

The Grace-Gifts

A Study of 1Corinthians 12

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We should earnestly desire the gifts of the Spirit because of the following key terms that Paul uses:

Service (*Latreia*)

Romans 12:1-2, when set in the context of the rest of that chapter, suggests that Paul's understanding of what happens in church goes way beyond what, in his day, would have been understood to be 'worship.' The word he uses to describe what happens when the church assembles is *latreia*, service. 1Corinthians 12 similarly anticipates that 'ministry' happens when the church gathers. It was an understanding of doing religion that was 'rational and voluntary rather than ecstatic' or 'cultic.'¹ This is in complete contrast to the mystery religions and even synagogue worship. It was an understanding of church that, being centred on serving one another, was not restricted to any place or time.² The purpose of the church was to build itself up:

The purpose of church is the growth and edification of its members into Christ and into a common life through their God-given ministry to one another.³

Meetings in earliest Christianity generally consisted of a meal followed by the exercising of ministry to one another.⁴

Gift (*Charisma*)

And the word that Paul tends to use to describe this giftedness to minister to others is *charisma*,⁵ literally a grace or a grace-gift. Käsemann defines this as 'the specific part which the individual has in the lordship and glory of Christ.'⁶ This *charisma* idea was a radical concept and was, as far as we know, completely without precedent either in Judaism or Greco-Roman religion. Even the word *charisma* or its plural *charismata* does not appear at all in Classical Greek and even in Paul's day was only ever used in a non-religious setting to refer to the giving of presents.⁷ It is part and parcel of a much greater whole and that was Paul's understanding of grace. Paul understood that all of God's dealings with humankind, including the church, bore the nature of an undeserved and free gift that elicited a well spring of thankfulness from those that were on the receiving end of it:⁸

Pneumatika (12:1; 14:1) stresses the spiritual nature or source of a particular ability or gift, while *charismata* (12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31) stresses their nature as gift, that is, the unmerited character of these functions or activities. *Pneumatika* was apparently a favourite term for many of those Paul has been concerned about in Corinth, while *charismata* is Paul's own term, meant to bring these people back down to earth. He wants them to realize that the functions they have are unmerited gifts of God's grace.⁹

The grace-gift of the Spirit brings the gifts of the Spirit. These are "the concrete realization of divine grace."¹⁰

¹ Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, Rev. Ed. (Peabody, MA.: 1994), p. 88.

² Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 89.

³ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 90.

⁴ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 90.

⁵ It was Käsemann that led the way in the recovery of this emphasis on the *charismata* in Paul: Ernst Käsemann, 'Ministry and Community in the New Testament,' in Tr. W.J. Montague *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964).

⁶ Käsemann, 'Ministry and Community', p. 65.

⁷ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 91.

⁸ Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, p. 92.

⁹ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 255.

¹⁰ Ralph P. Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12-15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 13.

Body

And it is the gift-character of the differentiated, and in some cases exchangeable, roles that we find in the gift lists that is axiomatic for Paul as this gives the different roles an egalitarian and strictly non-hierarchical cast.¹¹ Instead of a bureaucratic image of a variety of officials holding office in pyramidal formation from the emperor or the senate, Paul chooses the body metaphor¹² to express egalitarian unity in diversity, and diversity in unity, a situation of interdependence that presumably corrected tendencies towards vainglory that were present among the Corinthians:

The rule for the community of Christ's people has to be *unity only in diversity*, not unity in uniformity.¹³

Reflection

To what extent is your church tradition affirming of diversity in the congregation, and in its leadership team?

