

The Spirit's Word on Special Gifts of the Spirit

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Lists of the Special Gifts

	1 Cor. 12:8-11	1 Cor. 12:28-30	1 Cor. 14	Romans 12:6-8	1 Peter 4:10-11	Ephesians 4:11-13
Message of Wisdom	X					
Message of Knowledge	X					
Faith	X					
Healing	X	X				
Miraculous Powers	X	X				
Prophecy	X		X	X	X	
Distinguish Spirits	X					
Tongues	X	X	X			
Interpret Tongues	X	X	X			
Apostle		X				X
Prophet		X				X
Teacher		X		X		X
Helper		X				
Administrator		X		X		
Serve				X	X	
Encourage				X		
Contribute				X		
Show Mercy				X		
Pastor						X
Evangelist						X

Intention of this presentation: Focus on the full list of the special gifts, in a positive manner, rather than a negative presentation on abuses of the special gifts. Special gifts is a better term than charismatic gifts, a term which involves a limited number of the gifts in popular understanding, and for us a negative connotation.

Special gifts is to be distinguished from the gift of the Spirit (regeneration, conversion, salvation, cf. Romans 5:15ff and Romans 6:23) and from the fruits of the Spirit, which are given to all Christians. Special gifts are given individually, uniquely, and they are given for specific service to the wider body of the Church rather than for personal use and advantage.

Part I: The Continuance of the Special Gifts

The attitude towards special gifts is colored by the inclusiveness of the list one uses; many commentators are not precise in defining what they mean, and perhaps they are dealing more with the sign gifts (miraculous gifts) of the first part of I Corinthians 12 rather than the full body of special gifts. The attitudes of others are colored by their view of special gifts as hot (miraculous) or cold (non-miraculous)

I. Ignore the Special Gifts

cf. Pieper and Hoenecke Dogmatics, *Abiding Word* essays; in such standard works of American Lutheranism, there is general neglect of the Spirit's work apart from conversion and the means of grace; note, though, the inclusion of the charismatic pericope (I Corinthians 12:1-11) among the historic pericopes (Trinity 10)

II. Denounce the Special Gifts

Recent WELS materials have tended to this position, dealing with abuses of charismatic gifts and then dropping the matter of special gifts, as if to expose abuses and engage in polemics has adequately dealt with the whole matter

III. Special Gifts are no longer around; they ceased with the Apostolic Era

Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) as cited by Arndt (CTM, 1930), that the gifts were needed to establish the church, and the established church no longer needs them; also that they were a sign to unbelievers, and since all are now Christians, they are no longer needed.

Adalbert Schaller in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (1944) calls them “temporary” (page 243) and says “the need for them disappeared entirely as the church grew” (page 244)

Douglas Judisch in *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gift* has a very full defense of this position. Judisch is a Concordia, Fort Wayne, LCMS professor, writing in 1978. He states “it is contrary to the Word of God to claim prophetic gifts (his term for charismatic gifts) in the post-apostolic era” (page 15). He deals only with the sign gifts of I Corinthians 12. His reasons:

- 1) no means of authenticating gifts today, since the apostles are gone (problem: is not Scripture a point of reference for us today?)
- 2) these gifts were given only through the apostles, and therefore cannot be given today (problem, gets into a RC hierarchical view, as if the apostles give, rather than the Spirit; what of the other less spectacular special gifts, as in later I Cor. 12?)
- 3) given to authenticate apostolate, and therefore not needed today (problem: given to the whole Church to edify it)
- 4) I Corinthians 13:8-12 (“tongues...will be stilled...when perfection comes...”) as he sees it, does not deal with the end time but to the complete NT canon and end of apostolic age; “the cessation of the prophetic gift was to be a complete obliteration beyond recall” (page 83) (problem, how does one divide out which gifts have so completely stopped?)
- 5) Daniel 9:24-27; he claims it is to be identified with the end of the apostolic era and with the end of prophecy at that point
- 6) I Corinthians 14:21, quoting from Isaiah 28:11-12, which he claims indicates tongues are a sign to Israel only and therefore are no longer needed in our Gentile-era Church
- 7) Zechariah 13:2-6 is claimed to mean that all prophecy after the apostolic era is spurious
- 8) The lack of prophetic gifts in the post-apostolic church, except among heretics

The general failure of his approach, the most thorough-going of a conservative Lutheran, reminds us of the inadequacy of this position. His views were also attacked in the LCMS, cf. *Concordia Journal*. One cannot isolate some gifts out and denounce them if they are put into practice without opening oneself to this kind of charge: “A large number of pastors, professors at the seminaries, etc., seem to be saying this in particular (that the gifts have ceased) despite the fact that the gift of being a pastor, or preaching and teaching, are listed among the gifts which they say do not exist today.” (*The Reflector*, fall, 1980, publ. by the Lutheran Lamplighters)

Arndt, CTM, 1930, comments that one would like to find a passage saying that gifts are at an end, and be done with the problem, but that there is no such passage.

