

The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14

David L. Baker

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I. INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 13 is very well-known as the 'Hymn to Love' and it will ever be treasured as the supreme exposition of that theme. However, it is less often realized that it is an integral part of the argument of chs. 12-14, perhaps because chs. 12 and 14 deal with less understood and therefore commonly ignored subjects such as "spiritual gifts" and "speaking in tongues". The rapid advance of the Pentecostal movement, probably the fastest-growing segment of the Church today, and the obvious relevance of these chapters to that phenomenon, necessitate a reconsideration of these chapters, particularly since the majority of commentaries do not give an adequate interpretation of them.¹

In this article I attempt only to sketch some of the main lines along which I believe the section should be interpreted. I argue that the key to the three chapters is the correct understanding of the first phrase, *περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν* ("Now about the spiritual gifts", 12: 1). Moreover I try to show that it is the absence of quotation marks in the Greek language which is responsible for many of the problems of interpretation in these chapters, and that in a number of places they are to be supplied in translation (viz. 12: 1, 31; 13: 4; 14: 1, 12, 37, 39). It will be necessary to discuss in some detail the meaning and use of the words *χάρισμα*, *ζηλώω* and *πνευματικός* in chs. 12-14 before proposing an interpretation of the section.

II. *χάρισμα*, "GIFT (OF GRACE)"

χάρισμα comes from the verb *χαρίζομαι*, which in turn is derived from the noun *χάρις*. *χάρις* is a common word in classical, LXX and NT Greek, which means basically "attractiveness" or

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"gracefulness". A development of this meaning occurs as it is used for a subjective attitude: actively for "kindness" or "favour", and passively for "gratitude". In the NT we find a further development of this to mean "favour towards men contrary to their desert". *χάρις* is also used objectively for the result or effect of a gracious action, and all these meanings are summed up in one word "grace".² The derivative verb, *χαρίζομαι*, occurs only twelve times in LXX and usually means simply "give" or "grant". In the NT it often means "give freely", "bestow as a favour" (Luke/Acts five times; Paul five times), as well as being used to express forgiveness (eight times). *χαρίζομαι* means therefore "to give", with special reference to the grace,

¹ Most fail to distinguish between *πνευματικά* (12: 1) and the *χάρισματα*. (12: 4), and understand speaking in tongues to be ecstatic speech, as will be seen below. The most satisfactory treatment I have found is M.-A. Chevallier's book, *Esprit de Dieu, Paroles D'Hommes* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 1966), to which I shall frequently refer in the following exposition

² Cf. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *χάρις*, in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1957), and the bibliography there; R. K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, I (ET: London, 1952), §§ 32-4; E. D. Burton, *Galatians* (ICC, Edinburgh, 1920), pp. 423f.

favour and kindness which inspire and accompany the gift. The ending $-\mu\alpha^3$ denotes something concrete, the product of an action, and therefore we see that $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is the result of the action $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$, i.e. "a (free) gift". Similarly the relationship of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ to $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is that of abstract to concrete, source to effect or manifestation, action to product. $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ does something and $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is the result. An alternative translation would therefore be "gift of grace", which although not fundamentally different from "free gift" emphasizes the source of the gift rather than its nature.

The word $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ is very rare, not being used at all in the classical writers and LXX⁴, and only being found occasionally in later Greek writings.⁵ It is found seventeen times in the NT⁶, all but one in the writings attributed to Paul, and in the majority of these passages it is translated simply by "gift" (e.g. RSV: twelve out of seventeen). In Rom. 5: 15f. and 6: 23 it is translated "free gift" with reference to the gift of eternal life, and in 2 Cor. 1: 11 "blessing". Finally in 1 Cor. 1: 7 it is translated "gift" by NEB, but "spiritual gift" by RSV (cf. JB); the former is preferable since the translation "spiritual gift" is based on the theory that this is the meaning of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ in 1 Cor. 12, which I shall dispute below.

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There is no indication in 1 Cor. 1: 7 that Paul is referring to "gifts of the Spirit" in any technical sense: although he is obviously talking about gifts which are spiritual in nature he does not say this explicitly.