The *Charismata*

Gordon Fee groups the gifts together under the headings: "Spirit Manifestations," "Deeds of Service," and "Ministries."¹⁴ These broadly correspond to the three gift lists that occur in Paul's letters: 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, Romans 12:6-9 and Ephesians 4:11. Without doubt, it has been the 1 Corinthians 12 list and the Ephesians 4 list that have received the most attention in Pentecostalism: classical Pentecostals having recovered the use of 1 Corinthians 12 gifts, and NeoCharismatics having recovered the Ephesians 4 gifts of apostle and prophet. These two passages (notwithstanding debates around the authenticity of Ephesians) will therefore be the focus here as we try to glean from scholarship – Pentecostal and otherwise – some ways of assessing, enriching or correcting popular Pentecostal and Charismatic understandings.

¹¹ Robert Atkins, *Egalitarian Community: Ethnography and Exegesis* (Tusculooa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), p. 123-4.

¹² An image thought by Ernest Käsemann and others to be derived from the gnostic idea of the cosmos as being the body of God, while other options have been a Eucharistic background (1 Cor.10:16-17, Rawlinson), the corporate personality of Adam in Rabbinic thought (W.D. Davies), the corporate personality of the Messiah in apocalyptic thought (Schweitzer), or Paul's "in Christ" idea (Percy), or his nuptial "Bride" metaphor (Chavasse): Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ: A Study in the Relationship of the Church to Christ in the Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (London: SPCK, 1955), p. 85. Best himself preferred to see it as a logical result of Paul's thinking that originates with the saying: "members of Christ" (1Cor.6:15). "Members" made him think of "body," an idea already "in the air" in (proto) Gnosticism and Judaism: Best *One Bod in Christ*, pp. 94-95. After him, Cerfaux asserted the Eucharistic idea: "We must remember, and emphasize strongly, that in this context *hen sōma* refers to the body of Christ, his real and individual body, become present in the Eucharist." He bases his argument on the writings of the Apostolic Fathers e.g. Didache and Ignatius of Antioch and on the "Hellenistic simile" based on a fable of Aesop. Paul extends the Hellenistic simile of unity to speak of "...more than just unity: it tells us that unity is brought about by the one life of Christ which animates all Christians as if they were – or rather, who are – all members of the body of Christ." L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St Paul* (Tr. G. Webb & A. Walker. New York: Thomas Nelson, 1959), p. 265 & 267. Martin notes the Stoic background to the concept whose watchword was "sympathy," based on interdependence. Martin also notes Plato's origination of the metaphor in *The Republic* 462c-d: Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation*, pp. 21-23. Mitchell highlights the use of the body metaphor in Greco-Roman political discourse as a way of inveighing against factions: M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), pp. 157-64. Witherington makes the point that, where this metaphor would normally have been deployed against plebeian factions, here it is the privileged classes that are being accused of being factious by not acknowledging their need of the poorer, less salubrious members: Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 254. More recently, Michelle Lee, like Ralph Martin, has drawn attention to a possible Stoic background to the concept. The Stoics believed all the universe to be a unified body animated by wisdom. This was meant to produce the ethical result that people act empathetically and cooperatively once they understand that they are part of one another. Michelle Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) *passim*.

¹³ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM, 1992), p. 183.

¹⁴ Gordon Fee, "Gifts of the Spirit," in Hawthorne et al (eds) *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), p. 345-347.

Harold Horton, in his *The Gifts of the Spirit*, of 1934, was the first person to write a Pentecostal view of 1 Corinthians 12-14, and, in contrast to his contemporary, Donald Gee,¹⁵ who sees the Word of Knowledge in a non-supernatural way, distinctly emphasises the supernatural character of each and every gift listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11: "All the Gifts are miraculous – a hundred per cent miraculous."¹⁶ This was widely appreciated by Pentecostals around the world who bought the many reprints and new editions of the book.¹⁷ Against this, it should not escape our attention that, only moments later in the same passage, Paul freely includes a number of obviously non-supernatural functions such as "helps" and "administrations," which are mentioned in the same breath as obviously supernatural manifestations. I loosely follow Horton's categorisation of the gifts here. He helpfully summarises them all as manifestations of God's "omnipotence and omniscience,"¹⁸ for distribution among his people. It is clear that what we have here is not exhaustive but "a small sample"¹⁹ of nine such manifestations, but what an important sample they are for displaying the nature of the Spirit's operation among the Corinthians. Doubtless this passage served the rhetorical purpose of preventing the Corinthians from glorying in the gifts by emphasising their divine source and the vital importance of them all. Note the repeated use of "through the Spirit," "through the same Spirit."

