

falls short of this ideal marks itself as an imitation and, if spiritual health is to prevail, ministry within the body of Christ must do without that imitation.

Chapter Two

UNIFIED SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS: THE TRIUNE GOD

12:4-11

4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

6And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

7But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

8For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

9to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

10and 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.

11But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

The fact that by one simple test spiritual gifts are distinguishable from counterfeit spiritual activities does not mean that all spiritual gifts are the same. Diversity is the feature that emerges immediately in 1 Corinthians 12:4. Assuredly, spiritual gifts are unique and are to be distinguished carefully in the broader field of spiritual manifestations (12:1-3). Yet this uniqueness does not entail fitting every one of them into the same mold.

Side by side with this variety, verses 4-11 emphasize the one source from which all proceed. Each gift exhibits itself in a different manner and with a value distinct to itself, but no matter what the manner or value of manifestation, each one is traceable to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

12:4-Gifts of grace from the one Holy Spirit. The fourth verse moves quickly into this new phase of the subject. Instead of continuing a treatment of how to distinguish good spiritual activities from bad, the discussion now focuses more specifically on good spiritual activities alone and how distinctions exist among them. "Varieties" emphasizes by its threefold repetition that no Christian is a carbon copy of

another when it comes to spiritual gifts. This initial mention of differences implicitly forecasts the list of gifts found in verses 8-10, where gifts not only differ from one another but also fall into distinct categories. As is recorded elsewhere, they are gifts that differ "according to the grace given to us" (Rom. 12:6.

"Varieties" are first of all characterized as "gifts" ~charismaton, 12:4. The Greek expression more fully describes them as "gifts of grace." They are unearned, being prompted purely by God's unmerited favor toward individuals in the body of Christ. The thought aligns with 12:11, where the sovereign will of God alone determines how the gifts are distributed.

After noticing the "varieties of grace gifts," Paul quickly qualifies that variety by noting the unity that lies behind all the gifts. No matter how many and large the differences, the same Spirit of God is the origin. A list of specific gifts is about to appear (12:8-10~, each one having its own characteristics, but one and the same Person produces them all, none other than He who dwells within every believer in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19).

Implicit in this unity of source is a remedy to a Corinthian problem. The very gifts that Paul goes on to list in verses 8-10 are those that, utilized by carnal men, have caused division among Christians. Because of these gifts' spectacular character, individual members of Christ's body enjoyed particular prominence, a prominence that was in turn used to create a party spirit. Paul wanted his readers to know that this schismatic abuse was not of the Spirit. This third Person of the Trinity does not fight against Himself. That these gifts might be used to create division is completely contrary to His intent.

12:5-Services from the one Lord Jesus Christ. Another designation complements "varieties" in verse 5. It is "ministries" or "services" (diakonia~. This designation looks at spiritual gifts as creating benefits for others. The ultimate in Christ's bestowal of gifts is the service they enable one to render. This thread of emphasis runs throughout chapters 12-14 and is well summed up by the nature of love that "is kind [or useful]" (13:4) and "does not seek its own" (13:5).

"The same Lord" (12:5) provides additional evidence favoring the case for unity. The second Person of the Trinity joins the third (12:4) as the source of services performed through spiritual gifts. If this is not sufficiently clear here, a further word written a few years later in Ephesians 4:11 reveals Jesus Christ's part in bestowing such gifts. It is under His authority and for His purposes that they operate, and none escapes His surveillance. Of course, He is not at variance with Himself. How then could anyone justify the use of gifts as a springboard for promoting schism among Christians?

12:6-Results from the one Father. The sixth verse adds another word about varieties, this time in connection with the good effects wrought by spiritual gifts. "Varieties of effects" is the third expression in as many verses depicting spiritual gifts. The "operations" or "effects" (energēmatōn, 12:6), focus upon the miraculous things wrought wherever spiritual gifts are operative. Such "energizings" are clearly supernatural. Divine power is at work, a power demonstrating its presence in such things as removal of mountains through the gift of faith (1 Cor. 13:2).