We turn to the five occurrences of $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$ in 1 Cor. 12, in vv. 4, 9, 28, 30 and 31. Although $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ is translated simply "gifts" in RSV, NEB and JB, it is often thought that it is being used here as a technical term for the "gifts of the Spirit"⁷, a view which depends on the assumption that the $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ are the same as the $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ ("spiritual gifts") of v.1.⁸ This assumption is however gratuitous, and we shall see that it destroys the main point of the section, in which Paul attacks the Corinthians' stereotyped and limited view of the $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ (discussed below) and presents them with a fuller doctrine of the $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$, those gifts which God in his grace gives freely to men. If we can forget the assumption that the $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ and the $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\nu\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ are identical then there is no good reason for translating or interpreting $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ in 1 Cor. 12 other than elsewhere, namely "gifts (of grace)". This is not of course to deny that it is the Spirit who gives and inspires these gifts, but to point out

³ Cf. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *Romans* (ICC, Edinburgh, 1902⁵), p. 99: "not so much the thing done as the completed, determinate, act".

⁴ Except in variant texts of Si. 7: 33 (for $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$), 38: 30 (for $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$) and Theodotion Ps. 30 (31): 22, where it unlikely to be original since it would make little sense.

⁵ *Didache* 1: 5; Ignatius (4 times); *Sibylline Oracles* 2: 54; "gift of God"; Alciphron 3.17.4, "present"; Philo, *Legum Allegoria*, 3.78 (twice), "gift of grace", "act of grace"; also I Clement 38: 1; *BGU* 551.3; 1044.5.

⁶ Rom. 1: 11; 5: 15f.; 6: 23; 11: 29; 12: 6; 1 Cor. 1: 7; 7: 7; 12: 4, 9, 28, 30f.; 2 Cor. 1: 11; 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6; 1 Pet 4: 10.

⁷ E.g. Arndt and Gingrich, $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$, 2, in *Lexicon*; H. Conzelmann (*Meyer-Kommentar*¹¹, Göttingen, 1969); A. J. Grieve, "Charismata", in *ERE*, III (Edinburgh, 1910), p. 368b; F. W. Grosheide (London, 1954); *Today's English Version*; cf. H.-D. Wendland (Göttingen, 1968¹²). All references are to commentaries on 1 Corinthians (*ad loc.*) unless otherwise stated.

⁸ So A. Bittlinger, *Gifts and Graces* (ET: London, 1967, p. 119n); Bultmann, *Theology*, § 14.1; Conzelmann, p. 245; E. Kasemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, (London, 1964), pp. 63ff.; H. Lietzmann (Tübingen, 1949); C. F. Sleeper, "Pentecost and Resurrection", *JBL* 84(1965), p. 397; cf. E. Schweizer, *TDNT*, VI (German edition 1959), p. 437; F. Godet (Vol. II, ET: Edinburgh, 1887).

that the word χάρισματα does not of itself mean this. The wrong understanding of this word has been the root of much misunderstanding of 1 Cor. 12-14, and its correction is therefore a necessary preliminary to the proper interpretation of the chapters.⁹

III. ζηλώω "TO BE ZEALOUS", "TO STRIVE FOR"

Paul uses ζηλώω and its cognates ζήλος, ζηλωτής for an attitude of concern, good or bad, towards things or other people. In 2 Cor. 7 : 11; 9 : 2; Titus 2: 14 the meaning is simply "zeal" or "enthusiasm" without any moral overtones, whereas in Rom. 13: 13; 1 Cor. 3: 3; 13: 4; 2 Cor. 12: 20; Gal. 5: 20 the meaning is "jealousy". In Rom. 10: 2; Gal. 1: 14; Phil. 3: 6 (cf. Acts 21: 20, *al.*) he refers to a Jewish attitude, especially towards their traditions, and in 2 Cor. 7: 7; 11: 2; Gal. 4: 17f. he speaks of an attitude towards another person, that of deep concern. Finally, in our

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present passage, Paul uses these words four times (12: 31; 14: 1, 12, 39) with reference to striving for gifts.

