these become spiritual gifts. They are just as much spiritual gifts as miraculous activity. Kuyper suggests the sequence by which non-miraculous activities become spiritual gifts. He notes, God’s institution of the areas of service, His giving of gifts and talents to fill these areas that are fitted for each personality by the Son, and the kindling of these in each by the Holy Spirit.⁸³

To summarize, a proper distinction between spiritual gifts and natural talents should be observed. Three classifications of activities exist: (1) the abilities and talents of the unbeliever or disobedient Christian; (2) the Spirit working through the dedicated life and talents of the believer in divine enablement, and (3) special, supernatural, extraordinary gifts bestowed upon a believer (first-century activity only). No valid distinction exists between dedicated abilities and spiritual gifts. As

⁸²Schwiezer, “πνεῦμα, πνευματικός,” *TDNT*, 6:424. [translations added]

⁸³Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Henri DeVries (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946) 39-40.

one dedicates his abilities to the Lord, the Spirit is able to work through him. These abilities become spiritual gifts. Carter describes the process when he writes:

The gift of the person of the Spirit may illumine, quicken, and nurture these potentialities in an individual to the development of greater usefulness, whereas without the presence of the Spirit in the life of an individual such potentialities may remain dormant throughout life.⁸⁴

The Source of Gifts

A final consideration is the relationship of the Godhead to the gifts. Writers frequently emphasize the Spirit as the giver of the gifts without saying much about the role of other members of the Godhead.⁸⁵ More accurately, the giving of spiritual gifts is similar to other works of God in which all Persons of the Godhead collaborate.⁸⁶

The Work of Christ

Christ was the baptizer at Pentecost; *pneuma hagion* is the instrument or means of baptism.⁸⁷ As Boyer notes with regard to 1 Cor 12:13,

The construction (Greek, *ἐν*) is never used for the personal agent with a passive voice. The consistent representation of this doctrine of Spirit baptism in the New Testament is that Christ is the one who does the baptizing (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5), that He does this in, or with the instrumentality of, or by means of, the Holy Spirit. The historic occasion of that baptism on Pentecost was the receiving of the Spirit (Acts 2:38).⁸⁸

F. F. Bruce summarizes this point: “[T]he Holy Spirit Himself is given by the exalted Christ to His church (Acts 2:33), and so the gifts of the Spirit may also be thought of as gifts of the exalted Christ.”⁸⁹ When this activity of Christ is viewed alongside

⁸⁴Charles Webb Carter, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: A Wesleyan Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974) 270.

⁸⁵The expression “the gifts of the Spirit” is often emphasized, e.g., Harold Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (reprint; Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1975) 19-38.

⁸⁶Well stated by Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971) 114-15.

⁸⁷James L. Boyer, *For a World Like Ours, Studies in I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971) 115.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1961) 81.

the activity of God, who works all things in all (1 Cor 12:7), who places the members in the body (12:18), and who gives to everyone the measure of faith (Rom 12:3), it is best to conclude that God gave, through Christ, the gift of *pneuma hagion*. This indwelling Holy Spirit distributes power to the believer as gifts.

The Work of the Spirit

The Spirit's work with respect to gifts closely relates to the other members of the Godhead (1 Cor 12:4-6) in two respects.

Energizing

First Cor 12:11 directly states that the Spirit energizes (*energeō*) all the gifts.⁹⁰ If the genitive in v. 7 is objective, Paul here speaks of the gifts as the operations which manifest the Spirit.⁹¹ In both cases the Spirit is not the author of the gifts but the energizer.

Distributing

The various distributions of gifts are indicated in 1 Cor 12:4 as related to the entire Godhead. Verse 11 speaks of the *diaroun* (verb form of *diairesis*), the distributing activity, of the Spirit. Paul elsewhere speaks of the elders who were made overseers by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). In Acts 6:8-10 Stephen is filled with wisdom and the Spirit, demonstrating the close relationship between the gifts and the Spirit. Since the gifts are termed *pneumatikos*, they pertain to the Spirit who is God. The persons of the Trinity work together in perfect unity.

A Working Definition

The above careful study of various aspects concerning spiritual gifts yields the following definition of a gift. From word study it was observed that grace-gifts are distributions of the Spirit's power. Spiritual gifts are diverse and distinct among individuals, yet they all contain gracious provision, a spiritual ministry, and most important, an effect or activity. In the study of biblical parallels it was noted that God has always engaged in enabling and empowering through His Spirit. Gifts included supernatural empowering in the first century as well as divine enablement in which the Spirit works through a dedicated life by awakening, nurturing, and developing. Lastly, spiritual gifts are given by God through Christ, and are produced

⁹⁰One cannot conclude, however, that the activity of energizing belongs only to the Spirit. First Corinthians 12:6 attributes the energizing to God (ὁ θεός). The activity is shared by the Godhead. See Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* 178.

⁹¹Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary, 2nd ed. (Edinburg: T. and T. Clark, 1911) 264.

in the person whom the Holy Spirit indwells and controls.

