

SOME FUNDAMENTAL CONCERNS ABOUT GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT:
A POSITION STATEMENT ON NATURE, PURPOSE,
FUNCTION, AND RELATIONSHIP TO THE
DOCTRINE OF REVELATION AND
INSPIRATION

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PREFACE

A "position statement" is a somewhat masochistic adventure. It is a statement of one's present understanding and decision(s) on some issue(s). It is a statement which is open to future review and expansion and/or revision and which is open to present dialogue and criticism.

This statement will deal first with what the gifts of the Spirit are --their nature, purpose, and function and the kinds of gifts. A distinction will be made between the gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Attention will next be turned to the relation between the gifts and the Canon of the Scriptures and the doctrine of revelation and inspiration. This section will present definitions of revelation, inspiration, general revelation, special revelation, verbal inspiration, plenary inspiration, and the canon of Scripture. Finally, attention will be given to the question, "Are gifts, such as the utterance gifts, equivalent to the canon as revelatory experiences?"

WHAT ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT?

Nature, Purpose, and Function: It is important to distinguish, at the beginning of this statement, between the gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit.¹ This statement will be primarily concerned with the latter--the gifts of the Spirit, sometimes called spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit is promised to all believers. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was specifically declared to be the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 ff. The Apostle Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-18) from the prophet Joel and identifies the fulfillment of it as the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. This was a corporate fulfillment of Joel's prophecy as well as an individual experience for those present.²

The Holy Spirit had previously worked on earth. During Old Testament times the Spirit came upon men, for example, Balaam (Num. 24:2), Jephthah (Judges 11:19), Gideon (Judges 6:34). He filled men, for example, Bazaleel (Exod. 31:3) and Micah (Micah 3:8). He rested upon men, for example, the seventy elders (Num. 11:25), Eldad and Medad (Num. 11:26).³ However, during Old Testament times,

. . . the Holy Spirit is never represented as indwelling the believer. The Holy Spirit filled them but never took His abode within them. No Old Testament saint was ever baptized with the Holy Ghost. That initial baptism came at Pentecost, fifty days after Christ arose from the dead.⁴

In Old Testament time the Holy Spirit definitely endowed persons for the tasks

of their calling similarly to the way He does today. This Old Testament endowment was external bestowment, symbolized in a transition such as Elijah's mantle upon Elisha.

In general, the Spirit in Old Testament times, prepared speakers and workers, He empowered men for technical and mechanical tasks, and He qualified them for official functions. Thus, the Spirit: qualified Gideon (Judges 6:34), empowered Samson (Judges 14:6), enlightened Baza-leel (Exod. 31:2, 3), and anointed Noah (2 Peter 2:5). . . . The temporary nature of the Spirit's enduement in the Old Testament era is evident.⁵

The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 validated the work of Jesus Christ. It constituted a significant covenantal change when the divine administrator came to earth to abide with His Church. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit assumed His permanent residence within the believers to constitute them a Church.

The Church owes its very origin and existence to the Holy Spirit, for only through the indwelling Spirit does the body that is the church enjoy the life that must characterize a body. On the day of Pentecost the principle of life was imparted to the Church, and as long as the Church exists on earth, that same Holy Spirit must continue to abide and bestow that essential life. . . . The Holy Spirit is He by whom the Lord Christ is present in His Church. The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost is inseparable from the work of the Son at Calvary.⁶

The outcome of the day of Pentecost experience was the corporate bestowal of the Spirit to constitute the Church and was the individual "filling of the Holy Spirit" and impartation of power for service (Acts 2:4) of those present. The latter experience is what Pentecostals call the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" which is subsequent to conversion when the indwelt and endued believer is wholly and completely filled with the Spirit.⁷ This experience differs from conversion which is the occasion of baptism by the Spirit, when the convert is taken by the Spirit and placed into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). The day of Pentecost, therefore, presents the interpreter with an unique situation, namely, a new covenant relationship begins. Furthermore, it is the immediate fulfillment of the Joel prophecy, the fulfillment of the Acts 1:8 promise, and the fulfillment of Jesus' statements recorded in John 14.

In Acts 2:38-39, Peter replies to the question by the day of Pentecost observers and hearers of his sermon as to what their appropriate response should be.

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.⁸

Holdcroft comments, "The gift of the Spirit constitutes His indwelling the believer to impart the new life in Christ Jesus."⁹ Chadwick comments, "The Holy Ghost is God's gift to the Church of His Son."¹⁰ The gift (dorea) of the Spirit here is expegetically the Spirit Himself¹¹ and may most properly be seen as the gift which God gives to the Church and that is received by the

Church on the day of Pentecost. The presence of Christ physically with His disciples and in resurrected form changes with the Ascension. This change necessitates what Jesus promised in John 14.

The term gift (dorea) of the Spirit is a legally oriented term which denotes formal endowment. In the New Testament, dorea is always used of the gift of God or Christ to humans; and it always implies the grace of God in this activity.¹² The term is not used in the Synoptics and is found once in the Gospel of John (4:10). "In the Acts, the Spirit is called the dorea of God in 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17; also in Hebrews 6:4. Paul uses it more generally for the gifts of God or of Christ in Romans 5:15, 17; 2 Corinthians 9:15; Ephesians 3:7; 4:7."¹³

To enable a distinction to be made between the gift and the gifts of the Spirit, one needs to look specifically at revelatory historical material recorded by Luke in Acts. Lampe suggests that Luke thinks of the receiving of the Spirit in particular relation to the impressive outward manifestations which accompanied that inward experience during the time of his recorded history.¹⁴ The day of Pentecost experience resulted in an intense emotional stir within those gathered.