Along with implying this additional aspect of spiritual gifts,

Paul reinforces his argument for unity a third time. This he does by reference to God the Father, a singular person in contrast to the "varieties of effects." One and the same God stands behind all the effects, and surely He is not in conflict with Himself. Beginning with the third Person of the Trinity, the text has now included all three Persons and reached a climax with its mention of the first Person. Other passages that group the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the same context are Matthew 3:16-17 (the baptism of Christ); 2 Corinthians 13:14 (the threefold benediction); and Ephesians 4:4-6 (another list of unifying factors in Christ's body). The Father has given Jesus Christ as Lord of the church and has sent the Holy Spirit to function in the body of Christ as described in this chapter. The Spirit is the immediate agent of the verse 6 effects (a related word rendered "works" in v. 11) because He is the one whom the Father has chosen to be His representative in dispensing the gifts, carrying out the services, and reaping the beneficial results all things") in all people involved with Christ's body ("in all persons").

12:7-Many manifestations for one purpose. In spite of the variety expressed in verses 4-6, however, each gift does not involve a separate intent. A new word to characterize spiritual gifts occurs in verse 7: a gift is a "manifestation" or "exhibition" [phanerosis]. The word signals another aspect of spiritual gifts, the element of display. The activity is by nature outgoing, with the result that it touches other lives. It must be seen, heard, or in some manner experienced by at least one person other than the gifted one. The Giver never intended any spiritual gift for private purposes, and to the extent that anyone uses a gift that way, he or she abuses that given ability. Unless

this principle governs, the body of Christ cannot realize "the common good" 12:7 or "edification" 14:12).

Returning again to the matter of source, the text repeats that the manifestation is "of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit's part in these phenomena has already been the subject in verses 3-4 above. In essence, He exhibits His bestowal in the operation of various gifts. His part as dispenser is reiterated again in verse 11 below: "distributing to each one individually just as He wills."

Two significant features characterize this Spirit-produced exhibition.

1. It is "to each one." The wording in verse 7 lays heaviest emphasis on this. It is as though the Holy Spirit through Paul would proclaim loudly that gifts of the Spirit are not reserved for a few outstanding people. Every single Christian, whoever he is and no matter when he lives, possesses a spiritual endowment. The discussion constantly returns to this common characteristic. For example, in verses 8-10 the words "to one ... to another ..." and so on, take their cue from this universal characteristic. The same strain continues in the words "to each one individually" (v.11). Nor does this chapter exhaust Paul's attention to this universality. In the companion section of Romans, it is "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" 12:3. In Ephesians also, some time later, Paul comes back to this theme: "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" ~Eph. 4:7. If there is one well-established teaching in this field, it is that every Christian has at least one gift.

2. Secondary emphasis in verse 7 falls on "for the common good" or "for profit." Here in summary is the purpose of Spirit-produced manifestations. Each one has a spiritual ability for the purpose of benefiting the rest of the body of Christ. It is important to observe in 1 Corinthians 12-14 that the profit or edification is not for the benefit of the individual possessing the gift. That is not the goal. In fact, to use a gift for one's own gratification is selfishness, neglecting the guidelines of love. As such, it is a sin against the Giver of the gift, as well as against those for whose benefit the gift should have been used. The consideration constantly before Paul's mind was, "What shall I profit you?" 1 Cor. 14:6, not "How can I profit myself?" Let it be known once and for all: God never intended any spiritual gift for private benefit. Every gifted person is primarily responsible to serve the rest of Christ's body with whatever abilities he has from God.

12:8-Sample gifts: two gifts for the mind. To confirm his word about spiritual manifestations, Paul now embarks upon a list of typical gifts (12:8-10)--ways in which the Spirit manifests His bestowal through different individuals. The gifts mentioned here were those that lent themselves to schisms because their supernatural nature was most conspicuous. The divisive Corinthians appear to have craved these because of their obsession with the personal attention they attracted. The nine gifts in this list fall into three categories marked by alternating Greek words for "another." Six times in the list the "another" stands for "another of the same kind," but two times "another" means "another of a different kind."³ These latter two occurrences mark beginnings of the second and third divisions of the list and occur in conjunction with "faith" (v. 9~ and

"kinds of tongues" (v. 10~.