Gifts of Supernatural Insight

Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is defined by Horton as being very similar to knowledge but instead of revealing God's total knowledge of all things as they now are, it reveals that aspect of his omnipotence that reaches into what *could* be. He knows all things possible and actual. In the word of wisdom, he reveals things possible so that God's people may make the right choices.

The Word of Wisdom is therefore the supernatural revelation, by the Spirit, of Divine Purpose; the supernatural declaration of the Mind and Will of God; the supernatural unfolding of His Plans and Purposes concerning things, places, people: individuals, communities, nations.²⁰

He unfortunately lists examples anachronistically from the Old Testament, such as Noah being divinely warned to build an ark.²¹

Gee, while insistent that all the gifts are equally "a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit,"²² and by definition cannot be natural human gifts, he defers to the preaching of apostolic doctrine (1Cor. 2:1-4, 10) and the wisdom of good oversight (Acts 6:1-7) as the safest way to explain what Paul intended here.²³ He allows also for the more Hortonian view of the word of wisdom as that which God gives in a moment of need or emergency²⁴ but does not give this prominence. In short, he prefers to see the gift of wisdom as having more to do with inspired utterances, especially in preaching and teaching, than inspired insight, and more to do with regular pulpit ministry than special moments of prophetic revelation about people's circumstances.

Fee notes that both wisdom and knowledge "held high court in Corinth," and are a significant thing that he is trying to critique at various points in the Corinthian correspondence. This desire to critique Greek ideas about the value of wisdom that had so enthralled the Corinthians probably accounts for wisdom and knowledge being listed first, even though these may not have been the most important or

¹⁵ Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield, MO: Radiant Books, 1949), pp. 41-48.

¹⁶ Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 32.

¹⁷ It went into nine editions: *Gifts of the Spirit*, pp. 8-9 of 1976 edition.

¹⁸ Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 28.

¹⁹ Max Turner, "Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Formation in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013), p. 193.

²⁰ Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 61.

²¹ Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit*, pp. 65-67.

²² Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 34.

²³ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 35-8.

²⁴ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 38-9.

visible.²⁵ In harmony with Gee, Fee translates this gift as “the message of wisdom” and references Paul’s earlier argument in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 in support of this being “the message of Christ crucified” as “God’s true wisdom.”²⁶ As Gee makes clear, this function need not compromise the supernatural Spirit-inspired nature of the gift.²⁷

Knowledge

Through its beneficent agency the Church may be purified, the distressed comforted, the saint gladdened, lost property recovered, the enemy defeated and the Lord Jesus glorified in all.²⁸

Despite the fact that this is undoubtedly true, it is the case that, as with the word of wisdom, “...the Scriptures provide for the task [of defining the gift] no material that is avowedly and unmistakably a manifestation of the word of knowledge.”²⁹ Gee acknowledges that, both in Scripture and in countless stories of Christian experience, there are some awe-inspiring moments when divine omniscience is manifested in flashes of insight that have often turned out to be game-changers in delivering people from danger or imparting faith and encouragement. However, Gee thinks it probable that these are aspects of prophetic ministry and probably not what Paul intends when he lists the word of knowledge in 1 Corinthians 12:8.³⁰ It seems that, in Gee’s mind, what prophesying is to prophets, words of knowledge are to teachers: it is a manifestation of the teaching gift. Its purpose is to impart the knowledge of Christ: Ephesians 1:17.³¹ Thiselton’s so-called “new proposal”³² is almost identical to Gee’s exegesis. He proposes that the word of knowledge is, in all likelihood, “...*instruction in the basic truths of the gospel, perhaps for baptismal candidates*,”³³ and notes the first signs in this epistle of the gradual emergence from momentary gift to settled office whereby the office of “teacher” is already in existence alongside the occasional operations of the word of knowledge: 1 Corinthians 12:28-9. Later, in Ephesians 4:11-12, of course, there has emerged a fixed-looking fivefold paradigm of offices: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.³⁴