The narrative in Acts 2 has special emphasis because of the pivotal nature of what occurred. As already noted, it is the situation of the fulfillment of what Peter refers to in his use of Joel's prophecy.¹⁵ Pentecostal tradition generally views the day of Pentecost experience in the light of other references in Acts, e.g., Acts 8, the occasion of the Spirit's outpouring in Samaria; Acts 9, Paul's experience (cf. I Cor. 14:18); Acts 10, at Cornelius' house approximately eight years after the Acts 2 day of Pentecost; and Acts 19, with the Ephesian believers approximately twenty-three years after the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Classical Pentecostals like to discuss the Baptism in the Spirit in the light of experiences and separate the Spirit's work in regeneration (a Spirit baptism, I Cor. 12:13) from that of the Spirit baptism subsequent to conversion. We generally refer to the Acts 8, 9, 10, and 19 experiences with this in mind, thus distinguishing conversion from Pentecostal baptism.¹⁶

One can affirm that the gift of the Spirit particularly in the Acts 2 account is the Spirit Himself and that the work and manifestation of the Spirit as the experienced gift has varied expression. Chadwick makes the following comment concerning Acts 8:14-17.

At Pentecost, disciples . . . had already received the Spirit for salvation. . . . The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a definite and distinct experience assured and verified by the witness of the Spirit. . . . The experience is distinct from that of Regeneration. . . . In Regeneration there is a gift of life by the Spirit, and whosoever receives it is saved; in the Baptism of the Spirit there is a gift of power, and by it the believer is equipped for service and endued for witnessing.¹⁷

He comments further, "The Holy Spirit is Himself a Gift. In the Gift of the Spirit there are gifts."¹⁸ One would conclude that the gift of the Spirit is given to individuals as well as corporately to the Church.

The spiritual gifts of the Spirit, in contrast, are given to the Church, not to individual persons. The individual who exercises a gift is, therefore, simply the channel through whom the Spirit chooses to operate in bestowing His gifts to the Church.¹⁹ Furthermore, the gifts of the Spirit are manifested according to the decision of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:11). The Spirit is the agent who gives gifts. It is possible that people can have a part in developing certain gifts.²⁰

The Greek word for a spiritual gift is charisma. Its plural form is charismata. The word is related to grace, because charis means grace. Thus, a spiritual gift is due to grace. The word charisma or charismata is usually used in the New Testament in reference to special gifts or abilities given by God to humans.²¹ Paul is the only New Testament writer who uses the word (except for I Peter 4:10). When charisma is used to refer to a gift for service, it seems to include natural talent given at birth (some see this emphasis in Ephesians 4 as an emphasis on giften men)²² as well as super-natural talent given at salvation or when a gift is exercised.

Thus, a spiritual gift may be defined as a God-given ability for service. Its origin is from God. It is an ability, whether natural or supernatural or a combination of both. It is given for the purpose of service. A spiritual gift is not primarily a place of service. It is the ability, not where that ability is exercised. A spiritual gift is not primarily a particular age group ministry. There is no gift for children's ministry, for youth ministry, for adult ministry. A spiritual gift is not primarily a speciality of ministry. There is no gift of writing or Christian education. There is a gift of teaching, for example, which may be expressed through writing or church education.²³ "In the present age, . . . the Spirit ministers to reveal Christ to the responsive believer and to reproduce the Christ-life within Him."²⁴ The gifts are charitable bestowments of specific application for the edification of the Church and the advancement of the Lord's service. They are simply the medium through which God manifests Himself and thus enables believers to fill their places in the Body of Christ.²⁵

Kinds of Gifts: In the New Testament,²⁶ as a whole one will find listed a total of twenty-one gifts of the Spirit. The primary references are: Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:8-14; and I Corinthians 12-14. The list includes the following: apostles; prophets; evangelists; pastor-teachers; miracles; gifts of healings; helps; governments; tongues; prophecy; ministry; exhortation; giving; ruling; showing mercy; teaching; wisdom; knowledge; discerning of spirits; interpretation of tongues; and faith.

Paul in I Corinthians 12-14 gives the reader six lists of five or more gifts. He is emphasizing four things in these chapters: (a) the diversity of spiritual gifts; (b) a problem in Corinth, namely, their misinterpretation and abuse of tongues; (c) edification of the whole church gathered; and (d) the need for intelligibility and order in their gathered worship activities.

Scripture²⁷ lays down no conditions for receiving spiritual gifts other than salvation. A gift is bestowed without merit. Even deep spirituality is not necessarily a condition (even though it would seem to be most desirous to add to the credibility of the manifestation of the Spirit at least from a human standpoint) or an assurance of the manifestation of spiritual gifts. The gifts are not described as being appropriated by faith as in the manner of

receiving salvation.²⁸ The sovereign God in His own way bestows these gifts (I Cor. 12:11). I Corinthians 12:7 suggests that the manifestation of these spiritual gifts is given "to every man to profit withal," i.e., given to the whole church for edification.

One would conclude, therefore, that the spiritual gifts would seem to be intended for public rather than private exercise.²⁹ Gifts are intended to operate through individuals in a congregation in order to provide the most elevated and spiritually profitable experience(s) of all participants. The operation of the gifts involves God and the human, who³⁰ functions as a channel. The gifts are not possessed permanently by any person. One who is sensitive to the Spirit's direction is prompted and anointed to minister to the others.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE GIFTS TO REVELATION

This position statement was prepared for a series of chapel services at Northwest College which dealt with the so-called "utterance gifts," namely gifts of prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. It is particularly important to understand the relationship between the gifts (the utterance gifts especially) and the doctrine of revelation and inspiration.