A spiritual gift, then, is any ability and accompanying spiritual ministry and effect that God, through Christ, enables a believer to use, or motivates him to use, for His glory, in the body of Christ, through the energizing work of the Spirit. God may grace the believer with a gift or gifts, or bring them to light, at salvation or later, but these abilities are only gifts when used for edification in the church. Today, as in biblical times, these enablings differ among churches according to the needs of the church and vary greatly as the needs vary.⁹²

The Kinds of Spiritual Gifts

The miraculous and non-miraculous gifts in Scripture are easily distinguished from each other. A miraculous gift empowers an individual to perform an act in which God's power is directly applied into natural order (i.e., into this time-space-mass continuum).⁹³ Such an event involves "a suspension, a bypassing, or even an outright contravention of the natural order."⁹⁴ Commenting on the miracles of Christ and His apostles, Whitcomb notes that they were "fantastically abundant, utterly spectacular, and totally undeniable."⁹⁵

This is in sharp contrast to the usual way God works through indirect and secondary causes. Such gifts as helps, administrations, pastor-teacher and several of those listed in Romans 12 fall into the non-miraculous category. These gifts or abilities operate within the natural realm of order even though God's hand of providence is involved.

As Paul lists different gifts, he makes no apparent attempt to separate the miraculous and the non-miraculous. Earlier discussion has noted that Paul did not confine spiritual gifts to the extraordinary but included all spiritual graces and endowments. Warfield comments on this close association by noting that "charismata . . . is broad enough to embrace that [which] may be called both the ordinary and the specifically extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; both those, that is, which were distinctively gracious, and those which were distinctly miraculous."⁹⁶ Complicating this is the difficulty of determining where the miraculous aspect ceases

⁹²James L. Boyer, "The Office of the Prophet in New Testament Times," *Grace Journal* 1 (1960):17.

⁹³Rolland D. McCune, "A Biblical Study of Tongues and Miracles," *Central Bible Quarterly* 19 (1976):15.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵John C. Whitcomb, "Does God Want Christians to Perform Miracles Today?" *Grace Journal* 12 (1971):6.

⁹⁶Warfield, *Miracles* 3-4.

and the non-miraculous begins in the apostolic gift of prophecy or teaching.⁹⁷ The point made here is not that Paul knew no difference between the miraculous and the non-miraculous but that he makes no distinction in the gift passages.

Two Proposed Solutions

Two views exist for explaining the purpose, recipients, and duration of spiritual gifts.

All gifts for today

Many proponents of this view elevate experience as their defense. Frederick Bruner, points to the heart of the issue when he says, "It is important to notice that it is not the doctrine, it is the experience of the Holy Spirit which Pentecostals repeatedly assert that they wish to stress."⁹⁸ In giving an account of his "conversion," one writer tells of his former belief in the temporary nature of some gifts, "But the almost wholesale re-entry of the gifts in the church has caused me to take a second look."⁹⁹ Ervin, a leading Pentecostal writer, enthusiastically quotes Henry Krause who says, "Truth divorced from experience must always dwell in the realm of a doubt."¹⁰⁰ This type of thinking is also evident in a comment by Quebedeaux when in speaking about Neo-Pentecostals: they "believe that the person with an experience need never feel himself to be at the mercy of the person with an argument."¹⁰¹ Note further the words from Edward Murphy:

Nowhere in the New Testament are we told from four to nine of the gifts listed by Paul would cease with the Apostolic Age, with the rest continuing in the church. Such a division is completely arbitrary. . . . Just because St. Augustine, B. B. Warfield, or C. I. Scofield, puzzled by the decline of spiritual gifts in the churches of their day, reasoned some of the gifts must have been only temporary doesn't make it so.¹⁰²

Recent attempts for a scholarly defense of this view continue this posture in more sophisticated ways. Barnett and McGregor subtitle their work, *A Scholarly Defense*,

⁹⁷This point is discussed by Lightfoot, *Notes* 148-49.

⁹⁸Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 21.

⁹⁹Peter E. Gilquist, *Let's Quit Fighting about the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974) 61-62.

¹⁰⁰Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken* 1-3.

¹⁰¹Richard Quebedeaux, *The New Charismatics* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 9.

¹⁰²Murphy, *Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission* 101-2; see also 104-6.

and then offer the following:

Many in the historical churches are no longer satisfied with the claim that speaking in tongues was restricted to the apostolic era, now that some of their own ministers are practicing and cherishing this gift of God. It is even harder for the laity to accept the explanation that ‘tongue-talkers’ are overemotional, uneducated fanatics on the fringes of Christianity (or worse yet, demon-possessed) when they see scholars with theological doctorates espousing this New Testament gift! “Thinking Christians” are demanding more satisfactory answers, and it turns out these answers are coming from people who have embraced this Charismatic experience that played a vital part in the first-century church.¹⁰³

They go on to develop a defense of charismatic gifts today based on the “threefold cord” of the “Bible, logic, and history.”¹⁰⁴ Max Turner, in his academic tome, addresses the views of Warfield, Edgar, Farnell, Gaffin, and Masters out of courtesy since “Nearly all NT scholars would dismiss such a view as a curiosity,” with a view “entirely unacceptable to serious NT scholarship.”¹⁰⁵ Noted charismatic scholar, Gordon Fee, when addressing the question of duration of the *charismata* confidently writes, “[Paul’s] answer is plain, ‘Of course they will continue as long as we await the final consummation.’”¹⁰⁶ It is clear that experience still plays a significant role in theological determination. But as Gaffin warns, “[F]aith is not an assertion of my ever tentative subjectivity in need of ‘objective’ props and confirmation.”¹⁰⁷ Mayhue offers a similar concern in his analysis of Jack Deere by asking, “Could it be that [Deere and others] have used a combination of experience and a redetermined theology to override otherwise reasonable conclusions?”¹⁰⁸ Walvoord earlier warned of the dilemma of those who have had an experience and encounter “two fatal grounds of error: (1) a misapprehension of the experience itself in its content and divine origin; (2) a faulty conclusion as to the doctrinal meaning of the experience.”¹⁰⁹ While manifesting itself in different ways, this is an ongoing error

¹⁰³Donald Lee Barnett and Jeffrey P. McGregor, *Speaking in Other Tongues: A Scholarly Defense*. (Seattle: Community Chapel Publications, 1986) 10.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 7

¹⁰⁵Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament Church and Today*, rev. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996) xii.