If this view is right then it probably means that what tends to be referred to as a “word of knowledge” in a meeting is really a particular aspect of the gift of prophecy. This would certainly chime with the ministry of Old Testament prophets who gave flashes of supernatural insight as part of the prophetic function. What is actually a word of knowledge would appear to be linked, not to the prophets, but to the office of teacher. It is either the insipient emergence of that office or a particular instance of that office in operation. It is Spirit-inspired yet it seems that any hard dichotomy between natural and supernatural (a very late modern way of looking at the world in any case) has to be abandoned before we can make any sense of Paul’s gift lists here as elsewhere.

There is not quite a consensus on this, however. Fee is ambiguous and notes the placing of knowledge between “revelation” and “prophecy” in 1Cor.14:6, and its inclusion with prophecy and tongues in 1Cor.13:8. These uses do not strongly suggest a manifestation of teaching but something more along the lines of Horton: a moment of supernatural insight, something that would make Paul instinctively place it alongside revelations, prophetic words and tongues-speaking.³⁵ The broader

²⁵ Gordon Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 165.

²⁶ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, pp. 165-7. So Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation*, p. 13. With this Thiselton also agrees, and cites a number of sources in support, including a couple of his own earlier works: Anthony Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit: In Biblical Teaching: Through the Centuries, and Today* (London: SPCK, 2013), pp. 85-87.

²⁷ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 35-6: “It may be objected that it is the normal function of all Christian preaching and teaching to center on these subjects, and this we do not dispute. But in the ministry of a truly Pentecostal order there oftentimes comes shining forth a revelation in words that make our hearts burn within us...We have recognized once again “not the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”

²⁸ Horton, *Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 58.

²⁹ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 41.

³⁰ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 42.

³¹ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 41-48.

³² Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 87.

³³ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 88.

³⁴ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 88-9.

³⁵ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, pp. 167-8.

context of the epistle clearly does not suggest this: the use of the word *gnōsis* nowhere prepares the reader for this sudden change in its meaning, yet it is the case that 1Cor.14:6 is probably the only illustration we have of this gift in use, sketchy and suggestive though it is.

Discernment

“...Discerning of Spirits shows, in a miracle, the source of a miracle, and indicates inerrably its true character, whether heavenly or hellish.”³⁶ In other words, the gift is itself miraculous and its nature is to show the true source of something miraculous. Horton is keen to point out that this gift does not refer to discernment in general, to penetrating insight into things generally, but to the discernment of *spirits*.³⁷ Using his rule-of-thumb that the gifts of the Spirit must be understood only as supernatural and not at all as natural, he rules out human spirits and insists that this gift is only intended for discerning whether a given supernatural phenomenon is of satanic or divine origin,³⁸ which Gee also affirms.³⁹ This view probably represents the far end of a spectrum of views, most of which would include discerning whether something is of purely human origin, for instance, whether someone supposedly prophesying is really operating out of “the flesh.”⁴⁰

On this general view that the gift has reference to discerning whether something is demonic, divine or, possibly just human, possible examples of its operation would be: Acts 5 (Ananias & Saphira), Acts 8:23 (Simon the Sorcerer), and Acts 16:16-18 (the demon-possessed girl).⁴¹ To this also could be added Acts 13:4-12 (Elymas the sorcerer).