It is clear that the meaning in 1 Cor. 12-14 is distinctive and nowhere else in Paul do we find a command to exercise ζήλος. Paul normally uses the words either to describe an actual attitude or to warn against jealousy. The unfavourable sense of the words is particularly evident in the only other occurrences in this letter, 3: 3; 13: 4. The significance of these facts becomes clearer if we examine the context of the four occurrences of the words in 1 Cor. 12-14. In each case the clause containing ζηλώω or ζηλωτής is followed by another which qualifies it in some way:

12: 31: "Strive for (ζηλοῦτε)¹⁰ the greater gifts. And now I will show you a better way";

14: 1: "...strive for (ζηλοῦτε) the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy";

14: 12: "...since you are eager for (ζηλωταί) spiritual gifts¹¹, seek (ζηλτεῖτε) to excel in building up...";

14: 39f.: "...strive (ζηλοῦτε) to prophesy... let everything be done decently and in order".

The simplest explanation for these facts is that Paul is quoting the Corinthians either explicitly (as in the phrase ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά, "strive for the spiritual gifts", 14: 1) or implicitly (as in 14: 12). That ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά in particular was a catch-phrase in the Corinthian Church is confirmed by the investigation of πνευματικός below, which shows that this word is also uncharacteristic of Paul's vocabulary. Again we note in 14: 12 that Paul

⁹ Cf. the detailed discussion of χάρισματα in Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, 139-71.

¹⁰ Ζηλοῦτε could be an indicative instead of an imperative and this is argued by G. Iber, "Zum Verständnis von 1 Cor. 12: 31", *ZNW* 54 (1963), pp. 43-52. Since the imperative contradicts the rest of ch. 12 it is surprising that few others have favoured this translation. However, if, as I argue, ζηλοῦτε has implicit quotation marks, the imperative makes sense and it is a better parallel to 14: 1 (which is undoubtedly an imperative). Cf. E.-B. Allo (Paris, 1956²); T. Holtz, "Das Kennzeichen des Geistes (1 Kor. XII. 1-3)", *NTS* 18 (1971/2), pp. 365f.

¹¹ Literally 'spirits', πνευμάτων, which is probably intended to be equivalent to πνευματικῶν; cf. C. K. Barrett (London, 1968); A. Robertson and A. Plummer ICC, Edinburgh, 1914²).

substitutes a different verb, ζητώ, for ζηλώ, when he encourages them to excel in edification, and thus avoids the word which was connected with the misunderstanding and division in Corinth. It seems therefore that the Corinthians had introduced the word ζηλώ and that it was associated with their wrong attitudes towards each other (cf. 3: 3). Paul deliberately avoids using the word positively in the letter, except in quotation, and thus attempts to direct their attention to mutual up-building (12: 7; 14,

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passim), the sovereign will of the Spirit (12: 11) and to love, without which all else is of no value (ch. 13).¹²

IV. πνευματικός "SPIRITUAL"

πνευματικός occurs fourteen times in 1 Corinthians:

(a) referring to persons, 2: 13, 15; 3: 1; 14: 37;

(b) referring to things, 2 : 13; 9: 11; 10: 3f.; 14: 1;

(c) referring to the spiritual resurrection body in contrast to the natural body, 15: 44-6 (four times). In 12: 1 τῶν πνευματικῶν has sometimes been taken to refer to "spiritual men"¹³ but more often to "spiritual gifts"¹⁴ and, although either translation is possible, the use in 14: 1 and the parallelism with χάρισματa (esp. 12: 31) favour the latter and the discussion below will confirm this. The important question is to ask which gifts are included in the category τὰ πνευματικά. Too often the meaning is deduced only on the basis of 12: 1-11 and it is assumed that περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν refers to the χάρισματa, those gifts listed in vv. 8-10.¹⁵

However, we have seen above (p. 226) that the πνευματικά are not necessarily the same as the χάρισματa, and if we look at ch. 14 we get a different picture altogether.¹⁶ We learn from 14: 1 that the chapter is to be about the πνευματικά, but we find that it is devoted almost entirely to a discussion of the relative merits and uses of prophecy and speaking in tongues.¹⁷ If we started reading at ch. 14 we would assume that the πνευματικά were prophecy and speaking in tongues, and if we examine this assumption we shall find that it is consistent with the text of the whole section and brings a new light to its interpretation.¹⁸ There is good reason to think that on each occasion in these three chapters Paul uses the word πνευματικός

¹² Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, ζηλώ, etc., in *Lexicon*; Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, pp. 161-3; A. Stumpff, ζηλώ, *TDNT*, It (German edition, 1935), 882-8.