In part one of the list, the result is two gifts, wisdom and knowledge, which entail insights granted to the mind. These are "revelatory" gifts in that they included matter granted in one way or another by direct revelation. People became channels used by God to convey His mind to the church. The next part of the list consists of five gifts grouped in accordance with their confirmatory character. Without leaving the intellect in abeyance, the gifts of faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and discernment more peculiarly involved the human will. Volitionally, certain ones had abilities to perform feats that would confirm divinely granted revelations in the eyes of men. Thus, the second category of gifts supported the first. Though revealing divine power, in the main, these were void of informational content.

The third part of the list, tongues and interpretation, was also confirmatory (cf. 1 Cor. 14:22, but differs from the second in that intellect was largely in abeyance when anyone used tongues (cf. 1 Cor. 14:2. The listing places interpretation here because of its connection with tongues as a solution to the unintelligibility of tongues.

Taking up the first category, verse 8 depicts two gifts-or manifestations that pertain more particularly to the mind: an utterance prompted by wisdom and an utterance prompted by knowledge.

"The word of wisdom." The widespread occurrence of "wisdom" in the Word of God is obvious to any Bible reader. The gift so labeled, however, has a more restricted sense

because it refers to a specific spiritual function of which only a certain group in the body of Christ has been capable. That specialized sense is understandable in light of 1 Corinthians 2:6-13.4 In this earlier section of the epistle, Paul describes himself in connection with other apostolic and missionary teachers, such as Apollos and Cephas (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-6~. As divine mouthpieces, they spoke "God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom" (1 Cor. 2:7~. By mentioning wisdom in connection with "mystery" and what is "hidden," this passage points clearly to divine revelation received by these early Christian leaders, which they in turn transformed into words for communicating to others of their generation. It is the process of receiving and communicating this special revelation that is discussed in the paragraph through 2:13.

It is, therefore, in connection with the word of wisdom that Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:2 refers to the gift of prophecy and the understanding of all mysteries. At strategic times throughout Bible history, God has spoken directly to His servants, that they in turn might communicate His message to people at large. The period following Pentecost was one such strategic era. Special need arose for an understanding of hitherto unrevealed truths in order for the church to grow into an instrument for encircling the globe with the message of Christ. The spiritual gift of wisdom to certain first-generation Christians was the means God adopted.

Much information thus revealed became permanently recorded in the pages of the New Testament. Nevertheless, it is probable that much that God chose to reveal had only a temporary usefulness for the local circumstances of first-century Christians. This information did not become a part

of God's written revelation.

Noteworthy among those who received this gift was the apostle Paul himself. Peter referred to Paul's particular endowment when he wrote, "Just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you" (2 Peter 3:15, italics added). Among the mysteries so abundantly revealed to Paul were the final destiny of Israel (Rom. 11:25) and joint participation in the same body by Jews and Gentiles on an equal basis (Eph. 3:1-7).

It is worth repeating that this gift is not the same as the wisdom available to all Christians. The demands of life are such that no Christian can stand merely on his own wisdom. He needs divine enlightenment to face various circumstances of life, and this too is "wisdom" (cf. James 1:5~. Wisdom in this more general sense is available to all Christians, but is not the same as "the word of wisdom."

"The word of knowledge." The other gift of the intellect belongs to the same group as the word of wisdom. In other words, the word of knowledge is in the same revelatory category as the former gift of verse 8. Yet a distinction exists between them. While the word of wisdom brought direct revelation, the word of knowledge was the ability to grasp that objective revelatory data and by inspiration apply it in various connections.

The relation of knowledge to prophecy had hence to wisdom also is demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 13:2, where the follow-up statement regarding prophecy includes the understanding of not only "all mysteries" but also "all

knowledge." This also means, of course, an overlapping of knowledge and apostleship which, along with its other features, provided for authoritative communication of the message of Christ.

The revelatory nature of knowledge surfaces again in Colossians 2:2-3, where it occurs in connection with "God's mystery," "hidden," and "wisdom." Second Peter 3:1-2 illustrates how it functioned in a revelatory manner. Peter, the divinely inspired writer, took teachings given earlier by "the holy prophets" and "your apostles" and applied these earlier, direct revelations to new circumstances of the late sixties in connection with "mockers" (2 Peter 3:3~. That was a new situation that demanded special insights. Jude did a similar thing later in his epistle (Jude 17-18~. Once again, it is obvious that all inspired applications of divine revelation did not find their places in the permanent record of the New Testament. The pages of Holy Scripture do, however, record those applications of the gift that were of lasting value to the church of all generations.