Fee links this gift most strongly with 1Corinthians 14:26-29 where, in the midst of discussions around the “spirits” of prophets being subject to the prophets, Paul makes clear his expectation here as in 1Thessalonians 5:20-21, that prophecies will routinely be weighed or judged.⁴² In the same way that tongues and interpretation must go together, so prophecy and discernment must go together.⁴³ Thiselton also links discernment with prophecy, referencing many interesting works along the way.⁴⁴

It is clear that the four episodes in Acts are Spirit-inspired moments of discernment into the spiritual realm, but there is no clear exegetical reason to link such occurrences to what Paul lists here. By contrast, linking the gift with the judging of prophecy has greater exegetical weight from within the letter itself.

Reflection

Thinking back to the three gifts of supernatural insight (for want of a better category): wisdom, knowledge, discernment of spirits: Where do you lean? Are you at the Horton end of the spectrum or do you feel the exegetical evidence takes you elsewhere? Perhaps your position is different for each gift.

Gifts of Supernatural Speech

Prophecy

The Greek verb carries the meaning of speaking for another and was a widely understood concept within Greco-Roman religion with its oracles inspired by Zeus. Horton, once again provides us with a pole on the extreme end of interpretations by which we can measure all the other positions:

³⁶ Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 73.

³⁷ So Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, p. 65.

³⁸ Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 74-75.

³⁹ Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, p. 65

⁴⁰ In what must be the only full-length book on the subject, the gift is extended to include almost everything: Douglas McBain, *Eyes That See: The Spiritual Gift of Discernment* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1986).

⁴¹ Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, p. 70.

⁴² Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 171.

⁴³ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, pp. 171.

⁴⁴ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 113-4.

Prophecy in its simplest form is divinely inspired and anointed utterance. It is entirely supernatural. As speaking with tongues is supernatural utterance in an unknown tongue, so Prophecy is supernatural utterance in a known tongue. It is a manifestation of the Spirit of God, and not of the human mind.⁴⁵

Horton excludes any human ingredient in the strongest of terms, saying that all who prophesy, whoever they are, are “but ‘mouths’ for the expression of divine words.”⁴⁶ This approach is scorned in charismatic circles today as being a “drainpipe” approach. It is pointed out that, in the Bible, God always uses the background and characters of the speakers: Amos and his shepherding background, for instance. Indeed, in our approach to the inspiration of Scripture itself we would generally avoid the idea of dictation and prefer instead to conceive of God as inspiring the natural faculties of the biblical authors. At the other end of the scale are the exegetes who solemnly insist that prophecy here refers merely to inspired preaching, which is presumably the kind of approach that Horton is militating against.

It is clear, both in pagan and in biblical usage, that prophesying does not only, or even mainly, involve prediction of future events. The main purpose of the gift, according to Paul, is “edification, exhortation and comfort” to God’s people. It may also serve to awaken the consciences of unbelieving visitors. Fee defines it as: “spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, intelligible messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people.”⁴⁷ On the one hand, this excludes the possibility that these were previously prepared sermons,⁴⁸ on the other hand, neither would these people have been in an “ecstasy” or “frenzy” as in pagan religion. Rather the background was the more Jewish concept of a prophet who is fully in possession of his faculties and announcing an inspired and perfectly intelligible message.⁴⁹

At the other end of the spectrum from Horton and his insistence on the totally supernatural nature of prophecy – the drainpipe approach - are those who continue to be so uncomfortable with the unbridled unleashing of random pictures and intuitions and the use of these for guiding churches and individuals that they prefer to stay more or less with the traditional interpretation of prophecy as “...*applied to preaching, especially as biblical, or gospel, applied preaching.*”⁵⁰ In the case of Thiselton, the possibility is admitted that God *could* communicate in a totally unpremeditated prophetic way, yet the reservations are so great as to narrow the actual possibilities to almost nothing. For Thiselton prophecy is truly “the interpretation of Scripture as well as charismatic utterance,”⁵¹ yet extreme caution is to accompany the latter. Probably the best case for total cessationism with respect to prophecy and the other gifts is that made by Sinclair B. Ferguson,⁵² who engages at length with Wayne Grudem’s *The Gift of Prophecy*,⁵³ and cites with approval B.B. Warfield’s classic cessationist text: *Counterfeit Miracles*.⁵⁴ The most recent academic treatment of cessationism from a Pentecostal perspective is to be found in Keith Warrington’s *Pentecostal Theology*.⁵⁵ Historically prophecy and prophesying is significant to cessationism since it is believed that most early church leaders, including Chrysostom and Augustine, developed a cessationist stance in reaction to the Montanists and their elevation of prophecy onto the same level as Scripture.⁵⁶