IV. Some of the Special Gifts ended with the apostolic era, while others continue

In this approach there is an effort to sort out the special gifts and to find some basis upon which one might say some have ended, while others continue. Some approaches:

- 1) Parallel with the Old Testament sign gifts at the great revelations of God (cf. age of Moses, age of prophets), and as those sign gifts ceased (subsided), so the sign gifts of the NT era; note, for example, that it is said of John the Baptist that he did no signs (John 10:41), for he preceded the era of direct revelation (on this subject, see Fowler in *Evangelical Quarterly*)

- 2) The claim that sign gifts were the prerogative of the apostles and those to whom they distributed them, and therefore are ended with the era of the apostles (cf. Romans 1:11, Acts 19:6, II Corinthians 12:12, Acts 8:18)
- 3) The foundation era of the church is over, and therefore sign gifts may cease while office and service gifts continue
- 4) The apostle's faint praise of sign gifts (at least tongues) in I Corinthians really damns them; he speaks of them in so negative a manner that one should see them only as an isolated condition rather than as a pattern for Christians generally (cf. Scaer in "An Essay for Lutheran Pastors on the Charismatic Movement")

Some contrary positions to this view:

Bittlinger: Paul does not distinguish between gifts but lumps them all together; he does not distinguish between natural and supernatural gifts

Paul does not sort out gifts for Corinth and other places (cf. overlap in lists on page 1)

The Joel vision referred to in Peter's Pentecost sermon indicates these gifts are for all Christians (all flesh...sons...daughters...old men...young men) rather than for a special group as in the OT, and therefore should be dealt with differently than any OT parallels. "There is no reason to suppose that this universal distribution of the charismata was to be confined to the apostolic era. The New Testament everywhere speaks as though it was to be a normal continuing situation." (p. 177, *Evangelical Quarterly*)

Since signs are no indication of the work of God (cf. Mt. 7:21-23 and Matthew 24:24), their absence or presence at any, given point in time proves nothing special (cf. reference to John the Baptist above, or their presence in the age of King Ahab but not at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah); one should beware of statements saying they are/are not needed at any given point in time

V. Special Gifts Continue but the Spirit determines which gifts are to be given at any point in time

LCMS report in 1972: "The Church, therefore, will not reject out of hand the possibility that God may in His grace and wisdom endow some in Christendom with the same abilities and powers He gave His church in past centuries" (page 25)

Joel Gerlach in "The Holy Spirit and the Charismatic Renewal" given to the Northern Wisconsin District in 1972: "Has God promised to give His Spirit to the church today in the same way He gave His Spirit to the church in the Age of the Apostles? To the Church? Yes! In the same way? No! No specific promise is given anywhere in the Scripture." (page 18) "No conclusive substantiation can be cited from Scripture in support of the contention that the gift of tongues was to cease for all time with the passing of the Apostolic Age." (page 19)

Martin Luther, from a sermon on Mark 16:17-18, preached 1522: "These words do not refer to the congregation but to each one individually. The idea is: If a Christian has the faith, he shall have power to do these signs... Where there is a Christian, there is therefore the power to do such signs even now if it is necessary. But no one should presume to exercise it if it is not necessary or required. For the Apostles did not always exercise it either, only in order to proclaim the Word of God and confirm it by miracles... Since now, however, the Gospel has spread and has been made known to all the world, it is no longer necessary to do signs as in the times of the Apostles. However if need be and if they should threaten and oppress the Gospel, then it will probably be our turn too, and we will have to do signs before we will allow the Gospel to be suppressed and dishonored." (Quoted Froelich, page 151)

VI. Special Gifts All Continue but should be understood as "cold" in nature

This view eradicates sign gifts in the Apostolic era and now by considering them *all* to be very natural occurrences with nothing supernatural about them. Carter presents a somewhat official Methodist view, in which tongues are only the knowledge of foreign languages, healings refer to medical work and praying for the sick, prophecy to preaching, etc.

VII. All the special gifts continue and are always “hot” in nature

This is the view of Pentecostal and Charismatic espoused in their numerous publications. Tongues are seen as direct communication from God. Prophecy is “the Spirit taking over and speaking directly from Christ through you, in words you had never intended to use.” (Green, page 171) Tongues and their interpretation are “divinely inspired” (Green, page 167). Healing and miracles are supernatural; the message of knowledge is with the direct help of God.