Another precautionary word is in order. Distinct from "the word of knowledge," a more general knowledge is the common resource of all believers in Christ. It is in reference to this more general category of knowledge that the Scripture commands Christians to grow continually throughout their lives (cf. 2Peter 3:18.

The Holy Spirit makes a point of noting His own place with each of the gifts of verse 8. The word of wisdom is "through" or "by" the Spirit. This means that He is the intermediary, or medium of communication, through whom God revealed

mysteries to His apostles and prophets. The word of knowledge is "according to" the same Spirit. This means that knowledge gained by those possessing this special ability was in perfect accord with the will of the Holy Spirit. The gift introduced no deviation from the straight line of divine truth expressed in the "word of wisdom," on which the "word of knowledge" was dependent.

12:9-Sample gifts: two gifts for the will. Verse 9 introduces a new category of gifted persons, a category that includes the next five gifts in the list. A different Greek word for "another" in connection with "faith" signals the transition. The gift of faith is "another of a different kind," whereas the rest, with the exception of the fourth occurrence of "another" in verse 10, are "another of the same kind." This variation in wording points to an accompanying shift in the character of the gifts to follow.

The first gift in this category, the gift of faith, provides the unifying factor in this new group. Whatever involves faith automatically entails the decisionmaking faculty of the human make-up, for no one has ever exercised faith unless he had a will to do so. It is therefore the aspect of human will that looms largest in this portion of the gift list.

The gift of "faith." In addition to furnishing the unifying aspect for the present series of gifts, "faith" is distinct as a separate gift in itself. One should not confuse the gift of faith with the more general faith that is common to all Christians. The more general sense of faith is not limited to a certain group within the body of Christ, since it is by such a volitional exercise that every believer initially enters the body of Christ.

The gift of faith, on the other hand, had to do with a more intensive manifestation of trust, a specialized function of which only certain Christians were capable. This unusual ability enabled a person to believe God in the face of enormous obstacles. The obstacles came in wide variety to the first-century church. With such a gift, however, the child of God could trust Him to the extent that God intervened and produced a means for overcoming that obstacle. The gift of faith apparently fulfilled the same confirmatory function as did other gifts in its category.

Paul alludes to this special capability once again in 1 Corinthians 13:2: "And if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." The idea of removing mountains, of course, goes back to the teachings of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 17:20, where He promised His immediate followers this special ability after He had demonstrated the removal of an obstacle by casting a demon from a child).

The kinship between the gifts of faith and prophecy, which comes later in this same group of five, is conspicuous in Paul's statement of Acts 27:25: "For I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told." In making his prophecy regarding the safety of the ship's crew, Paul did so under the full persuasion that God would perform the miraculous thing he had predicted, which very thing God did Acts 27:44. His special gift of faith enabled him to make such a dogmatic prediction.

That certain individuals had this special capability, however, does not excuse other Christians from failure to live by faith. This quality of life is a general Christian responsibility, as well as a special capability possessed by only some in Christ's

body. It is the general responsibility that is referred to when the Scripture records, "We walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7~, or when it speaks of "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6~. Hence, no Christian can afford to turn his back on trust in God as a basic rule of life.

"Gifts of healings." The book of Acts is replete with instances when a second kind of faith-oriented gift was in action, "gifts of healings." Both words are plural in the Greek, pointing to a variety of such gifts designed for different kinds of sicknesses. A crippled man was healed in Acts 3:6-8. Many of the sick were healed in Acts 5:15-16. Paralyzed and lame people were healed in Acts 8:7. A blind man received his sight and a paralyzed man the use of his limbs in Acts 9:17-18, 33-35. Diseased people were healed in Acts 19:12, as was one afflicted with fever and dysentery in Acts 28:8.