⁴⁵ Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 160.

⁴⁶ Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 160.

⁴⁷ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 170.

⁴⁸ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 170, n. 329.

⁴⁹ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 169-70.

⁵⁰ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 489.

⁵¹ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 109.

⁵² Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), pp. 223-237.

⁵³ (Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1982).

⁵⁴ (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1918).

⁵⁵ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶ The story is told in D. Christie-Murray, *Voices From the Gods: Speaking with Tongues* (London: Routledge, 1978).

Varieties of Tongues

It was Bloch-Hoell that first introduced the distinction between *Xenolalia* and *Glossolalia*.⁵⁷ *Xenolalia* is the speaking, supernaturally, of known languages, sometimes also referred to as *Xenoglossa*. *Glossolalia* is “non-cognitive, lexically non-communicative utterances.”⁵⁸ It is assumed that most of the references to tongues in the New Testament are *Glossolalia*, though the actual Greek word used is simply the word *glōssa*, tongue, meaning “language,” which occurs 50 times in all: 25 of which refer to this gift.⁵⁹ The consensus regarding the tongues heard on the Day of Pentecost, however, is that these were actual foreign languages, an event that might plausibly be interpreted as a symbolic reversal of the curse on Babel and hence a signal that God was now, “going global,” as it were.⁶⁰ It is also significant that this giving of the Spirit took place on the day traditionally used to celebrate the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, which inaugurated the first covenant. Now the new covenant was being brought into being, just as Ezekiel and Jeremiah had predicted, by the giving of the Spirit into the human heart where the law was now to be inwardly written.⁶¹

Horton defined the gift as “...supernatural utterance by the Holy Spirit in languages never learned by the speaker – nearly always not understood by the hearer.”⁶² Gee emphasises its emotional and ecstatic nature: “...in the first instance it seems to have been manifested as an almost spontaneous expression of otherwise unutterable ecstasy (Acts 10:44),”⁶³ and even in its on-going everyday use beyond “initial evidence,” Gee links it with “deep, mystical communion with God...”⁶⁴ citing 1 Corinthians 14:2, 14. Surprisingly for a Pentecostal who must have routinely used the gift in an entirely non-ecstatic way, he continues to wax lyrical about how “the understanding was temporarily suspended under the rush of spiritual feeling.”⁶⁵ In contrast to this, Fee points out that “The regulations for its use in 14:27-28 show that the speaker is not in ‘ecstasy’ or ‘out of control.’ Quite the opposite; the speakers must speak in turn, and they must remain silent if there is no one to interpret.”⁶⁶

Turner points out that, “...both Luke and Paul regarded glossolalia as invasive charismatic praise in languages unknown to the speaker.”⁶⁷ This is a theme that recurs in the literature: the thought that, on the basis of Acts 2:11; 10:46 and 1 Corinthians 14:2,14-17, tongues is always addressed to God, usually taking the form of praise, and that tongue interpretation, therefore, must also be of that nature, never a word addressed to people. Fee also holds this position,⁶⁸ as does Thiselton.⁶⁹

Historically, this gift continued in the Eastern Church but died out in the West in the fourth century. There is then no record of any tongues-speaking for 600 years. By around AD1000, in what would later become codified as the *Rituale Romanum*, tongues-speaking was explicitly associated with demon possession, though the phenomenon continued to occur through the medieval period among certain mystics including St Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), St Dominic (1170-1221), Anthony of Padua (1195-1231) and St Gregory Palamas 1296-1359, as well as among radical Reformation and Proto Reformation groups: the Waldensians (twelfth century onwards), the Jansenists (seventeenth century), the Quakers (seventeenth century), and the Camisard Huguenots (1720s). Edward Irving’s Regent Square Presbyterian church in London also became a haven for tongues-speaking in the

⁵⁷ N. Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), pp. 142-3.