¹⁰⁶Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 893.

¹⁰⁷Richard Gaffin, “A Cessationist Response,” in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?* 297.

¹⁰⁸Mayhue, “Who Surprised Whom?” 124. Mayhue “purposely used ‘redetermined’ in contrast to ‘predetermined’” to describe Deere’s new “less than objective approach” (*Suprised*, 124 n.)

¹⁰⁹Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* 174. See also the remarks of Bernard Ramm, “Hand in Hand,” *His* 26/2 (November 1965):4-7.

of noncessationist theology.

The “all gifts continuing” position is argued from each of the non-cessationist groups identified above. Classic Pentecostals, such as Gee,¹¹⁰ Horton,¹¹¹ Schep,¹¹² and Freeman,¹¹³ teach that Spirit baptism of Acts 2 is to be repeated along with accompanying gifts in all generations as a post-salvation experience. In the words of Freeman, “God in this present hour is pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh as foretold by the prophet Joel (2:28f). Countless thousands in all denominations are experiencing the reality of the promise in Acts 2:38-9.”¹¹⁴ That baptism is then followed by the “manifestation” of the nine gifts of the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:8-10.¹¹⁵ The overwhelming emphasis is on tongues; other gifts are often excluded. Charismatic writers including Ervin,¹¹⁶ Rea,¹¹⁷ Turner,¹¹⁸ Ruthven,¹¹⁹ and Lederle,¹²⁰ teach the book of Acts as completely normative and a type of Spirit baptism followed by manifestation of all the gifts, but especially tongues, prophetic utterance, and healing.¹²¹ With some variation among themselves, all writers insist on a “Spirit baptism,” which is understood in various ways,¹²² and some have little interest in the new birth. Logan summarized the movement:

Having experienced a compelling encounter with the Holy Spirit, they come to Scripture and interpret it in the light of that experience, instead of interpreting the experience in the light of Scripture. This, no doubt, explains why the Acts of the Apostles is lifted above

¹¹⁰Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.).

¹¹¹Harold Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit* (reprint; Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1975).

¹¹²John A. Schep, *Baptism in the Spirit, According to Scripture* (Plainfield N.J.: Logos, 1969).

¹¹³Hobart E. Freeman, *Deeper Life in the Spirit* (Claypool, Ind.: Faith Publications, n.d.).

¹¹⁴*Ibid.* 7, 25.

¹¹⁵Cf. Horton, *The Gifts* 23-27.

¹¹⁶Ervin, *These are not Drunken*.

¹¹⁷Rea, *Laymen's Commentary*.

¹¹⁸Turner, *The Holy Spirit*.

¹¹⁹J. Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata* (Sheffield: Academic, 1993).

¹²⁰H. I. Lederle, *Treasures Old and New: Interpretation of "Spirit Baptism"* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988).

¹²¹E.g., J. Rodman Williams, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit Today* (Plainfield, N.J.: Logos, 1980) 43-72.

¹²²George T. Montague, *The Spirit and his Gifts* (New York: Paulist, 1974) 14-17, appears to equate the baptism with infant baptism. Others view it as a separate event.

other New Testament documents as a kind of “canon within a canon.”¹²³

Third Wave theologians also believe all of the gifts are intended for today but differ from non-Pentecostals. Writers such as Wagner,¹²⁴ McGee,¹²⁵ Wimber,¹²⁶ Fee,¹²⁷ and Grudem¹²⁸ reject the concept of subsequence and teach that each person is Spirit baptized at their salvation and at the same time each is given one or more gifts.¹²⁹ Stress is placed upon all the gifts, including tongues. Usually the gifts are carefully listed and loosely defined. The position is supported by an ever widening number of evangelicals. Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Third Wavers all, relying heavily on experience, arrive at the conclusion that miraculous gifts exist today.

Temporary and permanent gifts

This position asks, What is the purpose of the gifts? Some are seen as having a temporary purpose and others a lasting one. Many have held this view in one fashion or another, including Lactantius,¹³⁰ Calvin,¹³¹ Owen,¹³² Warfield,¹³³ Walvoord,¹³⁴ and Thomas.¹³⁵ Despite the fact that the view is widely held, proponents disagree about what is temporary and what is permanent. Tension surrounds a lack of biblical criteria for separating the two kinds of gifts. Many

¹²³James C. Logan, “Controversial Aspects of the Movement,” in *The Charismatic Movement*, ed. Michael P. Hamilton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 36. His whole analysis is helpful (33-46).

¹²⁴C. Peter Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 68.

¹²⁵Gary B. McGee, ed., *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit-baptism* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991).

¹²⁶John Wimber, *Power Points* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991) 136.

¹²⁷Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001); idem, *God’s Empowering Presence*.

¹²⁸Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1988), and idem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 763-787, 1016-88.

¹²⁹Cf. Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy* 68.

¹³⁰Lactantius “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles” vol. 7 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1886) 480.

¹³¹John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. and indexed Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) 2:1061.

¹³²Owen, “Discourse on Spiritual Gifts” 486, 493.