Definitions of Revelation and Inspiration: "Revelation" basically means the disclosure of that which was previously unknown. When one refers to the contents of the Bible as "revelation," the term refers to the disclosure of God. It specifically refers to the material which is made known. It does not refer to the manner of its disclosure nor to the resultant product.

"Inspiration" in its theological sense concerns the resultant product of revelation,--the Bible. 2 Timothy 3:16 uses the Greek word theopneustos, which means "God-breathed," i.e., breathed out from God and not necessarily breathed into anything. Probably the best translation is "spiration" rather than "inspiration." This verse simply says that Scripture is God-produced without mentioning any of the means God may have used in producing it.

When one brings these two concepts (revelation and inspiration) together, the following product appears. Revelation concerns the material which God has used to reveal Himself. Inspiration concerns the method by which the material written in the Bible was recorded. The entirety of God's revelation is not contained in the Bible. Thus, in theology, one generally divides revelation into two parts: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is seen as God manifesting Himself to all people through creation, history, and the conscience of persons.³¹ General revelation inescapably confronts all persons with the fact that God exists and deserves to be worshipped. Special revelation is seen as God's revealing Himself in concrete form to a specific person or group of persons for the purpose of salvation and edification.³² The Bible is special revelation.³³

Charles C. Ryrie defines biblical inspiration as follows:

. . . [Biblical inspiration is] God's superintending human authors so that, using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs. God superintended but did not dictate. He used human authors and with them their own individual styles. The result of this combination of human and divine authorship was a record that in its original manuscripts was without error.³⁴

"Verbal inspiration" suggests that the words used in this process were exactly what God wanted to use in conveying His message. "Plenary inspiration" suggests that the entire record is inspired. The biblical revelation is verbally and plenary inspired.

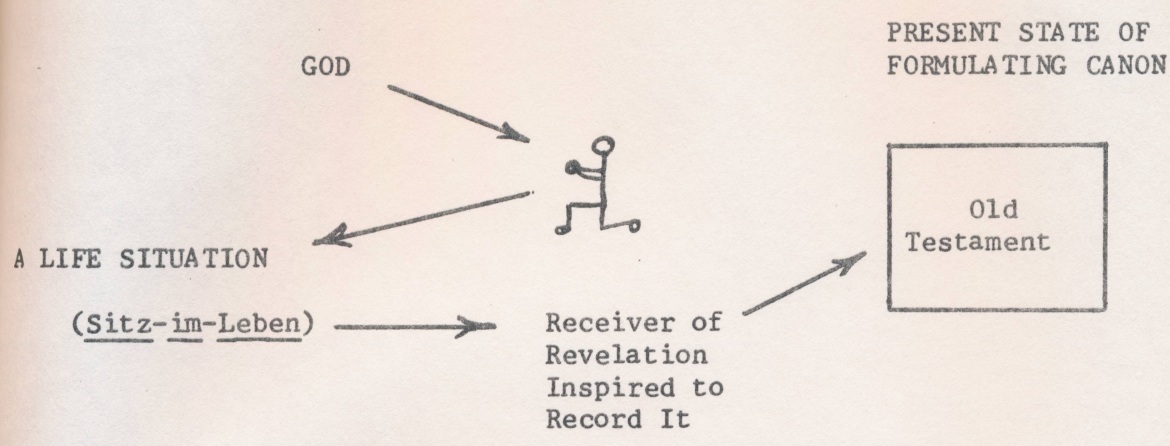
This paper takes the position that the utterance gifts of the Spirit (prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues) are revelatory in nature because they involve the material of God's self-disclosure. They concern something which God is revealing or has revealed about Himself--His nature, work, purpose, etc. They are inspired in terms of God's use of humans to convey said material and His use of their individual vocabularies, grammar, thought patterns, and style of communication.³⁵ In this general sense, as revelatory and inspired, these gifts of the Spirit are meant to edify the gathered assembly of believers as a group at a particular time and place and in a particular situation.

To state this position necessitates a qualifying addendum concerning the specific relationship between the Canon of Scripture and these spiritual gifts. The Bible as it is currently known emerged through a series of steps. The canonizing process ended in A.D. 397 when the question of New Testament canonicity was essentially universally settled. There was thus agreement on the sixty-six books of the Bible. The following material will seek to compare biblical revelation and the revelatory nature of the utterance gifts.

The Canon and Continuing Revelation: Did God stop revealing Himself when the Canon was finalized? The close of the Canon does not mean God stopped revealing Himself. Reportedly, Scott Dick once said, "God went on writing after His book went to press." The point of this figurative statement is that God was revealing Himself before the Scriptures were written down and has continued to do so after they were written and gathered together.

When one uses the term "canon" in reference to the scriptures, it is particularly meaningful and has importance in view of the relationship between Scripture and the spiritual gifts. The term "canon" simply means "the rule"--a standard. Probably the easiest way to illustrate the significance is to show the way this worked as the revelation recorded in Scripture progressed. The following diagram is illustrative.

Diagram 1: Process of Special Revelation.



The above diagram is illustrative of the progressive process of God's revelation to a person during the Old Testament times. This person encountered a life situation. Within this situation, God revealed Himself to the person. The situation became the word of God. God inspired this person to record this revelation which becomes the validated word of God. The life situation thus is the Sitz-im-Leben for the word of God, i.e., the means by which the word of God is initially given. This situation-action--the word of God--cannot be contrary nor contradictory to previous revelatory action by God. Thus future individuals can view such action in its verbal and/or written form as "canon"--the rule. Each new situation must be critically viewed in the light of established revelation over a period of time. Hence, one can see the development of a progressive revelation--a progressive special revelation (the Bible).