As reflected in all these situations, the gifts of healings did not result from human medical practice but had to do with cures wrought by special spiritual power. As is true with other spiritual gifts, this was an ability bestowed upon some in the church, but not all. When in possession of this ability, a person became the specific divine channel for producing a miraculous cure for a physical problem. This is not to say that the same individual could cure every illness he confronted, for healing was not always what God wanted (cf. 2 Cor. 12:8-9~. But he did become the vehicle of God in set circumstances for accomplishing such a spectacular work.

In grasping the purpose of this gift, it is important that one understand the circumstances in which God was pleased to manifest it. The example of Acts 3:6-8 is an illustration. On this

occasion, Peter exercised the gift in restoring a crippled man to normal health, and through this miraculous deed gained a hearing for the dramatic sermon delivered on this very occasion (Acts 3:12-26~. Without the bodily restoration, Peter would have had no audience. With the miraculous cure, he had a stamp of divine approval on what he had to say to the Jewish audience on that significant day. The healing obviously served to verify Peter's words in the minds of his listeners.

"Gifts of healing," then, were part of the "miracles and wonders and signs" that God granted through Jesus (Acts 2:22 and His disciples following Pentecost (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:13; 14:3; 15:12. They all served to confirm the gospel message in a day when no verified, written New Testament existed.

An important emphasis in connection with this gift, as well as with those that have preceded it, is that divine healing through the gift of healing is not the only divine healing spoken of in the Bible. In fact, the gift as an authenticating mark upon a certain individual and his message in the first century A.D. is different from God's commitment to heal the sick then and now in answer to prayer (cf. James 5:15. It is the privilege, even the responsibility, of every Christian to pray for physical healing, even though no individual in this day and time possesses the gift of healing. The day of divine healing has not passed, though the day of divine healers has. Healing goes on, but miraculous confirmation of specific individuals as vehicles of divine revelation does not because of the completion of New Testament revelation.

The recurring emphasis in the paragraph (vv.4-11 upon the

unified source of all the gifts is worthy of another mention. Faith is "by the same Spirit" (v. 9~. To be sure, variety characterizes different members of any body, but the Holy Spirit Himself is the agent for producing whatever variety there is. The Greek preposition translated "by" both times in verse 9 varies from the word for "by" in verse 8. In verse 9, "by" carries the connotation "in the power of" the one Spirit. The end result is essentially the same, however. The same Person lies behind the operation each time, and the net result because of this unified source must be unity among Christians.

12:10-Sample gifts: three more gifts for the will and two gifts for the tongue.

"Effecting of miracles." A third gift in the category of faith and healings is "effectings [the word is plural in the Greek, standing for individual cases where miracles were performed] of miracles." While miracles were broader than healings, which covered only one type of miracle, they were not as general as faith; miracles were only one way in which the gift of faith manifested itself. A sample miracle that was not a healing, strictly speaking, was bringing a person back to life ~cf. Acts 9:40].

Another instance of this gift's operation occurs in the blinding of Elymas Acts 13:8-11). The net result of this judgment against an adversary was to bring special attention to what Paul had to say following the miraculous feat (Acts 13:12). The confirmatory effect of the gift of miracles is thus like the effect of other gifts in this second category: these are a means for validating God's spokesmen and their messages. Such a need existed only so long as the church was without its

own authenticated written revelation, a condition that prevailed through the first century A.D. Once all had been written that God wanted written, no further place was open for this or any other confirmatory gift.

This is not to say that miracles have not occurred since A.D. 100. They have happened and continue according to God's providence. But the medium of their accomplishment is no longer the spiritual gift of miracles: the need no longer exists to verify specific persons as channels of new revelation, for new revelation ceased with the writing of the last New Testament book. The age of miracles continues, but the age of miracle workers has passed.

The gift of "prophecy." It is surprising at first to find prophecy listed as one of the confirmatory gifts. It more frequently finds its association with gifts that pertain to the mind ~cf. 1 Cor. 12:28-29; 13:2; 14:30. A possibility is that Paul chose to place it among these gifts early in chapter 12 to emphasize its dual nature, that of providing confirmation as well as revelation. This could be a very effective move in "selling" prophecy as the gift to be cultivated in the Corinthian assembly ~cf. 1 Cor. 14, where the desirability of prophecy is so strongly stressed).