¹³³Warfield, *Miracles: Yesterday and Today* 4.

¹³⁴Walvoord, “Contemporary Issues” 316.

¹³⁵Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*.

assume that because the two kinds appear in the same lists, they are inseparable. As pointed out earlier in this study, the words used to designate spiritual gifts fail to stipulate which are miraculous, non-miraculous, or supernatural.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the appearance of various gifts in a common list does not dictate that they all have the same purpose or reflect the same amount of divine empowerment.

The Temporary Gifts

Those gifts viewed as temporary include all gifts existing in the first century but whose nature and purpose indicate they do not exist today.

Descriptions

Many descriptions of these gifts are far too dogmatic and more precise than is warranted by the biblical record. The identity of some gifts is clear enough to observe their temporary nature, but doubt and obscurity often clouds their scriptural descriptions. This may be a further indication of the providence of God in communicating to men that these gifts were not intended to last.¹³⁷

Apostles. The word primarily denotes a delegate, envoy, or messenger (cf. John 13:16). It applies chiefly to the select few who held the office of supreme dignity in the early church. They were “apostles of Jesus Christ.” An “apostle of Jesus Christ” is separate from all other gifted persons because of the gift’s foundational character (Eph 2:20). The apostles were unique in several ways. They were ones who had seen the resurrected Lord (Acts 1:22; also Paul in 1 Cor 9:1). They also possessed a divine calling or commission from Christ (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 15ff.).¹³⁸ They were heralds of salvation, authorized by Christ to preach (Rom 10:15; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11). The nature of their gift made it unrepeatable and untransferable. Paul knew he was the last apostle (1 Cor 15:8; cf. 3:10).¹³⁹ Those men were God’s special gift in founding of the church. No biblical basis exists for diminishing the qualifications and miraculous powers of apostles (2 Cor

¹³⁶Hermann Cremer, “Charismata,” in *The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1909) 3, 11, observes, “The word charisma itself does not tell anything as to the nature of the gifts.”

¹³⁷An emphasis well developed by Leon Morris, *Spirit of the Living God* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1960) 63-64.

¹³⁸A. F. Walls, “Apostle,” in *The New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) 48, notes that “ἀποστῆλλω seems frequently to mean ‘to send with a particular purpose’, as distinct from the neutral πέμπω.” “The force of ἀπόστολος is probably ‘one commissioned’—it is implied, by Christ.”

¹³⁹The doctrine of apostolic authority will be developed in conjunction with the purpose of miraculous gifts.

12:12) to allow anyone to claim this gift today.

Prophets. “Prophecy in the New Testament is the same as prophecy in the OT; it is a continuation of the same office and function.”¹⁴⁰ The apostolic age, like many OT times, was an age of revelation. The prophet had a supernatural gift whereby he was able “to reveal to his listeners new truth from God.”¹⁴¹ His function as a spokesman for God included foretelling (prediction) and forthtelling (preaching), in either case on the basis of possessing supernatural knowledge (cf. John 4:19; Eph 3:3-5). In order to claim the gift for today, some writers have identified the gift of prophecy with inspiring and enthusiastic preaching,¹⁴² or congregational prophecy, “based on a ‘revelation’ from the Holy Spirit yet not possessing the authority of God’s own word.”¹⁴³ This is totally out of keeping with all biblical data.

Discernment. The verb form, διακρίνω (*diakrinō*), means “to separate,” and thus διάκρισις (*diakrisis*) has come to mean “distinguishing,” or “differentiating.” When used with *pneumatikōn* it means distinguishing spirits. In 1 Cor 12:10, 14:29, 1 Thess 5:20f., and 1 John 4:1-6, the gift is often closely associated with prophesy. In these passages it relates to hearers in general, indicating its widespread use. Lindsay recognizes this point when he notes God giving

on the one hand the *Charisma* which enabled the speaker to declare what was the message of God, and on the other hand the *Charisma* in the hearers which enabled them to recognize whether the message was really what it professed to be.¹⁴⁴

Scripture does not support the modern claim that the gift involves a present-day determination of demon possession.¹⁴⁵

Wisdom and Knowledge. Various attempts have been made in an effort

¹⁴⁰Boyer, “The Office of the Prophet in the New Testament Times” 13.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 18. E. J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) 175. “The prophet labored under the conviction that the words which he was uttering were actually indicted of God. Often times the personality of the prophet even recedes completely into the background, and the speaker appears to be God Himself.”

¹⁴²So Harold Lindsell, “Spiritual Gifts” *Christianity Today* (1975):7; Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond: John Knox, 1967) 93.

¹⁴³Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy* 242.

¹⁴⁴Thomas M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (New York: Armstrong, 1902) 71.

¹⁴⁵See the typically novel idea of Donald Bridge and David Phipers, *Spiritual Gifts in the Church*, newly revised (Fearn, Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1995) 66-69.

to distinguish and identify σοφία (*sophia*, “wisdom”) and γνῶσις (*gnōsis*, “knowledge”).¹⁴⁶ Scripture leaves these terms obscure, making it difficult to define them accurately. Robertson and Plummer wisely conclude that any distinction between the two is precarious: “[T]o the Corinthians, among whom these two gifts were of common occurrence, the difference between σ. and γν. would be clear enough.”¹⁴⁷ *Gnōsis* is directly linked with the miraculous gift of prophecy in 1 Cor 13:8. Both will be *katargēthēsetai*, a term that means “de-energized.” Such a close link with the gift of prophecy leads to the conclusion that *gnōsis* is revelatory in nature.¹⁴⁸ Its cessation accompanies that of prophecy. The close connection between the terms and their relationship to other revelatory activity indicates an underlying feature of revelation for both, putting them in the miraculous category.