Diagram 2: Process of Utterance Gift Becoming Exercised.

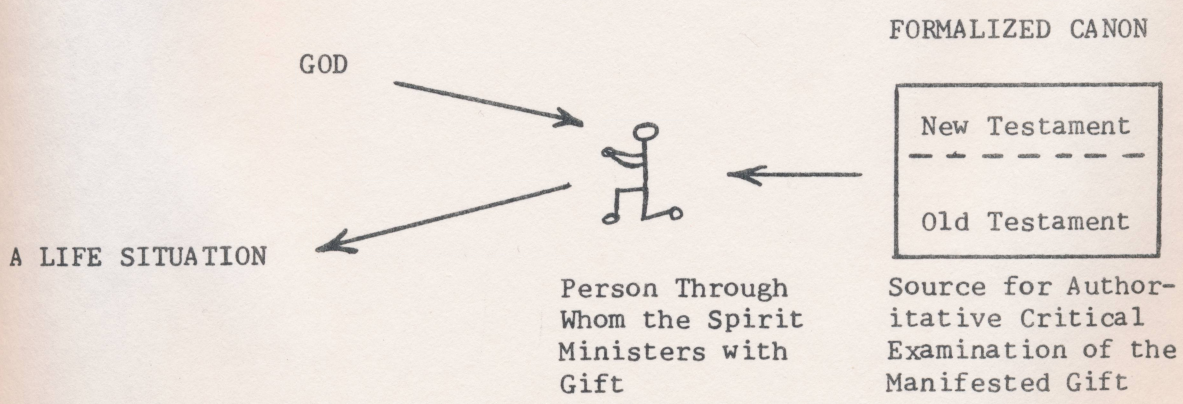


Diagram 2 presents the process of the exercising of an utterance gift. An individual in a life situation is inspired by the Spirit to minister via a spiritual gift,--here, an utterance gift. The person does so within the gathered congregation of the church. This expression is a

revelatory occurrence. Its validation occurs as the gathered congregation critically examines its content in the light of established revelation, namely, the Bible. When one views the spiritual gifts in this light, the implication is that spiritual gifts should not be viewed as equivalent to Scriptural revelatory materials but as subordinate to them.

In this position statement on the spiritual gifts, the writer has presented definitional material which also becomes criteria for critical evaluation of the function of spiritual gifts. The position which has been developed may be summarized as follows.

1. Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities for service.
2. They are bestowed via the sovereignty of God.
3. They are intended for public rather than private exercise.
4. They are for the edification of the church gathered.
5. God uses the characteristics of the human channel for expression of these gifts.
6. The gifts are revelatory in that God uses them to reveal Himself; yet they are not themselves canonical.
7. They cannot supersede nor replace canonical Scripture.
8. They are for a particular time, place, and situation and do not themselves become part of the canonical revelatory materials.
9. As reflective of the canonical revelatory materials found in the Scriptures, the utterance gifts are momentary disclosures.

NOTES

¹Cf. F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of the Acts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 77.

²See Robert D. Parlotz, "The Corporate Bestowal of the Holy Spirit: An Analysis of the Promise Fulfillment Concept of the Day of Pentecost," Paraclete, V, 3 (Summer, 1971), 18-24.

³L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit: From a Pentecostal Viewpoint (Santa Cruz, Calif.: Bethany Books, 1962), p. 35.

⁴Mark G. Cambron, Bible Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), p. 124.

⁵L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 36. Cf. Judges 13-16 on Samson; 2 Samuel 10:10; 16:14 on Saul; and Ezekiel 2:2; 3:24 on Ezekiel.

⁶L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 40.

⁷L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 71.

⁸Acts 2:38-39 (NIV).

⁹L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 77.

¹⁰Samuel Chadwick, The Way of Pentecost (New York: Revel, n.d.), pp. 30-31.

¹¹W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (4 vols.; Westwood, N.J.: Revell, 1964), II, 146-147; dorea "denotes a free gift, stressing its gratuitous character; it is always used in the N. T. of a spiritual or supernatural gift, John 4:10; Acts 8:20; 11:17; Rom. 5:15; 2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:7; Heb. 6:4; in Eph. 4:7, 'according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' the gift is that given by Christ; in Acts 2:38, 'the gift of the Holy Ghost,' the clause is exegetical, the gift being the Holy Ghost Himself; compare 10:45; 11:17, and the phrase, 'the gift of righteousness,' Rom. 5:17."

¹²Friedrich Buchsel, "Doron, doreomai, dorema, dorea," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (10 vols.; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1964), II, 167.

¹³Friedrich Buchsel, "Dorea," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, II, 167.

¹⁴G. W. H. Lampe, The Seal of the Spirit (London: 1951), pp. 47-48. Cf. F. F. Bruck, Acts, pp. 77-78.

¹⁵See Mark 16:17; Luke 11:13; 24:49; John 7:37-39; 14:16, 26; 15:26.

¹⁶L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, pp. 71-72, comments, "Conversion is the occasion of baptism by the Spirit, when the convert is taken by

the Spirit and placed into the body of Christ. Pentecostal baptism is an experience subsequent to conversion when the indwelt and endued believer is wholly and completely filled with the Holy Spirit. Though there is usually a span of time between the two experiences, Scripture sets forth no necessary extension."