⁵⁸ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), p. 222, n.4.

⁵⁹ Jay Green (ed) *The New Englishman’s Greek Concordance and Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1982), p. 1105. For an excellent introduction to the vast academic literature on this most controversial of all the gifts see Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 172, n. 336, and also Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, pp. 84-5, nn. 248, 249 & 252, where the literature is helpfully split into theological, sociological and psychological studies of tongues. In my view, the best book on tongues is the fascinating historical survey of occurrences going all the way back to the fathers: Christie-Murray, *Voices From the Gods*.

⁶⁰ A good review of the literature on this is to be found in Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, pp. 51-57.

⁶¹ Max Turner explores this theme in *Power From on High: The Holy Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), passim.

⁶² Horton, *The Gifts of the Spirit*, p. 135.

⁶³ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, pp. 74-5.

⁶⁴ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 75.

⁶⁵ Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, p. 75.

⁶⁶ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 173.

⁶⁷ Turner, *Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, p. 238.

⁶⁸ Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, p. 173.

⁶⁹ Thiselton, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 114. See further his excellent survey of different exegetical views: pp.114-120.

1830s, following an incident in October 1831 in which a certain Mary Campbell spoke in tongues during a service. Irving himself was soon excommunicated from the Presbyterian Church.

So it would appear that the gift has been more common in history than might be assumed. It is also the case that it is less common in Pentecostals than might be assumed, with 40% of Pentecostals worldwide saying that they never speak in tongues.⁷⁰

Tongue Interpretation

The spiritual gift (charisma) by which one so endowed makes clear to the congregation the unintelligible utterance of one who has spoken in tongues.⁷¹

Tongue interpretation is a gift precisely because, unlike on the Day of Pentecost, glossolalia is not translatable language but supernatural language which is given supernatural interpretation by the same Spirit who gives it. This unverifiable interpretation of an already unidentifiable language makes tongue interpretation one of the hardest gifts to understand and defend. Further, difficulties about identifying how to exercise the gift, that is, whether it must only be a message directed to God rather than a prophetic-type message addressed to the congregation, have meant that, in American Assemblies of God, only 17% of those surveyed have ever exercised this gift.⁷²

There is now a broad scholarly consensus about the nature of this gift in terms of the New Testament:

There is no biblical support for the suggestion that the gift of tongues [and hence its interpretation] was intended to be a means whereby God communicated with believers; neither is there any indication that when a tongue is interpreted, it becomes equivalent to prophecy.⁷³

It is also very clear that, according to 1 Corinthians 14:13, 27-28, if anyone one speaks out loud in a tongue in the context of the gathered church, one must pray for an interpretation. This interpretation may come from the giver of the tongue or from someone else.

The very fact that my tone here has changed to one of laying down rules and guidelines is probably the very thing that puts people off ever using the gift however. Church leaders have been very keen on Paul's concluding line: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1Cor.14:40),⁷⁴ and this verse seems to have become a pretext for quenching the moving of the Spirit. When it comes to tongues and interpretation, we too easily find ourselves hidebound with rules and restrictions, forgetting that Paul is here dealing with a situation very specific to Corinth. Perhaps, Spittler has a point in saying that many of the teachings given about the use of this gift are "needlessly restrictive."⁷⁵

Gifts of Supernatural Power

Faith

"...the faculty to trust God in a particular situation... a 'burst' of supernatural assurance."⁷⁶

"...the special gift of supernatural faith that can 'move mountains'"⁷⁷

"It would seem to come upon certain of God's servants in times of special crisis or opportunity in such mighty power that they are lifted right out of the realm of even natural and ordinary faith in God."⁷⁸

⁷⁰ From a survey cited in Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 87-8, n. 271.