¹³ E.g. F. F. Bruce (London, 1971); W. G. H. Simon (London, 1959); J. Weiss (Meyer-Kommentar⁹, Göttingen, 1910).

¹⁴ E.g. C. K. Barrett; *Calvin* (1546); Conzelmann; Godet; J. Héring (Neuchatel, Switzerland, 1949); Robertson and Plummer; A. P. Stanley (London, 18764); cf. J. Ruef: "One suspects the Corinthians asked about 'men' and Paul instructed them about 'gifts' " (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1971), p. 126.

¹⁵ Cf. p.226, n. 8. See also Allo; H. Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit* (Nottingham, 1934), p. 26f.

¹⁶ *TDNT*, VI, p. 437.

¹⁷ Paul does refer to interpretation (vv. 5, 13, 26-8) and to revelation, knowledge and teaching (v. 6; cf. v. 26), but these are incidental to the main argument.

¹⁸ Cf. Allo, p. 354; Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, pp. 161-3; C. F. G. Heinrici (Meyer-Kommentar⁷, Göttingen, 1888), p. 393.

that he is quoting the Corinthians. In 12: 1 Paul takes up a subject about which he had been asked by the Corinthians (cf. 7: 1, 25; 8: 1; 16: 1) and we have seen that Paul

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is quoting the Corinthians' terminology in 14: 1, "strive for (ζηλοῦτε) the spiritual gifts". It is clear in 14: 37, "if anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual...", that there were those in Corinth who claimed or were thought to be "spiritual" in some particular way, and 14: 12, "...since you are eager for (ζηλωταί) spiritual gifts...", is similar.

In this I am not, of course, intending to suggest that the two gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues are more spiritual than any other gifts: it was precisely this that was the error of the Corinthians. They asked Paul about the "spiritual gifts" (πνευματικά), by which in their circumscribed understanding of the Holy Spirit they meant above all prophecy and speaking in tongues, but Paul answers their question by referring to the many "gifts of grace" (χάρισματα) which God gives to Christians¹⁹. Their "spiritual gifts" are only two of these, and to emphasize the point he puts them right at the end of the list²⁰, although normally he ranks prophecy among the most important (12: 28-30; Rom. 12: 6). He is certainly not opposed to the gifts in themselves (14: 1, 5, 18, 39; cf. 1 Thess. 5: 19f.) but the Corinthians' attitude towards them is such that he has to spend two chapters setting in order their perspective before he can give a positive appraisal of them and answer their specific questions in ch. 14.

A few writers have argued that πνευματικός in 14: 37 is set over against "prophet" and refers only to the one who speaks in tongues.²¹ However, the contrast is not between προφήτης and πνευματικός but between Paul's authoritative teaching and any who might dispute it. That the subject in question is the two gifts "prophecy" and "speaking in tongues" is shown not only by Paul's placing them together at the bottom of the list in 12: 8-10 but by the fact that πνευματικά is plural and it refers to both gifts in 14: 1. Moreover the two gifts are closely associated as forms of inspired language in Acts (see 2: 4, 17; cf. 19: 6).

Much of this disagreement is based on a wrong impression that speaking in tongues is ecstatic in nature.²² But the rules which Paul gives for the control of the gift in 14: 26-33, together with

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the experience of those who exercise it, indicate that it is something which is under the individual's control, and that it should not therefore be described as ecstatic.²³ Paul's intention

¹⁹ Cf. Holtz, "Das Kennzeichnen des Geistes", p. 365.

²⁰ Together with the closely related gifts, discrimination of spirits and interpretation of tongues. Cf. Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, pp. 148f., note.

²¹ E.g. F. C. Baur (quoted by Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, p. 148n., q.v.); Stanley; cf. Holtz, "Das Kennzeichnen des Geistes", p. 368; Ruef, p. 124, Wendland, p. 105. Weiss, p. 294, thinks πνευματικά in 14: 37 is a person who speaks in tongues, yet in 14: 1 equates πνευματικός with χάρισματα.

²² Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon (ad loc.)* claim that γλωσσο is used in 1 Corinthians as a technical term for the "broken speech of persons in religious ecstasy"; cf. Conzelmann, p. 275; L. Morris (London, 1958); *NEB* (12: 10, etc.); Ruef, pp. xxvii, 124; J. Short (*IB*, New York, 1953); *Today's English Version*; C. S. C. Williams (*Peake's Commentary*, London, 1962).

in 1 Cor. 12-14 is not to oppose ecstatic speaking in tongues, or even to say that non-ecstatic gifts are better. He condemns implicitly the ecstasy which occurs in pagan religions (12: 2) but shows that in contrast the Christian is in control of himself and that everything in the church, including speaking in tongues, is to be done decently and in order (14: 40).

Finally it should be emphasized that it is the Corinthians' perspective and use of words which is at fault rather than their theology. Even they did not think that inspiration by the Spirit caused only prophecy and speaking in tongues, and although they were too fond of these two gifts it was not to the complete exclusion of other contributions to worship, such as teaching and hymns (14: 26). Their fascination by these more spectacular gifts was a relapse from a proper Christian perspective towards paganism (12: 2), as well as being due to a sense of living in the last days which led them to look for appropriate signs. "Les Corinthiens sont convaincus de vivre les temps eschatologiques; ils recherchent donc celles des manifestations pneumatiques qui leur paraissent les plus caractéristiques du nouvel eon: la prophétie et la glossolalie".²⁴

We see therefore that the theme of the three chapters is δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, and that this should be translated "Now about the 'spiritual gifts'," or, to make the point clearer, "Now about what you call the 'spiritual gifts'."

V. THE INTERPRETATION OF I COR. 12-14

It has been shown that the opening four words of 1 Cor. 12-14, περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν ("Now about the 'spiritual gifts'"), are the key to the understanding of the section. The Corinthians have asked Paul about the "spiritual gifts", by which they were thinking above all of two gifts which were particularly frequent at Corinth. In addition to their association with entry into the Church (Acts 10: 44-8)²⁵ and their appropriateness to the last days in which the Corinthians believed themselves to be living, another reason for the popularity of the gifts of tongues and prophecy was probably the very nature of the gifts. They were, after all, impressive, much

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more so than a word of wisdom or the ability to help others, and yet they were not unduly demanding on the individual concerned. To work miracles or to heal would have required a great deal more faith and would have been much more liable to ridicule if it had failed, whereas these gifts were obvious manifestations of the Spirit and had a certain air of mystery about them. Moreover they were thought to bestow upon the person who employed them an aura of being "spiritual" (14: 37)²⁶, and so a phrase was coined which Paul knew of or which they had mentioned in their letter, "strive for the spiritual gifts" (14: 1).

²³ See R. H. Gundry, " 'Ecstatic Utterance' (NEB)", *JTS*, n.s. 17 (1966), 299-307. Cf. Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 150. There seems little point in denying that the gift today is the same as that known in Corinth; the descriptions are similar, whatever the essence of the phenomenon. Paul probably understood it to involve speaking in foreign languages, as in the miracle at Pentecost; cf. J. G. Davies, "Pentecost and Glossolalia", *JTS*, n.s. 3 (1952), 228-31.

²⁴ Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, p. 148; cf. pp. 149, 174.

²⁵ Ruef, p. 124; cf. Acts 19: 5f.

²⁶ Perhaps connected with their association with the reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts (see 2: 4; 10: 44-6; 19: 6). Cf. Stanley, pp. 210f.

We cannot be sure whether the Corinthians asked Paul's opinion about the gifts in general, or whether there was some specific question such as which of the two was the more important. It may be that some had disputed the genuineness of the gifts and pointed to pagan religions where there were similar manifestations,²⁷ and the Corinthians therefore asked Paul for confirmation that these so-called "spiritual gifts" were real manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Paul assures them that they are and shows the radical difference from pagan phenomena in the confession of Jesus as Lord, but at the same time takes pains to correct their unbalanced view of them. The summary of his reply to their question would then be found in 14: 5, "I want you all to speak in tongues, but much more that you should prophesy". However that may be, the subject of the chapters is the "spiritual gifts", by which the Corinthians meant speaking in tongues and prophecy, and about which they wished to know more from Paul; he replies in no uncertain manner and gives guidance which to this day is the only authoritative teaching we have on the subject.²⁸

We may see four main sections in these chapters:

(a) Introduction—Manifestations of the Spirit (12: 1-11)

