

SPIRITUAL GIFTS (charismata):

The word *charisma*, with a single exception (1 Peter 4:10), occurs in the New Testament only in the Pauline Epistles, and in the plural form is employed in a technical sense to denote extraordinary gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon Christians to equip them for the service of the church. Various lists of the *charismata* are given (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11,28-30; compare Eph 4:7-12), none of which, it is evident, are exhaustive. Some of the gifts enumerated cannot be said to belong in any peculiar sense to the distinctive category. "Faith" (1 Cor 12:9), for example, is the essential condition of all Christian life; though there were, no doubt, those who were endowed with faith beyond their fellows. "Giving" and "mercy" (Rom 12:8) are among the ordinary graces of the Christian character; though some would possess them more than others. "Ministry" (Rom 12:7), again, i.e. service, was the function to which every Christian was called and the purpose to which every one of the special gifts was to be devoted (Eph 4:12). The term is applied to any spiritual benefit, as the confirmation of Christians in the faith by Paul (Rom 1:11). And as the general function of ministry appears from the first in two great forms as a ministry of word and deed (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Cor 1:17), so the peculiar charismatic gifts which Paul mentions fall into two great classes-those which qualify their possessors for a ministry of the word, and those which prepare them to render services of a practical nature.

(1) **Apostleship** (1 Cor 12:28 f; compare Eph 4:11).-The name "apostle" is used in the New Testament in a narrower and a wider sense. It was the peculiar title and privilege of the Twelve (Matt 10:2; Luke 6:13; Acts 1:25 f), but was claimed by Paul on special grounds (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 9:1, etc.); it was probably conceded to James the Lord's brother (1 Cor 15:7; Gal 1:19), and in a freer use of the term is applied to Barnabas (Acts 14:4,14; compare 1 Cor 9:5-6), Andronicus and Junias (Rom 16:7).

1. **Gifts Connected with Ministry of the Word:** From the *Didache* (xi.4 ff) we learn that the ministry of apostles was continued in the church into the sub-apostolic age (see *LITERATURE, SUB-APOSTOLIC*). The special gift and function of apostleship, taken in the widest sense, was to proclaim the word of the gospel (Acts 6:2; 1 Cor 1:17, etc.), and in particular to proclaim it to the world outside of the church, whether Jewish or gentile (Gal 2:7-8). See *APOSTLE*.

(2) **Prophecy** (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:10,28-29), under which may be included exhortation (Rom 12:8; compare 1 Cor 14:3). The gift of prophecy was bestowed at Pentecost upon the church as a whole (Acts 2:16 ff), but in particular measure upon certain individuals who were distinctively known as prophets. Only a few of the Christian prophets are directly referred to-Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32), the prophets at Antioch (13:1), Agabus and the prophets from Jerusalem (11:27 f), the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (verse 9). But 1 Corinthians shows that there were several of them in the Corinthian church; and probably they were to be found

in every Christian community. Some of them moved about from church to church (Acts 11:27 f; 21:10); and in the Didache we find that even at the celebration of the Eucharist the itinerant prophet still takes precedence of the local ministry of bishops and deacons (Didache x.7).

It is evident that the functions of the prophet must sometimes have crossed those of the apostle, and so we find Paul himself described as a prophet long after he had been called to the apostleship (Acts 13:1). And yet there was a fundamental distinction. While the apostle, as we have seen, was one "sent forth" to the unbelieving world, the prophet was a minister to the believing church (1 Cor 14:4,22). Ordinarily his message was one of "edification, and exhortation, and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3). Occasionally he was empowered to make an authoritative announcement of the divine will in a particular case (Acts 13:1 ff). In rare instances we find him uttering a prediction of a future event (Acts 11:28; 21:10 f).

(3) With prophecy must be associated the discernings of spirits (1 Cor 12:10; 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20 f; compare 1 John 4:1). The one was a gift for the speaker, the other for those who listened to his words. The prophet claimed to be the medium of divine revelations (1 Cor 14:30); and by the spiritual discernment of his hearers the truth of his claim was to be judged (verse 29). There were false prophets as well as genuine prophets, spirits of error as well as spirits of truth (1 John 4:1-6; compare 2 Thess 2:2; Didache xi). And while prophesying was never to be despised, the utterances of the prophets were to be "proved" (1 Thess 5:20 f), and that in them which came from the Spirit of God spiritually judged (1 Cor 2:14), and so discriminated from anything that might be inspired by evil spirits. See

DISCERNINGS OF SPIRITS.

(4) Teaching (Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28 f).-As distinguished from the prophet, who had the gift of uttering fresh truths that came to him by way of vision and revelation, the teacher was one who explained and applied established Christian doctrine-the rudiments and first principles of the oracles of God (Heb 5:12). Possibly (5) the word of knowledge (gnosis) and (6) the word of wisdom (sophia) (1 Cor 12:8) are to be distinguished, the first as the utterance of a prophetic and ecstatic intuition, the second as the product of study and reflective thought; and so are to be related respectively to the functions of the prophet and the teacher. See TEACHER,

TEACHING.

(7) Kinds of tongues (1 Cor 12:10,28,30).-What Paul means by this he explains fully in chapter 14. The gift was not a faculty of speaking in unknown foreign languages, for the tongues (glossai) are differentiated from the "voices" or languages (phoniai) by which men of one nation are distinguished from those of another (verses 10,11).