By separating prophecy from the words of wisdom and knowledge, Paul has no intention of denying its intimate association with them. But at this stage, he chose to emphasize the predictive element that was an indispensable characteristic of the New Testament prophet. In comparison with the Old Testament prophet, the predictive element had a much smaller place in the New Testament counterpart. Nevertheless, it is

present Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11; Rev. 1:3~. It was the ability to prophesy future happenings accurately that provided the gift with its own authenticating value.

A good question to raise is what does this gift have to do with faith? The answer is clear in Paul's response to a crisis during his voyage of Acts 27. In verse 25 of that chapter he says, "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God, that it will turn out exactly as I have been told." Paul confidently predicted the safety of all on board the ship in spite of the imminent dangers confronting them, and he made his firm affirmation on the basis of his belief in what God had told him. By faith, he was able to speak with authority regarding the future. Prophecy, then, is another kind of faith manifestation.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the accuracy with which Paul predicted what ultimately happened made him a respected authority in his companions' eyes. This was evidenced when they began heeding his advice (Acts 27:34-36, 44).

God has not continued to bestow the predictive powers that belonged to such first-century Christians as Agabus, the daughters of Philip, and Paul. Written by the apostle John, Revelation gives notice of the termination of prophecy. It specifically states that no prophetic additions are to be tolerated Rev. 22:18. It is quite evident in this prohibition that God incorporated into this one, great, final prophecy all the predictive elements that would be needed by the church in coming generations, until such time as these find their fulfillment in connection with Christ's second advent. Any

attempt on man's part to add to the contents of the Apocalypse subsequent to its completion would constitute an attempt to add to "the words of the prophecy of this book," and hence would provoke from God plagues over and above those described in the book itself. For this reason, the wise approach is to limit prophecy to the period before John concluded the writing of Revelation at the end of the first century A.D. (For further discussion of this aspect of prophecy, see Appendix C at the rear of this volume; for further discussion of the gift of prophecy in general, see discussion at 12:28 and Appendixes A and D; for an evaluation of a recent unusual view of the gift, see Appendix B~.

"Distinguishing of Spirits." The fifth and last gift in the list of faith-oriented manifestations is "distinguish[ing] of spirits." To be sure, all Christians should develop discernment in spiritual matters. That is what Paul has advocated earlier in this chapter (vv. 2-3), where he supplies tests for distinguishing the true from the false. First John 4:1 advocates the same for every believer: "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." Yet, an additional need existed for a special class of gifted individuals who could pass immediate judgment on utterances given in a Christian assembly.

The gift of discernment filled that need for an immediate ruling on whether the words spoken originated with the Holy Spirit or with some other spirit. Paul elaborates upon the exercise of this gift in 1 Corinthians 14:29 in the words "let the others pass judgment," where the Greek verb meaning "pass judgment" is the same root as the noun translated

"distinguishing" in 1 Corinthians 12:10. Such specialized discernment accompanied prophetic utterances, and herein lies the explanation of its inclusion right after the gift of prophecy. In any given instance, someone other than the prophetic speaker of the moment was to judge the source of the utterance. The wording of 14:29 indicates that the ability of discerning spirits normally belonged to those who were also prophets.

The particular need for special discernment arose in cases where the spoken message contained no direct blasphemy against Jesus as Lord and Christ. The criteria of 1 Corinthians 12:3, as well as that which came later in 1 John 2:22 and 4:1-3, tested such obvious violations. Supernatural insights were necessary, however, in cases where utterances were not so obviously wrong. For example, on the surface, the statement of the damsel in Acts 16:17 bore all the earmarks of truth: "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." Special ability on Paul's part enabled him to recognize the source of the utterance as being "a spirit of divination" (Acts 16:16, 18) and not the Holy Spirit.

The use of "spirits" in 1 Corinthians 12:10 carries a force similar to that conveyed by the same Greek term in 1 Corinthians 14:12, which translates the word as "spiritual gifts." The sense is "spirit-manifestations." A recognition of spirit-manifestations also involves, of course, a recognition of the spirit who prompts such an utterance. In 14:12, the source is presumed to be the Holy Spirit, whereas in the present verse, the source may or may not be the Holy Spirit. It was the responsibility of the discernor to determine this. In many cases,

he doubtless had to rule against the utterance when he found its source to be some other spirit, either human or demonic.