After stating his theme, namely to answer the Corinthians' question about the 'spiritual gifts', Paul gives a simple test for distinguishing between true and false inspiration. The inspiration of the Spirit is indissolubly linked with the confession of Jesus as Lord; it is not enough to be inspired but the inspiration must be from the Holy Spirit and to the honour of Jesus.²⁹ Next he shows the great variety of gifts to believers, which are distributed to each according to God's will. He emphasizes that each Christian can expect to know the Spirit manifesting himself in his life in some specific way,

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and gives some examples of the way in which this may happen but, as we have seen, he deliberately leaves speaking in tongues and prophecy to the end of the list. It should be noted that this is not a comprehensive list of gifts³⁰ but only examples of gifts, as may be seen by comparing it with other such lists in vv. 28-30, Rom. 12: 6-8 and Eph. 4: 11. Neither are these gifts closely defined entities or permanent abilities, but possible ways in which the Spirit may choose to work at a particular time in a particular individual. This is shown by the singular "word" in v. 8, the plurals in vv. 9f. and the fact that the Spirit is the subject in v. 11. Lastly, these manifestations should be distinguished from the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5: 22f.) which should be present in every Christian's life.

(b) Digression One—The Church as the Body of Christ (12: 12-31)

Paul has shown the Corinthians that they are mistaken in their striving for prophecy and speaking in tongues by setting these gifts in the context of the many ways in which God works among men by his Spirit. He now enforces his point by showing that within the

²⁷ Cf. Allo, p. 317.

²⁸ Acts gives some examples, but does not lay down general principles about these gifts. Cf. W. D. Davies, "A Normative Pattern of Church Life in the New Testament?", *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London, 1962), ch. 9.

²⁹ Cf. Bruce, p. 117; Stanley, p. 212.

³⁰ As is implied by, e.g., Allo, p. 319; Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, pp. 33f.; cf. Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, p. 167.

Church, the body of Christ, every member has his own distinct part to play, and each should guard against dissatisfaction and jealousy of others. Just as not every member of the human body is expected to have the gift of hearing, so not every member of the body of Christ is expected to have the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues. In vv. 1-11 Paul had spoken mainly of God's working in the individual (though cf. v. 7), but now he concerns himself with functions in the Church and gives a rather different list in vv. 28-30. He puts prophecy back in its usual place near the head of the list (v. 28; cf. Rom. 12: 6), but in his rhetorical questions makes it clear that not all speak in tongues or prophecy. Lastly he refers back to their slogan, "strive for the spiritual gifts", but makes three important emendations to it. He substitutes "gifts (of grace)" for "spiritual gifts" to remind them of the many possible manifestations of the Spirit, he adds "greater" to direct their attention to the more useful gifts, and he points them quickly to a way of advance in the Christian life much better even than striving for the greatest gifts. God will in any case give those gifts which are needed (vv. 4-11), but none of these gifts are of any value if the person who exercises them does not do so in love.

(c) Digression Two—Love (13: 1-13)

It is hardly necessary to comment on the meaning of this famous passage about the greatest of the Christian virtues. But it should be said that there is no need to consider it an interpolation, whether of Pauline or non-Pauline origin, although it is not impossible that Paul had written it as a poem beforehand and incorporated

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it here where it would usefully show the basis of Christian living.³¹ Chapter 12 has taught us that God gives different gifts to different people, but Love is for all without exception. It is not the greatest of the gifts, but is something of an entirely different order.³² Love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22) and without it we are nothing (1 Cor. 13).

(d) Paul's Reply Prophecy and Speaking in Tongues (14: 1-40)

At last Paul is ready to give a direct answer to their question(s). He reminds them first of all that it is love which they must pursue, and then quotes their slogan, "strive for the spiritual gifts", to show that he does not exclude prophecy and speaking in tongues as valid gifts of God, perhaps even agreeing that they may be desired in certain circumstances, and immediately adding "but especially that you may prophesy". Thus he states the main theme of the chapter: prophecy and speaking in tongues both have a place in the lives of Christians, but in the Church prophecy is preferable because it edifies all who are present. Speaking in tongues may also be used in public worship if it is properly interpreted, but the effect on unbelievers should be borne in mind. Although it is a sign to them³³ they will probably conclude that those worshipping are mad, whereas the effect of prophecy is to bring conviction and conversion. It is clear that Paul expects a service of worship to be quite free and open to the sudden inspiration of the Spirit, but that is no excuse for disorder because God's Spirit inspires order and not confusion. He then comments briefly on disorder caused by women speaking out of place³⁴ and claims the Lord's authority for what he has said. Lastly

³¹ In spite of Weiss and Héring. See Robertson and Plummer; Ruef.