William Kelly, Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p. 161, as quoted in A. J. Gordon, The Ministry of the Spirit (New York: Revell, 1894), pp. 69, 70, as quoted in Ralph M. Riggs, The Spirit Himself (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1949), pp. 55-56, ". . . The reception of the Holy Ghost . . . has nothing whatever to do with bringing men to believe and repent. It is a subsequent operation; it is an additional and separate blessing; it is a privilege founded on faith already actively working in the heart. . . . I do not mean to deny that the gift of the Holy Ghost may be practically on the same occasion, but never in the same moment. The reason is quite simple too. The gift of the Holy Ghost is grounded on the fact that we are sons by faith in Christ, believers resting on redemption in him. Plainly, therefore, it appears that the Spirit of God has already regenerated us."

P. C. Nelson, Bible Doctrines (Revised edition; Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1948), p. 82, comments, "Peter identifies the promise of the Spirit, or the Baptism in the Spirit, with the Gift of the Spirit. Acts 2:38, 39. . . . In Acts 11:16, 17, the gift of the Spirit and the baptism in the Spirit are made identical."

A. J. Gordon, The Ministry of the Spirit (New York: Revell, 1894), p. 69, thinks that Acts 2:38 "shows logically and chronologically the gift of the Spirit is subsequent to repentance."

Ralph M. Riggs, The Spirit Himself (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1949), p. 55, comments, "When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he instructed his audience to repent and be baptized, saying that they then would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . . At their repentance He would baptize them into the Body of Christ. Then they would take a public stand for Christ by being baptized in water in His name. Following that, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Henry H. Ness, Dunamis and the Church (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1968), p. 56, comments, "The baptism with the Holy Spirit was to follow the experience of repentance and water baptism. . . . [Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:38] The baptism with the Holy Spirit is therefore a subsequent experience to salvation."

¹⁷ Samuel Chadwick, The Way of Pentecost, p. 37.

¹⁸ Samuel Chadwick, The Way of Pentecost, p. 105.

¹⁹ L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 77.

²⁰ 2 Tim. 1:6; cf. I Tim. 4:14.

²¹ Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 83.

²² The main point in this light is that God has given people gifts according to His sovereignty. Technically, an individual is given the gift of the Spirit, namely, he is given the Spirit. The indwelling Spirit has the gifts

and manifests them through the individual. To "develop" a gift would seem to this writer to be a process of developing one's relationship to the Holy Spirit via sensitivity and yielding to the Spirit's leading, including the development of the fruit of the Spirit in one's life.

As for the issue of natural talent and supernatural talent, there are four possible views on the nature of gifts. (1) The gifts are totally natural abilities and personal inspiration. If so, the abilities or talents are possessed all the time. One then would have to talk about the spiritual dedication of one's talents. (2) There is a dictation view which suggests that God totally negates the human faculties but somehow uses the human vocabulary and style. The human is, therefore, only a secretary or a reporter, word for word. (3) Some people hold that holiness and spirituality dictate how and to whom God bestows the gifts. The more holiness one has, the more God will give of the gifts, according to this viewpoint. Weaker, immature Christians do not qualify, too. (4) There is a so-called incarnational view. Personally, this writer does not like the term "incarnational" as here applied; yet, he tends to hold this viewpoint, namely, that God makes full use of the vessel--the human's mind, thoughts, background, current situation. The vessel him/herself is part of that message. His/her life and way of sharing the gift is vitally part of that which builds up the body of Christ. The gifts are not possessed permanently by any person, but the one sensitive to the Spirit's direction is prompted and anointed to minister to others. The fruit of the Spirit has something significant in this, too. Via the fruit of the Spirit, one becomes sensitive to others within the Body of Christ gathered--the Church. There is a willingness to receive and give in ministry one to another. The gifts may be seen as tools of ministry. The fruit of the Spirit helps one to use these tools effectively.

Some question the statement including natural gift-talents. There are those in the Pentecostal movement who take the position that natural talents by themselves cannot build the kingdom of God. They conclude that every ministry represented in the New Testament, ranging from helps and administration to miracles and healings, if they are going to be effective, must be essentially supernatural. Representatives of this view are: Samuel Chadwick, The Way of Pentecost (Berne, Ind.: Light & Hope Publishers, 1937), p. 108; O. J. Sanders, The Holy Spirit and His Gifts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1940), pp. 111-112; Donald Gee, Spiritual Gifts in the Work of the Ministry Today (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing House, 1963), pp. 9-11.

However, the bottom line on this issue of separating natural talent and supernatural talent seems to be an arbitrary division. (See David Lim, Charismata . . . A Fresh Look: A Pentecostal Perspective and Commentary on I Corinthians 12-14 (Toronto, Canada: Gospel Publishing House, n.d.), p. 18. All Spirit-imparted abilities to minister and meet the need of the Church, regardless of the natural or supernatural question, are the result of the "enablement" or "gift" of the Spirit. Nothing can be accomplished apart from God's supernatural work on one's own behalf. So rather than saying some gifts are supernatural and some are natural, it seems better to say that the exercise of gifts can be seen on a continuum, ranging from totally natural on the one end to supernatural on the other end.

²³ Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit, p. 83.

²⁴ L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 40.

²⁵In I Cor. 12, one discovers reference to "spiritual gifts" and to "manifestations" of the Spirit of God. To define a spiritual gift as a "God-given ability for service" is to affirm that this ability is inherent in the Spirit of God indwelling the believer.

The Prophet Joel (2:28-29) said, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." The people of God in the Old Testament had not become the nation of priests that God had desired. Only certain individuals were willing to be used by God and anointed by His Spirit. These were judges, priests, prophets, and kings. God promised Joel that one day there would be no difference--that all could receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Thus, one sees in the New Testament that all believers have an equal opportunity to be anointed of the Spirit and be used by the Spirit.