The confirmatory contribution of this gift is not immediately obvious, and it probably finds its place in the present list only because of its relationship to prophecy.

"Kinds of tongues." The last two gifts named in verse 10 constitute a third category of gifts, those that relate to the tongue. The Greek text again marks this transition by its choice of a different word for "another" in connection with "kinds of tongues." This is the same variation marking the transition to the second category at the beginning of verse 9, where the "another" connected with "faith" likewise signifies "another of a different kind." As already pointed out, the other instances of "another" in verses 8-10 are representations of a word that means "another of the same kind."

Paul, guided by the Spirit, chose to put tongues and their interpretation into a class by themselves to underscore the differences between them and the rest of the gifts. That step hopefully would counteract the disproportionate amount of attention given to tongues in the Corinthian church.

The special enabling resulting from the tongues gift meant unusual capabilities with foreign languages.' A person received immediate ability to speak languages that he had never acquired by natural means. This, of course, is a psychological and natural impossibility, and the ability to communicate in this manner is explainable only from the standpoint of supernatural powers. That was the nature of the gift exemplified in Acts 2, where the "tongues" of verses 4 and 11 were one and the same

phenomenon as the "language" in verses 6 and 8. An atmosphere of amazement reigned on that birthday of the Christian church because here were people speaking dialects representative of widely scattered territories in the Roman Empire who could not possibly have learned those languages by natural means. "They continued in amazement" Acts 2:12. It was the amazement that provided Peter with a large audience for his great Pentecost sermon Acts 2:14-36~. The miraculous tongues attracted a crowd of people who then heard Peter preach the gospel in Greek, a language common to them all.

The striking feature about tongues that distinguished them from the remainder of the gifts was the degree to which the mind remained in the background while the gift operated. To this same degree, tongues were an unsuitable vehicle for providing edification among Christians. This shortcoming is the burden of much that Paul says on the subject in chapter 14. He strongly expresses his personal determination that the mind and understanding be active in ministry to other Christians in 14:19: "However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue." Tongues were no doubt a gift that, like the others, originated with the Holy Spirit. Once bestowed, however, they were subject to misuse. Such misuse among Corinthian Christians goes far in explaining the need for a section such as 1 Corinthians 12-14.

From the use of tongues in Acts 2, it is immediately evident that the gift also lay in the realm of those that God was pleased to use for purposes of confirmation. In fact, Paul specifically categorized the gift under that heading when he later referred to its "sign" purpose *1 Cor. 14:22. The purpose of a "sign"*

was to arrest attention and bring about a reflection upon some spiritual lesson taught by the sign. It was, in other words, a miracle with an ethical purpose-a fingerpost of God, as it were. That tongues were successful in such an evidential way the three times they are mentioned in Acts 2; 10; 19 goes without saying.

Yet the Corinthians had cultivated a habitual use of tongues among themselves, where verification was not the prime need, if it was a need at all. Paul's plea with them in chapter 14 was to recognize the purpose and place of the gifts and to cultivate among their own number only those gifts that contributed to edification through instruction. Tongues could very well have served a useful purpose in the city of Corinth-but as a means for convincing nonChristians rather than becoming a source of confusion among Christians. Commercially and geographically, Corinth was a city merchants and travelers visited while in transit. As an evangelistic tool in gaining a hearing for the gospel, the tongues gift could have ministered to these foreigners to very great advantage. That was the use to which Paul put the gift as he traveled about in his missionary labors (1 Cor. 14:18, 22j. If one could for a moment ponder the wisdom of God in sovereignly endowing the Corinthian church so richly with this gift, it would seem to have been His intention that the gift be used in metropolitan surroundings like these.

A final note about "kinds of tongues" concerns the meaning of "kinds." A probable explanation derives from a similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 14:10, where the "kinds of languages" in essence has the sense of "different languages." This parallels the meaning of the present expression. "Different tongues [or languages]" 1 Cor. 12:10) differs from the

expression "different languages" ~1 Cor. 14:10 in that the former were the result of supernatural enablement, while the latter came about through natural processes of learning.