³² Cf. Barrett; Morris; Robertson and Plummer; Ruef; A. Barr, "Love in the Church, A Study of First Corinthians 13", *SJT* 3 (1950), p. 418. Contrast Lietzmann, p. 1: love is the highest of all the gifts.

³³ Cf. R. P. Martin (London, 1968), p. 43; Morris, pp. 197f.; Ruef, p. 152.

³⁴ Cf. Héring; Martin.

he summarizes the chapter in as positive a way as he is able: "Strive to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but let all things be done decently and in order" (v. 39f.).

VI. Application to the Modern Church

1 Corinthians 12-14 (as well as a few passages from Acts) has long been the main locus of disagreement between the Pentecostal movement and the rest of the Church. The former has built an entire theology from these passages, and the latter has generally managed to ignore them. At the present time however, in view of the more serious consideration of these chapter, and the phenomenal expansion of the Pentecostal movement it is no longer possible to dispose of the subject of "gifts of the Spirit" by saying that they ceased in apostolic times. While a proper interpretation of 1 Cor. 12-14 shows that the Spirit inspires many "ordinary"

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gifts as well as the extraordinary, the intermittent occurrence throughout history of the more unusual manifestations of the Spirit cannot be ignored.³⁵ Paul shows clearly in these chapters that prophecy and speaking in tongues have a proper place in the Church, among other workings of God's Spirit, and this is being realized today by a rapidly increasing number of people within the established Churches, including that of Rome. Much more theological work is necessary both on a theoretical and practical level to consider the implications of this "neo-Pentecostal" movement.³⁶

On the other hand, although these chapters have much to say to the non-Pentecostal parts of the Church, it should be remembered that the letter was written by Paul originally to a church which was "Pentecostal", and one where the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues were particularly evident. One of the striking and sad facts about the modern situation is that the immediate reaction of many people, Pentecostal or non-Pentecostal, to the terms "Pentecostalism" or "gifts of the Spirit" is to think of speaking in tongues, and perhaps also of prophecy and healing.³⁷ Is this not almost the same as the situation Paul found in Corinth during the first century? The church at Corinth was far from being the most spiritual of those of which we learn through Paul's letters, in spite of their enthusiasm for "spiritual gifts", and so today the churches where the Holy Spirit is most obviously present are not necessarily those where the "spiritual gifts" are most manifested. The Pentecostal movement has relearned one of the truths of the Bible in its study of 1 Cor. 12-14 and the rest of the Church should also learn once again the importance of the dynamic working of the Holy Spirit. However, the Pentecostal movement must be on guard against making the same mistake as the Corinthians and realize the great variety of God's activity portrayed so clearly by Paul in 1 Cor. 12.

³⁵ See A. A. Hoekema, *What about Tongue-Speaking?* (Grand Rapids and Exeter, 1966), pp. 9-24. He gives a bibliography, as does Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu*, p. 172n. C. J. E. Kingston, *Fulness of Power* (London, 1939), gives an interesting survey from a Pentecostal point of view (see especially pp. 47-57; 104-14; 162-81), but without proper documentation.

³⁶ See, e.g., F. D. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (London, 1971); E. D. O'Connor, *The Pentecostal Movement in the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1971); *Documents Expériences* 1971 (No. 2): "Des 'Catholiques' Pentecôtistes"; W. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London, 1972).

³⁷ E.g. Kingston, *Fulness of Power*, in discussing the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" gives 81 pages to "tongues", 43 pages to "prophecy" and only 87 pages for all the other seven gifts of 1 Cor. 12: 8-10

David L. Baker, "The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14," *Evangelical Quarterly* 46.4 (Oct.-Dec. 1974): 224-234.

Perhaps both sections of the Church can learn from a new understanding of 1 Corinthians 12-14, and in such an understanding a new unity of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal can be found.

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