The idea of a spiritual gift being defined as a "God-given ability for service" lies in part in the meaning of the term charisma. It may be defined as a grace gift on the part of God as the Donor, i.e., His endowments upon believers by the operation of the Spirit in the churches (Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; I Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; I Peter 4:10). Thus, one derives the meaning as "God-given ability for service" from the understanding of the word in context.

²⁶Cf. L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 78. In I Cor., there are six lists of five or more gifts in each: 12:8-10, wisdom, knowledge, faith; gifts of healings, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment of spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues (classical Pentecostal interpretation generally refers only to these nine as the gifts of the Spirit and subdivides them into three groups of three gifts each--gifts of mind or revelation are wisdom, knowledge, discernment of spirits; gifts of power are faith, gifts of healings, and miraculous powers; and gifts of utterance are prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues); 12:28, apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, gifts of healings, helps, gifts of administration, tongues; 12:29-30, apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, gifts of healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues; 13:1-3, tongues, prophecy, knowledge, faith, and giving; 14:6 tongues, revelation, knowledge, prophecy, and word of instruction; and 14:26-27, (five examples given), hymn, word of instruction, revelation, tongues, interpretation. It seems extremely difficult to talk about only nine spiritual gifts in the light of this. The "source" of the gifts seems constant; it is the Holy Spirit. Paul's point is about diversity of gifts; the lists are representative of this.

In Eph. 4:11, Paul uses a different word dorea, which has already been defined above. Here Paul designates the dorea gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers. Notice that these are also listed when Paul is itemizing the charismata gifts in I Cor. 12:28 and 12:29-30. In the Eph. context, Paul is exhibiting the ministry of Christ between the time of His ascension and His revelation. Christ's ministry is via His gifts--His free gifts--for the purpose of enabling the maturity of the saints. It is possibly for this reason that some like to call these four gifts "enabling gifts." As such, they are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

One should note that Paul in I Cor. 12:4-6 makes distinctions among gifts as the charismata (grace gifts), ministries as the diakonion (a type of service, Acts 6:1-4), and operations as energmaton (the word for power which

emphasizes final results). The point Paul is making here is diversity yet "the same Spirit . . . Lord . . . and God" respectively; thus he emphasizes unity in the midst of diversity. Is Paul saying the same thing in three ways? One should note that in 12:6 he attributes "operations" to the Father and in 12:11 he attributes "operations" to the Spirit.

Unity is the theme of Paul in I Cor. 12. One must note the "all in all" in 12:6, referring to the whole body of Christ.

²⁷L. Thomas Holdcroft, The Holy Spirit, p. 78.

²⁸Cf. Rom. 12:6. This verse must be seen in its context. The passage occurs in the practical application portion of the Roman letter. It is dependent upon what Paul has already stated. Paul is showing what the effect of the Gospel is to be on the believer cognitively, physically, and in his/her personal relationships. In Rom. 12:3-8, the gifts (charismata) are plainly a condensation of I Cor. 12 (which was written about a year earlier than the Romans material--for a similar purpose, namely, to affirm that each member of a congregation has a function, that no one is sufficient in him/herself, and that no one can do anything apart from the whole.

Rom. 12:4, 5 reflect I Cor. 12:12-27. The King James Version and Revised Version incorrectly separate Rom. 12:6-8 from verses 3-5. A semicolon should be used; not a period. "Every one members one of another; and [or "but"] having gifts (charismata) differing according to the grace (charis) that is given to us." Cf. James M. Stifler, The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary Logical and Historical (Chicago: Moody Press, 1960), pp. 204-209; and W. E. Vine, The Epistle to the Romans: Doctrine, Precept, Practice (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), pp. 176-180.

Paul lists seven gifts here: prophecy (revelatory spokesperson exhibiting God knowledge; I Cor. 14:29-33; I Thess. 5:20-21); ministry (ministry of any type; preaching, service in money, general help of the saints; Rom. 11:13; 2 Cor. 9:1; Col. 4:17; Heb. 1:4); teaching (setting forth the fundamentals of the kingdom; enabling others to distinguish the true and the false; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16; 4:3; Eph. 4:14); exhortation (encouragement and entreaty); giving (special function of giving); ruling ("leaders;" one who presides, superintends; some suggest this is the "elders" of I Thess. 5:12 and I Tim. 5:17); and showing mercy (aiding those experiencing any kind of misfortune). These gifts receive their character and their measure in God's grace as He bestows them. Paul says that if one has a gift of prophecy, let his prophecy be "according to the portion of the faith." Faith here is not "the faith," as doctrine. It is the person's own personal trust. (See 12:3, each has a "measure of faith" for each his work.) If God ministers insights through him, Paul says, let his prophecy not go beyond the message or revelation. One is to avoid arrogance and misleading others. If one has a gift of "ministry," Paul says, let him/her wait on his/her ministering, give self to it, and be content with that. Do not attempt something one is not gifted to do. The "teacher" gifted are to stick to teaching; the "exhorter" gifted are to stick to exhortation. The "giving" gift is to be exercised in simplicity. The "ruling" gift must not be expressed slothfully, but diligently. To "show mercy" one does so with cheerfulness to the less fortunate.

If one takes into account the I Cor. 12 context as one interprets Rom. 12:2-8, Paul would seem to be saying to avoid puffing oneself up in piety and pride because it is God who works through the believer. He is also saying that one should get down to business.

"Let us prophecy according to the proportion of our faith" does not mean prophecy is appropriated by one's faith. This is a warning against giving beyond what has been given and faith receives. The prophecy gift is a message--a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion. One is to present prophecy according to strength, clearness, fervor, and other qualities of the faith bestowed upon one, according to Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (4 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), III, 153-158.