⁷¹ R.P. Spittler, "Interpretation of Tongues, Gift of," in Burgess et al (eds) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), p. 801.

⁷² Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 95.

⁷³ Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ Some have even insisted that the interpretation must resemble the tongue given in its intonation and duration: Spittler, "Interpretation of Tongues," p. 802.

⁷⁵ Spittler, "Interpretation of Tongues," p. 802.

⁷⁶ Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, p. 79.

⁷⁷ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 168, citing 1Cor.13:2 as the same gift.

All writers are unanimous in asserting that the gift of faith is to be sharply distinguished from the other kinds of faith mentioned in the Bible such as saving faith or the fruit of faith(fullness). This is a momentary supernatural endowment.

Aside from the anachronistic use of the Old Testament to furnish an example of a New Testament gift, Horton make a credible attempt to differentiate this gift from the working of miracles:

Miracles' operation is more active than passive: Faith's operation is more passive than active. Miracles' power *does* things by the Spirit: Faith's power receives or enjoys things by the Spirit. If Daniel in the lions' den had slain the dreaded beasts with a gesture it would have been a miracle wrought by the Working of Miracles. That he rested unharmed in the presence of the full active beasts was a miracles wrought through the Gift of Faith.⁷⁹

Probably a less restrictive way to distinguish the gift from the other two power gifts is to point out that the gift of faith, while including the capacity to work miracles and healings where necessary, is not restricted to that but can apply to any situation that requires either something impossible to happen or some supernatural assurance about a chosen course of action or inaction.

Miracles

This literally the working of *dunamis*, "power." A miracle is a mighty work, a work of power.⁸⁰ It presupposes a situation of felt powerlessness, a felt need for a miracle. Though healings are clearly miracles, logically, healings must be excluded from this particular gift, and some have found in this gift a slot for the ministry of exorcisms.⁸¹

Here is Horton's definition, which is consistent with his other gift definitions: "A supernatural intervention in the ordinary course of nature; a temporary suspension of the accustomed order."⁸² He is very clear that miracles here are to be sharply distinguished from the lighter, more metaphorical ways in which we are apt to employ the term, such as by referring to the "miracle" of grace, or of beauty.⁸³ The gift of miracles is a work of power of an extraordinary nature, and may include anything such as inanimate objects, provisions of food, mechanical things or the weather.

Healings

Here, we have the unusual phrase: "gifts of healings," where both the word "gifts" and the word "healings" take the plural in the Greek. This could signify either:

1. An indication that each manifestation is a momentary "gift."⁸⁴ That is, the gift of healing alights in an entirely temporary and contingent way upon a church member who is ministering to another, or,
2. That this gift is itself a series of distinct gifts.⁸⁵ This has become a widespread view within charismatic circles which points in quite the opposite direction. Far from these being momentary anointings for specific needs, this understanding is that a gift of healing takes up residence in a person a permanent way and gives them a distinct power over particular ailments or areas of the body (or mind). Another person moves in a different 'specialism,' as it were, hence the plural. It is a plural of kind, of characteristic, rather than a plural of moments, of instances.

⁷⁸ Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, p. 50.

⁷⁹ Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 124.

⁸⁰ Fee, God's Empowering Presence, p. 169.

⁸¹ Warrington, Pentecostal Theology, p. 81.

⁸² Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 112.

⁸³ Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 111.

⁸⁴ Fee, God's Empowering Presence, pp. 168-9.

⁸⁵ Horton, Gifts of the Spirit, p. 99.

Given that Paul is trying to militate against the Corinthians becoming puffed up with pride over certain of the more spectacular gifts and ministries, it is perhaps unlikely that Paul had this latter idea in mind.