Faith. Though the identity of the gift of faith is somewhat uncertain, probably more is in view than saving faith, since the context addresses believers. Paul, as a believer with saving faith, speaks hypothetically of having this gift of faith in 1 Cor 13:2. It is perhaps best to conclude with Hill that

The inclusion of πίστις [*pistis*, “faith”] in the list of the Spirit’s gifts probably means that the word is to be understood as “trust” in the miraculous power of God to perform signs through human agents, rather than as the personal relationship of faith in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 13:2).¹⁴⁹

Paul equates this faith with the seemingly miraculous activity of moving mountains in 13:2, a feat mentioned by Christ on two occasions (Matt 17:20; Mark 11:22-24). Such faith appears to be miraculous because of its close link with other miraculous gifts in 1 Cor 13:2.¹⁵⁰

Miracles and Healings. Included here is a wide range of miraculous activity. This is the very word used in 2 Cor 12:12 and Heb 2:4a in the description

¹⁴⁶For a summary see Gordon H. Clark, “Wisdom in First Corinthians,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15 (1972):197.

¹⁴⁷Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians* 265.

¹⁴⁸It was used in the sense of God communicating with man among the Gnostics (Rudolf Bultmann, “γινώσκω,” *TDNT*, vol. 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 694.

¹⁴⁹Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings* 267.

¹⁵⁰J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* 1:117, warns, “It is a great mistake for Christians to distort their reports of answered prayer so as to make out ‘sign’ miracles where nothing comparable to the Biblical ‘signs’ has occurred. God gives us abundant evidence of His love and care without any exaggeration on our part.”

of authentication signs wrought by the apostles. Δύναμις (*Dynamis*, “Power”; plural, “Miracles”) occurs 120 times in the NT and is almost always with reference to the miracles. A survey of the Gospels and book of Acts reveals many different types of miracles including various kinds of activity. Closely associated with miracles in general is ἰάμα (*iama*, “healing”). Though this word occurs only in 1 Corinthians 12, the verb ἰάομαι (*iaomai*, “I heal”) is used often in the Gospels to speak of healings or cures.

Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues. The nature of tongues is a study in itself. Some hold that tongues are bonafide foreign languages.¹⁵¹ Others, however, understand tongues as ecstatic utterances.¹⁵² Numerous mediating positions are held such as that of Best, who suggests the Corinthians spoke in a “heavenly tongue.”¹⁵³

A question of greater importance to this survey is the miraculous element in tongues. Assuming that tongues are understood as foreign languages, God is working a miracle each time they occur. The gift of interpretation is closely related to that of tongues as seen in 1 Corinthians 14. Paul uses the word διερμηνεύω (*diermēneuō*), which can mean “translate” (Acts 9:36) or “interpret” (Luke 24:27). Those viewing tongues as foreign languages see God working a miracle in translation on each occasion. As to the cessation of tongues, Scripture makes it clear that tongues will stop (παύω [*pauō*, “I cause to cease”] in 1 Cor 13:8).¹⁵⁴ History makes it quite clear that tongues have ceased.¹⁵⁵ The chaos of the modern tongues movement and the arbitrary, and often lacking, element of interpretation support this position as well.

Purpose

In spite of occasional obscurity in defining temporary gifts, it is clear that supernatural and divine empowerment characterized each of these gifts. Their purpose must now be addressed. The whole question of miraculous gifts revolves first around Christ, then the apostles, and then the NT church.

¹⁵¹So Robert Gundry, “‘Ecstatic Utterance’ (N.E.B.)?” *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S. 17 (1966):299-307; also Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement*; Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit* 159.

¹⁵²Charles R. Smith, *Tongues in Biblical Perspective* (Winona Lake, Ind: BMH Books, 1973); A. J. Grieve, “Charismata,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, 13 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1928) 3:368-72.

¹⁵³Ernest Best, “Interpretation of Tongues” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975):47.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 83-84. See the development of the future middle indicative, παύσονται, as it relates to tongues.

¹⁵⁵See the development of Thomas R. Edgar, *Miraculous Gifts: Are They for Today?* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1983) 223-59.

Christ. The coming of Christ to earth is truly unique in history: God in the person of His Son dwelled with mankind (cf. Matt 1:23). Christ had numerous opportunities to communicate special revelation to men (Heb 1:2) or to authenticate it with signs and wonders (cf. John 1:30-31). Miraculous activity characterized His ministry in a way never known before. He used miraculous powers extensively in the fulfillment of His Messianic office. This greatest epoch of miracle-working was faintly preceded by other epochs in which God gave revelation and accompanied it by authentication. The periods of Moses¹⁵⁶ and Elijah and Elisha exemplified this as well. At other times in the theocratic kingdom, God authenticated His prophets and their messages with miracles (e.g., the early chapters of Daniel).¹⁵⁷ Thus in the coming of Christ to earth, God gave to man the highest level of revelation and authenticating miracles yet known.¹⁵⁸

The Apostles. Previous discussion has outlined distinct foundational characteristics and qualifications of apostleship. As evidenced in Matt 10:1-4, Christ officially commissioned these men, authorizing them to act in His place (cf. Matt 10:40, “he who receives you receives me”). Such a person in Rabbinic tradition, as a general rule “owed the duties of a slave.”¹⁵⁹ In becoming apostles of Jesus Christ, these men became the representatives or agents of Christ. An apostle “represents in his own person the person and rights of the other.”¹⁶⁰

To these representatives Christ gave power, an authority predicted by Christ in Mark 16:15-18 (also John 14:26; 16:13). The apostles were to speak (Mark 16:17), and were given assurance that authenticating signs (σημεῖα, *sēmeia*) would accompany them. For this power the apostles waited in Acts 1:13 and then received at the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.¹⁶¹

In Rom 15:18-19 Paul speaks of this apostolic authority in his preaching, which was accompanied by *en dynamei sēmeiōn kai teratōn, en dynamei pneumatos* (“in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit”). Even more clear

¹⁵⁶Cf. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* 53ff.