²⁹ Cf. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "Written Prophecies: A Question of Authority," Pneuma, The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, II, 2 (Fall, 1980), 26-45. Robeck traces the history of the issue of written and published charismatic prophecies. A problem involving written publication of prophecies existed during the early formulative years of the Pentecostal movement. The problem is still around and is further complicated by the advent of radio and television.

There seems to be a fundamental problem in the reduplication or replay of utterance gifts, namely, how is the reader or replay listener to test the message thus received? There is a sense in which the ability to test the prophetic word has been impaired once an oracle has been placed in a written form or a recorded form and widely distributed. Once so published, the only test appears to be a rational one to be used to determine its genuineness. Furthermore, how is one to experience the revelatory nature of this duplicated prophetic word without experiencing the situation in which it was received? The utterance gift was given through a specific individual(s), at a specific place, to a specific group of individuals, and at a specific time. One must take into account the Sitz-im-Leben, as it were, out of which it arose and to which it was originally addressed. How can such a duplicated utterance be beneficial if it is de-contextualized of its prophetic situation and applicability. Also it becomes anonymous when duplicated. (Cf. Matt. 7:15-20 about the prophet being known by his fruit.) To deny the reader or hearer of recorded material the knowledge of who has spoken the prophetic words seems to deny the reader/hearer of the one criterion by which the prophetic words might be tested.

³⁰ Some raise a question concerning the permanency of a gift, especially since, they argue, there are those who are called "apostles" as an official of the church. The issue involved here is one of differentiating between office (which is a church polity issue, e.g., apostolate) and function (which is a gift/manifestation issue, charismata).

It is interesting to investigate the use of the term "apostle" in Paul's salutations. Paul never refers to himself in any of his salutations to his letters as "the apostle." There is never a definite article "the" accompanying the word "apostle." When, in Greek, a definite article is present, the "the" points out individual identity. It marks a contrast. It makes the word it is used with stand out distinctly. The definite article "the" is used to identify. But Paul does not refer to himself as "the apostle"--he is not identifying his apostleship. He refers to himself as "an apostle." The absence of the definite article qualifies. He is referring to his function. In I Cor., 2 Cor., Col., and Philemon, Paul refers to another person as "the brother" using the definite article and thus is identifying the uniqueness of that person and contrasting him with others.

In the salutations to his letters, Paul refers to himself as: "a slave of Christ called an apostle, having been separated to the Gospel of God"

(Rom. 1:1); "a called apostle of Christ Jesus through will of God" (I Cor. 1:1); "an apostle of Christ Jesus through will of God" (2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1); "an apostle, not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God Father the [one] having raised him out of [the] dead" (Gal. 1:1); "an apostle of Christ Jesus through will of God by way of a promise of life in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:1); and "a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for faith of chosen ones of God and full knowledge of truth that leads to godliness" (Titus 1:1). There is no mention of "apostle" in the salutations of I and 2 Thess., Phil. 1:1, and Philemon. Paul seems to go to some effort to describe his function and relationship to Christ and not his identification as holding an office.

Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "Apostolos," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), I, 440-441, comments, "whenever he has reason to speak authoritatively to his churches, Paul stresses in his salutations his apostolic authorization by Christ. What is at issue is not his own person but the cause for which he stands. Like the [Old Testament] prophet, Paul as an apostle serves only his message, i.e., the preaching of the word" (I Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:19). Paul is obedient to his Lord as His servant (doulos)."

Rengstorf, p. 423, further points out that according to Paul, the "apostles" in I Cor. 12:28-29 are not officials of the congregation. They are not even the chief of church officials. They are authorized representatives of Christ by whom the Church is built. In this respect they may be compared with the prophets of the Old Testament (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), whose function, on the basis of their commission, was to prepare the way for the One who was to come.

There appear to be five uses of the word "apostle" in the New Testament. First, it always denotes a person who is sent, and sent with full authority. In the New Testament, apostolos never means the act of sending or figuratively the object of sending. Sh^eli^ach is the Hebrew term for "one who was commissioned and authorized by God. Two groups might be mentioned in this connection, first, the impersonal one of the priesthood in the priest as such, and second, a small number of outstanding personalities, especially Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel" (Rengstorf, p. 419) Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel are the "sh^eluchim of God," i.e., things took place through them which were "normally reserved for God." Moses causes water to flow out of the rock; Elijah brings rain and raises a dead man; Elisha opens the mother's womb and also raises a dead man; Ezekiel receives the key to the tombs at the reawakening of the dead, according to Ezek. 37:1 ff. Rengstorf comments, "These four were distinguished by the miracles which God empowered them to perform and which He normally reserved for Himself." The Greek word apostolos presents one only the form of the New Testament concept, namely, of the person who is sent and sent with full authority; the sh^eli^ach of later Judaism provides the content (Rengstorf, p. 421). The person commissioned in this sense is always the representative of the one who gives the commission. S/he represents in his/her own person the person and rights of the other, the one who gives the commission. Second, in John 13:16 the term apostolos is fully identifiable with sh^eli^ach. Here apostolos is simply a rendering of the legal term in its purely legal sense of one who is lawfully charged to represent the person and cause of another. Third, like sh^eli^ach, apostolos denotes the "commissioned representative of a congregation" (Rengstorf, p. 422). In 2 Cor. 8:23, Paul uses the phrase apostoloi ekklesion (apostles of churches) to refer to the men who at his request were to accompany him to Jerusalem with the collection