"The interpretation of tongues." As the name implies, "the interpretation of tongues" was an ability to translate into one's own native tongue from a language that had not been learned by natural means.' Its positioning at this point in the list grows out of its function as a companion gift to "kinds of tongues." The gift furnished the means of transforming a message unintelligible to the immediate listeners into one that could be understood, making it spiritually profitable.

The New Testament has no specific instance of the gift's use. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul argues strongly for its use among the Corinthians in chapter 14 [vv. 5, 13-19, 27-28]. Only when accompanied by interpretation was the gift of tongues legitimate in any sense for use in a predominantly Christian gathering, since tongues alone could not edify or otherwise benefit those who were already Christians. Edification came only when the gift of interpretation communicated a message to their intelligence. In one sense, interpretation had a strong kinship to the gift of prophecy: through both, listeners learned divine revelation and mysteries [13:2; 14:2, 6, 30]. The difference between the two lay in the interpretation's dependence upon a previous tongues utterance, while prophecy was dependent solely upon a direct inner revelation from God.

A review of the list of nine gifts in verses 8-10 is impressive in the variety that characterizes Spirit manifestations to various members of Christ's body. In the face of such variety, however,

it is acutely important to recognize the unity that underlies all the gifts. So, the text in verse 11 returns once again to the theme of unity.

12:11-The common origin: one and the same Spirit. "All these things" in verse 11 means "all these manifestations" to which verses 8-10 have just referred. Many distinguishing features in the list differentiate the various gifts from each other. Each gift is, as it were, an entity in itself, and not subject to confusion with any other because of excessive similarity.

A diametric opposite to that variety comes in verse 11 through the agent who originates all the manifestations. He is "one and the same Spirit""one" as a contrast to the large number of members through whom the manifestations operate and "the same" as an antithesis to the variety of ways in which the gifts make their appearance. As the one and only immediate executor of spiritual ministries, the Holy Spirit stands in bold contrast to the variety of persons active in the performance of a variety of supernatural tasks. The great need among the Corinthians was for unity. What stronger foundation could Paul build upon than the oneness of the Person from whom stemmed all the gifts that so intensely interested these Christians? With them, these very gifts had come to be a cause for serious dissension, whereas a proper understanding would have bound the Corinthian church into a more cohesive unit.

The way the Spirit deals with individual members of the church also has strong emphasis. Gifts are not meted out on a mass-production basis, but "to each one individually" He gives a gift or gifts. Each individual is therefore different from every other member of the body. No carbon copies are among

them. Everyone has a combination of gifts that makes him distinct from all the rest. (See Appendix F regarding "How to Discover and Use Your Spiritual Gift(s)" for an elaboration on how each person is unique.) Only the Spirit knows the need and capacity of each person and the place he is to fill in the body of Christ. Because He knows this, He can intelligently and adequately equip each one.

Closely associated with His individual attention to every Christian is the basis on which He gives all spiritual gifts. Erroneous concepts about how spiritual gifts are distributed have multiplied. Their disbursement is not on an arbitrary basis, nor on the basis of whim, whether human or otherwise. It is not in accordance with man's wishes or requests, nor do gifts come as a form of reward or recognition for human achievement, spiritual or otherwise. The one and only criterion for the Spirit's distribution of spiritual gifts is according to the words "as He wills" (v. 11; cf. "just as He desired," v. 18). Since He possesses the capacity of volition, He is capable of making determinations like this. He can and does decide what combination of gifts is best for each person and his role in the body of Christ.

It is futile, therefore, for any individual to desire some special spiritual function that he does not already possess. It may very well be that he needs to discover some capability he already possesses, but he cannot possibly attain any new spiritual ability, as the divine plan and purpose has already decided this. At the moment a Christian assumes his place in the body of Christ, he comes to possess all the spiritual gifts he will ever have (cf. discussion at 12:13). Recognition of this hard and fast guideline will be necessary to clarify commands that some have

interpreted otherwise later in this section ~cf. 12:31; 14:1, 13).

Chapter Three