¹⁵⁷Well developed by Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 250-52.

¹⁵⁸Σημεῖον (“sign, mark, token”) is used 48 times in the Gospels; τέρας (something strange, causing the beholder to marvel, hence “wonder”), is used 3 times, and δύναμις (“power” of supernatural origin, “miracle”) 38 times in the Gospels.

¹⁵⁹David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athone, 1956) 266.

¹⁶⁰Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, “ἀπόστολος κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT* 1:415.

¹⁶¹Smith, *Tongues* 67, notes four indications that only the apostles did miraculous deeds at Pentecost. In 2:7 the speakers were all Galileans; in 2:14 Peter stood “with the eleven”; in 2:37 after the message, those whose hearts were pricked spoke to Peter and “to the rest of the apostles”; and in 2:43 it is stated that “many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”

is 2 Cor 12:12 where Paul states, “The signs [*sēmeia*] of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles [*sēmeiois te kai terasin kai dynamesin*].” On this passage Hodge wisely comments, “The signs of an apostle were the insignia of the apostleship; those things which by divine appointment were made the evidence of a mission from God.”¹⁶² A most emphatic statement occurs in Hebrews 2:3 where the words of Christ (“so great salvation”) were delivered to the readers of Hebrews by those who heard them (i.e., the apostles). In verse 4 God is said to have confirmed their witness with signs, wonders, miracles, and distributions (*merismois*) of the Spirit. In each of these passages spiritual gifts (e.g., apostles, prophets) are used to communicate revelation, and spiritual gifts are given to authenticate this revelation (signs, miracles).

A careful study of the apostles reveals their function as agents for Christ. They alone had received the responsibility of communicating revelation and they alone could expect authenticating miraculous gifts and lay hands upon others.

The NT Church. In the historical context outlined above, Paul writes to the Corinthians concerning spiritual gifts. This church obviously had members with authenticating gifts (1 Cor 1:7).¹⁶³ As Paul lists examples of gifts, he includes miraculous and nonmiraculous. He then stresses to the Corinthians that the authenticating gift of tongues does not edify (14:4), but prophecy does edify the body and should be emphasized. This emphasis on edification is also the thrust of Eph 4:12 where apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers are said to be given for building up the body. The purpose of the miraculous gifts was to communicate revelation and authenticate that revelation. Such gifts edified directly (in the case of revelation) or indirectly (e.g., in the case of tongues). Lightner’s suggestion seems to be helpful when he notes the purpose of gifts is edification with subordinate purposes for some gifts.¹⁶⁴

Duration

It is not difficult to see the duration of miraculous gifts in light of the above discussion. Their purpose limits such gifts to the apostolic age. As Warfield has so well stated,

¹⁶²Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) 290.

¹⁶³J. Lanier Burns, “A Reemphasis on the Purpose of the Sign Gifts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975):247-48, argues that *χάρισμα* in 1:7 refers to spiritual gifts because *ὥστε* in 1:7 is closely linked to *ἐβεβαιώθη*, indicating their need for confirmation of truth, which need resulted in sign gifts.

¹⁶⁴Robert Lightner, *Speaking in Tongues and Divine Healing* (Des Plaines, Ill.: Regular Baptist, 1955) 13. Note also that even those who hold tongues to be foreign languages should see their purpose as authenticating (cf. Gundry, “‘Ecstatic Utterance’ (N.E.B.)?” 303-4).

Miracles do not appear on the page of Scripture vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently, without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to His people through accredited messengers, declaring His gracious purposes. Their abundant display in the Apostolic Church is the mark of the richness of the apostolic age in revelation; and when this revelation period closed, the period of miracle working had passed by also, as a mere matter of course.¹⁶⁵

To insist that miraculous gifts continue is to say that apostles exist today. One cannot claim the signs of an apostle without the office as well.

Another strong indication of the duration of miraculous gifts may be seen in Paul's direct statements in 1 Cor 13:8-12. Another article in this issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal* will deal extensively with that passage.

The Permanent Gifts

The above examination of the miraculous gifts makes it possible to understand more clearly the gifts involving divine enablement.