And when the apostle says that the speaker in an unknown tongue addressed himself to God and not to men (verses 2,14) and was not understood by those who heard him (verse 2), that he edified himself (verse 4) and yet lost the power of conscious thought while praying with the spirit (verses 14 f), it would appear that the "tongues" must have been of the nature of devout ejaculations and broken and disjointed words, uttered almost unconsciously under the stress of high ecstatic feeling.

(8) Parallel to this gift was that of the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:10,30). If the gift of tongues had been a power of speaking unknown foreign languages, the interpretation of tongues would necessarily have meant the faculty of interpreting a language unknown to the interpreter; for translation from a familiar language could hardly be described as a charisma. But the principle of economy makes it improbable that the edification of the church was accomplished in this round-about way by means of a double miracle—a miracle of foreign speech followed by a miracle of interpretation. If, on the other hand, the gift of tongues was such as has been described, the gift of interpretation would consist in turning what seemed a meaningless utterance into words easy to be understood (verse 9). The interpretation might be given by the speaker in tongues himself (verses 5,13) after his mood of ecstasy was over, as he translated his exalted experiences and broken cries into plain intelligible language. Or, if he lacked the power of self-interpretation, the task might be undertaken by another possessed of this special gift (verses 27,28). The ability of a critic gifted with sympathy and insight to interpret the meaning of a picture or a piece of music, as the genius who produced it might be quite unable to do (e.g. Ruskin and Turner), will help us to understand how the ecstatic half-conscious utterances of one who had the gift of tongues might be put into clear and edifying form by another who had the gift of interpretation. See

TONGUES, GIFT OF.

2. Gifts Connected with Practical Service: (1) Workings of miracles (1 Cor 12:10,28-29).—The word used for miracles in this chapter (*dunamis*, literally, "powers") is employed in Acts (Acts 8:7,13; 19:11-12) so as to cover those cases of exorcism and the cure of disease which in Paul's list are placed under the separate category of "gifts of healing." As distinguished from the ordinary healing gift, which might be possessed by persons not otherwise remarkable, the "powers" point to a higher faculty more properly to be described as miraculous, and bestowed only upon certain leading men in the church. In 2 Cor 12:12 Paul speaks of the "powers" he wrought in Corinth as among "the signs of an apostle." In Heb 2:4 the writer mentions the "manifold powers" of the apostolic circle as part of the divine confirmation of their testimony. In Rom 15:18 ff Paul refers to his miraculous gifts as an instrument which Christ used for the furtherance of the gospel and the bringing of the Gentiles to obedience. The working of "powers," accordingly, was a gift which linked itself to the ministry of the word in respect of its bearing upon the truth of the gospel and the mission of the apostle to declare it. And yet, like the wider and lower gift of healing, it must be regarded primarily as a gift of practical beneficence, and only secondarily as a means of confirming the truth and authenticating its messenger by way of a sign. The Book of Acts gives several examples of "powers" that are different from ordinary healings. The raising of Dorcas (Acts 9:36 ff) and of Eutychus (20:9 ff) clearly belong to this higher class, and also, perhaps, such remarkable cures as those of the life-long cripple at the Temple gate (3:1 ff) and Aeneas of Lydda (9:32 ff).

(2) Gifts of healings (1 Cor 12:9,28,30).—See HEALING, GIFTS OF.

(3) Ruling (Rom 12:8), governments (1 Cor 12:28).—These were gifts of wise counsel and direction in the practical affairs of the church, such as by and by came to be

formally intrusted to presbyters or bishops. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, the ministry of office had not yet supplanted the ministry of inspiration, and Christian communities were guided and governed by those of their members whose wisdom in counsel proved that God through His Spirit had bestowed upon them the gift of ruling.

(4) **Helps (1 Cor 12:28).**-This has sometimes been understood to denote the lowliest Christian function of all in Paul's list, the function of those who have no pronounced gifts of their own and can only employ themselves in services of a subordinate kind.

But the usage of the Greek word (*antilempsis*) in the papyri as well as the Septuagint points to succor rendered to the weak by the strong; and this is confirmed for the New Testament when the same Greek word in its verbal form (*antilambano*) is used in Acts 20:35, when Paul exhorts the elders of the Ephesian church to follow his example in helping the weak. Thus, as the gift of government foreshadowed the official powers of the presbyter or bishop, the gift of helps appears to furnish the germ of the gracious office of the deacon-the "minister" paragraph excellence, as the name *diakonos* denotes-which we find in existence at a later date in Philippi and Ephesus (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13), and which was probably created, on the analogy of the *diakonia* of the Seven in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1 ff), as a ministry, in the first place, to the poor. See, further, HELPS.

LITERATURE. --Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, Lect X; Neander, *Hist of the Planting of the Christian Church*, I, 131 ff; Weizsacker, *Apostolic Age*, II, 255-75; Lindsay, *Church and Ministry*, passim; *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, IV, article "Spiritual Gifts"; Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, III, article "Charismata"; Hauck-Herzog, *Realencyklopadie fur protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, VI, article "Geistesgaben."

J. C. LAMBERT

(from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by BibleSoft)