which he had organized among the Greek congregations for the poor saints. In Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus is an apostolos of the Philipians to Paul. These references may denote a religious rather than a legal significance. Fourth, apostoloi (apostles) is a comprehensive term for the "bearers of the New Testament message." The name is first borne by the circle of the twelve, i.e., the original apostles (including Matthias brought in as a replacement in Acts 1:26; cf. I Cor. 15:5). Their sending by Jesus is presupposed. Acts 15:2, 3, 6, 22-23; 16:4. They center in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). In Matt. 10:2 and Mark 6:30, apostoloi are the first twelve disciples of Jesus. However, the name is also applied to the first Christian missionaries or their most prominent representatives, including some who did not belong eventually to the wider groups of disciples: Acts 14:4, 14, Paul and Barnabas; Gal. 1:19, James, the Lord's brother; Rom. 16:7, Junias and Andronicus; I Cor. 15:7, a wider circle. Acts 13:2 ff. sees Paul and Barnabas sent by a congregation. Apollos is not included in this group (I Cor. 3:5 ff.). Timothy is also not included (2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1; Phlm. 1; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 3:2). Rengstorf says, "The basis of the apostolate is commissioning by the risen Lord is expressly stated in I Clement 42:1 ff" (p. 423). Fifth, in Hebrews 3:1, Jesus Himself is called "apostle." The only possible meaning of apostle here is that in Jesus there has taken place the definitive revelation of God by God Himself (Heb. 1:2).

³¹Psa. 19:1-6; Acts 17:16-33; Rom. 1:18-23.

³²Rom. 2:12-16; 2 Peter 1:21.

³³Cf. G. C. Berkouwer, General Revelation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); B. Ramm, Special Revelation and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961); J. I. Packer, God Speaks to Man: Revelation and the Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); H. N. Ridderbos, The Authority of the New Testament Scriptures (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963); H. W. Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967); B. B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960); E. J. Young, Thy Word Is Truth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957); and J. Baillie, The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956).

Definition of revelation: God's disclosure of Himself in act and word. General revelation is God manifesting Himself to all men through creation, history, and conscience of persons. Special revelation is God's revealing Himself in concrete form to a specific person or group. Unifying elements: (a) same in origin--"from God;" (b) same in content--concern God's grace (general revelation communicates God's common grace; special revelation communicates God's redeeming grace); (c) same in purpose--ultimate bringing of glory to God Himself (general revelation sustains human life; special revelation redeems life). Distinguishing features: (a) means (general revelation implies usual run of phenomena or events; special revelation involves the unusual means, e.g., appearance, prophecies, etc.); (b) content (general revelation exhibits the attributes of God's power, wisdom, and measure of goodness; special revelation exhibits the attributes of God's holiness, righteousness, grace, etc.); and (c) direction (general revelation is to all persons; special revelation is to all who receive the message either orally or by means of written communication).

General revelation is only correctly understood as it is viewed through the lens of special revelation. The basis of this is stated as follows. Man has a "veil over his mind," according to Paul. Man is spiritually dead and blind. Apart from the grace of God, he cannot see. "Common grace" benefits all men in common, e.g., rain, air, sun, etc. General revelation is an expression of moral law. Psa. 19:1-6; Acts 14:8-18; 17:16-33; Rom. 1:18-23; 2:12-16.

A biblical position concerning special revelation: (1) Ultimate object of all biblical revelation is God as a Person, revealing Himself to make individuals holy not necessarily wiser. The ultimate goal of revelation is communication with God Himself. There is a subjective, passionate involvement with the system; one's theology should be included within the circle in which one lives. (2) Revelation is by divine acts (Micah 6:5, righteous acts through Israel and later through the Church). (3) Biblical revelation is divine interpretative word. All history is general revelation. History in Scripture is a selected history, which has become special revelation. (4) Biblical revelation culminates in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3, "gospel"). (5) This revelation is brought to persons by the Bible. Redemptive acts, etc., are recorded in the Bible and through witness of the Holy Spirit, they are brought to human beings. (6) Revelation must be subjectively appropriated. The objective side of revelation must be subjectively appropriated by the Holy Spirit. If revelation is to be of any value to one, it must come through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (7) Authority of the Bible is derived from the fact of its inspiration. Authority has to do with the fact that the Bible is God's Word. (8) The Bible must be rightly interpreted.

Revelation is the autobiography of God, i.e., it is the story which God narrates about Himself. It is that knowledge about God which is from God. Revelation is the sum total of the ways in which God makes Himself known. General revelation is God's witness to Himself for all persons: (a) it is a general revelation for all persons, i.e., it is not restricted to a specific person or people; (b) it is a general kind of revelation--"no voice is heard" Psa. 19:4). Special revelation, by contrast, is God's word in a concrete form to a specific person or group. General revelation comes through creation, history, and conscience of the individual (i.e., the works of the Law written on the heart") but not through words or speech. Special revelation contains words--the Words. Not all, however, are "saved" when confronted with special revelation. Subjective response does not determine objective presentation; the Bible is special revelation regardless if it is accepted or not.

Effect of the Fall: Special revelation after the Fall is different in time and place than it was before the Fall. The record of this special revelation before the Fall comes in time after the Fall. Before the Fall, special revelation was necessary as a complement of general revelation. Special revelation is subsequent to general revelation before the Fall. After the Fall, special revelation is indispensable. Special revelation is the means by which general revelation is to be understood. (General revelation is essentially knowledge about God whereas special revelation is knowledge of God.) Before the Fall, general revelation led to special revelation thus glorifying God. After the Fall, general revelation (i.e., the knowledge about God) leads to idolatry when subjectively responded to by humans. Therefore, the function and relation of both special and general revelation to each other have undergone a change,--a change necessitated by the Fall.

³⁴Charles C. Ryrie, The Holy Spirit, p. 33.

³⁵Cf. I Cor. 14:32.

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