Description

More doubt prevails over the exact nature of the non-miraculous gifts than was true with the miraculous ones. The non-miraculous gifts appear to be representative, as were those in the previous list. Some of the titles depict ministries while others speak of effects. It is quite certain that, for the most part, the terms represent broad areas that are not intended to be closely defined. The following descriptions contrast with the diverse and arbitrary descriptions in the gift literature.¹⁶⁶

Evangelist. The word εὐαγγελιστής (*euangelistēs*, "evangelist") occurs three times in the NT (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5). Probably, however, more evangelists were serving than Scripture mentions.¹⁶⁷

The activity of evangelism is widespread in the NT (2 Cor 8:18; Phil 1:15-18; 4:3; Col 4:11). Scripture gives several instances of those with other gifts who engaged in evangelism. These include the evangelistic activity of Paul as an apostle (Rom 1:9, 16:25; 1 Cor 15:3, 4; 2 Tim 2:8) and Philip's evangelistic activity as a servant (cf. Acts 6:5, 6 with Acts 8:5; 21:8). Another illustration comes from Paul's exhortation to Timothy. He instructs Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5, note the absence of the definite article). This instruction from Paul probably

¹⁶⁵Warfield, *Miracles, Today and Yesterday* 25-26.

¹⁶⁶Cf. Gangel, *You and Your Spiritual Gifts*; Bridge and Phipers, *Spiritual Gifts and the Church*; Wagner, *Frontiers in Missionary Strategy*, 68-77; Leslie B. Flynn, *19 Gifts of the Spirit* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1974).

¹⁶⁷Gerhard Friedrich, "εὐαγγελιστής," *TDNT* 2:737.

indicates that Timothy did not have the “gift” of evangelism.¹⁶⁸

In light of this pattern of close association of the work of an evangelist with other gifts such as apostleship, it is better to see *euangelistēs* as denoting a function rather than an office.¹⁶⁹

Pastors and Teachers. As it occurs in Eph 4:11, the phrase τοὺς δὲ ποιμείνας καὶ διδασκάλους (*tous de poimeinas kai didaskalous*, “and some pastors and teachers) seems to depict a single gift. The τοὺς δὲ (*tous de*, “and some”) combines ποιμῆν (*poimēn*, “pastor”) and διδάσκαλος (*didaskalos*, “teacher”) as one gift for several reasons. First, the absence of the disjunctive *tous de* between the titles indicates this. Secondly, other passages link the function of pastoring with teaching, as in 1 Tim 5:17 (πρεσβύτερος—διδάσκαλος, *presbyteros—didaskalos*, “elder—teacher”) and Tit 1:9. A third indication of this is the natural combination formed by the terms: “the teaching of God’s truth is basic to all pastoral care.”¹⁷⁰

Such a gift is very important and far ranging. It is a lifetime pursuit, and for some who are willing to work hard, a position of double honor (1 Tim 5:17). The *didaskaloi* are those who “edify the congregation by means of their own clearer understanding.”¹⁷¹ They have the Spirit’s guidance apart from revelation. That a definite type of teaching gift is valid today may be seen in a number of later-NT passages (1 Tim 5:11; 2 Tim 2:2; Heb 5:12).

Gifts of Assistance. The words *antilēmpsis* (“helps,” 1 Cor 12:28), and *diakonia* (“service,” Rom 12:7) are close in meaning. As to *diakonia*, etymology suggests that simply “service” or “ministry” is in view, allowing context to determine meaning. *Diakonia* is used of spiritual ministry (Acts 1:25, 6:4), physical ministry (Acts 6:1), hospitality (1 Cor 16:15), giving (2 Cor 8:4), and a general preaching and teaching ministry (Acts 20:24). As a spiritual gift, *diakonia* is best regarded as including a wide range of loving service. *Antilēmpsis* is a NT hapax legomenon and is probably best rendered “helpful deeds.”¹⁷² Though many commentators have viewed this help as directed toward the sick (cf. verb *antilambanō* in Acts 20:35), it includes other areas of service as well (cf. LXX usage in Pss 22:20; 84:6; 89:19 and

¹⁶⁸Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1982) 286. The χάρισμα “in you” (ἐν σοί, 2 Tim 1:6) was hardly an office.

¹⁶⁹Friedrich, “εὐαγγελιστής” 737.

¹⁷⁰Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Ephesians, The Glory of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1971) 72.

¹⁷¹Rengstorf, “διδάσκω,” *TDNT* 2:158.

¹⁷²BDAG, 89.

the verb form in Luke 1:54 and 1 Tim 6:2).¹⁷³

Administration. A similar situation arises with *proistēmi* (Rom 12:8), and *kybernēsis* (1 Cor 12:28). In classical Greek *proistēmi* has both the idea of “presiding,” “leading,” and “directing,” and also more precisely, “to protect,” “to care for,” “to help,” “to further.”¹⁷⁴ NT usage brings out this latter concept consistently (cf. 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17). Thus, in whatever area the gift is employed, it involves both presiding and caring.

Kybernēsis is another NT hapax legomenon, having the meaning of “administration,” along with management, guidance, and directing.

Exhortation. This word is used in three major ways,¹⁷⁵ including “encouragement, exhortation” (1 Thess 2:3), “appeal, request” (2 Cor 8:4), and “comfort, consolation” (2 Cor 1:4-7). Of these, the second sense of “request” or “beg earnestly” is not likely in view as a gift.¹⁷⁶ That leaves the ideas of “comfort” and “encouragement.” Further study of various uses points to a wide range of godly activity.

Giving. Romans 12:8 lists *metadidōmi*, a verb coming from *meta* (“with”) and *didōmi* (“giving, sharing”), and having the meaning of “give (a part of)” or “share.” In its four other NT occurrences *metadidōmi* clearly has this idea of “sharing” or “imparting.” Luke 3:11 speaks of sharing a coat, Rom 1:11 of imparting a spiritual gift, Eph 4:28 of the sharing of money, and 1 Thess 2:8 of sharing the gospel and one’s own soul. This gift of giving or sharing could well be then in the realm of physical giving (e.g., 1 Cor 13:3, giving to the poor) or the giving of one’s self (e.g., 1 Thess 2:8). Any one of these areas should be characterized by ἀλότις (“sincerity, simplicity,” Rom 12:8).¹⁷⁷ The gift is sufficiently broad to include the

¹⁷³See F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 299.

¹⁷⁴Bo Reicke, “προϊστημι,” *TDNT* 4:700-701.

¹⁷⁵BDAG, 766.

¹⁷⁶Otto Schmitz, “παρακαλέω, κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT*, vol. 5, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 794, affirms that the request for help denoted by this word proceeds from one in need to one with power. In view of its usage in conjunction with Paul’s request for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh (1 Cor 12:8), one might argue that this gift included prayer.

¹⁷⁷R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1936) 764, “His slogan must ever be in simplicity; which does not mean liberality of anything regarding the size or the value of the gift imparted but refers to the giver’s own motivation: that must be single, not double.”

whole area of Christian giving.

Showing Mercy. Ἐλεέω (*Eleēō*, “I show mercy”) is listed as a gift in Rom 12:8, having the basic idea of “mercy, compassion, pity.”¹⁷⁸ Vine explains that ἔλεος (*eleos*, “mercy”) is “the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.”¹⁷⁹ It is “kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.”¹⁸⁰ Such mercy is well illustrated in God’s activity toward men (Luke 1:58) and Christ (Jude 21).

Purpose

These gifts are the product of divine enabling and are clearly non-miraculous. From word meaning and usage, it is evident that most of these gifts represent the kind of activity that should characterize all Christians.¹⁸¹ All of the above include God’s use of the dedicated life and the abilities He has granted. Such activity God calls a “gift” and often grants an office (e.g., pastor-teacher) to accompany the gift.

The non-miraculous gifts have no ability to give new revelation, nor do they authenticate apostolic testimony. Instead the gifts exist for the purpose of the edifying the body of Christ. The verb οἰκοδομέω (*oikodomeō*), has the basic meaning of “build” and is found in the NT in both a literal (of building a house) and figurative sense.¹⁸² This latter sense is used in 1 Corinthians 12–14 to speak of “the process of the growth and development of the community” of believers.¹⁸³

Various statements in 1 Corinthians 12–14 contribute to this emphasis on edification. In 12:7 the manifestations are for the common good and not individual good (1 Cor 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26). The same emphasis is present in Rom 12:5 where individually gifted members are said to be καθ’ ἑἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη (*kath’ heis allēlōn melē*, “members one of another”). Peter also stresses this same idea when he states that each one is to employ his gift in serving another. This theme not

¹⁷⁸BDAG, 315.

¹⁷⁹W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 4 volumes in one (Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1952) 178.

¹⁸⁰Thayer, *Greek English Lexicon*, 203.

¹⁸¹Notice how the activity involved in a given spiritual gift is elsewhere commanded of all believers in the following instances; Evangelism (Acts 1:8, “you shall be My witnesses”); Pastoring (1 Thess 5:11, “build up one another”); Teaching (Matt 28:19, “teaching them”); Exhortation (Heb 10:25, “encouraging one another”).

¹⁸²Otto Michel, “οἶκος, κ.τ.λ.,” *TDNT* 5:136-38.

¹⁸³Ibid., 140.

only occurs in all the gift passages, but it appears to be Paul's guiding principle (1 Cor 14:26; 1 Thess 5:11; 2 Cor 10:8, 12:19, 13:10; Rom 14:19, 15:2; Eph 4:12, 16, 29). Saucy gives a good summary of the Biblical idea of edification:

Edification must not be thought of only in terms of morality or emotional uplift. Rather it aims at a fullness of growth in the total life of faith through the ministry of the Word in its various applications of exhortation, encouragement and comfort (1 Th. 5:11; 1 Co. 14:3), and especially in the practice of love (1 Co. 8:1; cf. 12:31–13:3).¹⁸⁴

Duration

The duration of permanent gifts is determined by their description. These gifts designate regular activity of Christians. Many of the same functions constitute the emphases of the epistles. Nothing requires an understanding of non-miraculous gifts as some type of mystical enabling above talents dedicated to the Lord. The general nature of the gifts often reflects activity that God has always enabled His own to perform (cf. various OT examples).

The purpose of the building up of the body (cf. Ephesians 4) is vital in this present day. It is an important theme throughout the NT. The fact that God has always sought the edification of the body, whether by miraculous or non-miraculous gifts, indicates that when the miraculous gifts ceased, the others continued.

Conclusion

This study attempted to give a working definition of a spiritual gift, based on a careful examination of the biblical data. The writer believes the confusion surrounding spiritual gifts today can best be resolved by limiting the discussion to the biblical text and allowing the Scriptures to speak without propping up an experience with truth. A study of the gifts identified in Scripture reveals two kinds of gifts, both coming from the same source but each having a different purpose and duration within the edification process. Miraculous gifts characterized the apostolic age for the purpose of revelation and authentication. The purpose was to limit these gifts to the period of the apostles and others associated with them. Attempts to bring such gifts back, supported by experience, must be rejected regardless of one's theological frame of reference. The conclusion, then, is to understand that in apostolic times God gave some temporary, miraculous gifts for authentication and others for revelation and edification. In addition, He gave certain non-miraculous gifts for edification. In addition, He gave certain non-miraculous, permanent gifts for the edification of the body.

¹⁸⁴Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* 176.