Furthermore, the possession and use of these special gifts is seen as the basis for spiritual life, as signs to oneself and others that God is with one. “Nothing is of more vital importance concerning the reestablishment of New Testament Christianity than the full return of everyone. of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost.” (Gee, page 85) Problems: Like those who insist these gifts are over, so those who insist these gifts are with us in the supernatural sense do not make full use of the list of special gifts; “in the life of the Pentecostal movement, as far as we have been able to observe, there appears to be no deliberate or wide-spread practice of the non-remarkable gifts *per se*” (Bruner, page 138); “it would be more accurate to say that it stresses the extraordinary spiritual gifts.” (Bruner, page 139) One notes the false doctrine which invariably seems to accompany this view: grades of Christians (complete and incomplete), saying some of the spiritual gifts are to be possessed by everyone, a theology of experience and feeling, which is a Reformed—not Lutheran Gospel—approach, the idea of Spirit Baptism before the gifts, problems with sacramental baptism, the Trinity, ecumenicity, order and authority in the church. The Augsburg Confession V, “They condemn (those) who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.” To read in those who espouse this view is to read the very kind of thinking that Paul had ‘to refute and rebuke in I Corinthians.

VIII. Special Gifts Continue, Some “hot” and others “cold”

Luther held to the continuance of the special gifts, both office/service gifts and the extraordinary sign gifts. He sees them as both hot and cold: healing is only a matter of healing people as through medical means, but can also be faith healing, laying hands on the sick in prayer. The gift of faith is the power to work miracles, but tongues are nothing more than the use of foreign languages and the ability to translate them. Exorcism is to be done. “Ordinary and extraordinary charismatic manifestations are placed by Luther on the same plane: ‘The Spirit who has given to one (the gift of) preaching and to you (the gift of) listening, and who has raised dead people through still another, this same Spirit has given to another the gift of comforting people. Before God there is no difference.’” (Froelich, p. 154)

Part II. The Nature of the Special Gifts

A. General Comments on the Special Gifts: I Corinthians 12:1-7

Verses 1-2

Do not think of “gifts” as the heathen do; they are not proofs of salvation summoned up by self-will and self-action; they are neither for pride nor for self-glorification

The presence of such gifts also among the heathen means one should not take refuge in them of themselves, but always and only in Christ.

cf. Scaer : “The basic error is that the charismatic movement tends to equate the level of sanctification in a believer with the presence of one or more gifts or offices,” (page 220) and then it is no longer a gift but an accomplishment.

cf. LCMS (1977): “Anything that leads people away from the Word for the assurance of the Spirit’s presence and power in their lives is a soul-destroying, satanic delusion.” (page 272) “Spiritual gifts are not to be considered Means of Grace.” (page 274) “Lutherans are also concerned when speaking in tongues is described

as a spiritual gift which imparts to the one using it a keener realization of his sins, a deeper and more constant awareness of the Spirit's indwelling presence, a stronger faith, the ability to pray at a deeper level, an awakened interest and a deeper hunger to study the Bible, and a new freedom to witness to others what Jesus means to him. Such a view raises the very experience of speaking in tongues to the level of a means of grace and attributes to the function what can be performed only by the Gospel and the sacraments." (page 275) "Neither tongues, nor miracles of healing, nor any of the other charismatic gifts referred to in I Corinthians 12 were given for the purpose of making God more real to man, to assure him of God's love, to give power for witnessing, or to bring about a renewal in the church. These were all *signs* that Christ had sent His Spirit." (page 282)

cf. Romans 12:3, not to think higher of oneself than one ought, I Peter 4:11, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."

Verse 3

The gifts point to Christ as Lord; they will not deny Him His place. Since Christianity alone does not possess charismatic manifestations, what makes them Christian gifts is that they are used in service to the Gospel. They always center on the Word of God and ministering to it and for it.

No false doctrine is to be tolerated in the name of "gifts"

Verses 4-6

The gifts are called *charismata*, from His distribution, *energemata*, His power at work, *diakonia*, for the use of others.

The gifts are given by the Triune God (we have here a Trinitarian formula), and therefore one ought not divide out gifts given by the Spirit from gifts of God (I Corinthians 12:28) or gifts of Christ (Ephesians 4:11).

Yet the Spirit is emphasized, and "one important purpose of the charismatic gifts was *to stress the third person in the Godhead* and His indispensable power in the life of the church." (Schaller, *Quarterly*, p. 240)

Verse 7

Gifts are given "to each one" in contrast to OT when such gifts were the possession of the few (for OT examples of gifts, Anna and Simeon prophesy; skills in arts and crafts, Bezalel, Exodus 31; Samson's strength, Judges 14:4,19; of Jephthah and Gideon, Judges 15:12-15, 6:34; of the prophets, including Saul, II Samuel 23:2, Nehemiah 9:30; of leaders, I Samuel 10:1-7, 16:13); see above on the vision of Joel.

"Specific gifts are reserved for individuals and individuals endowed with these gifts are themselves 'gifts' from the ascended Christ to His Church." (Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, "Gifts")

Gifts are given to each and every Christian "for the common good." They are to build up the whole body (cf. 12:14-27, also Romans 12:4-5 for the body analogy), "to serve others" (I Peter 4:10), "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:12-13). I Corinthians 14:12 (and the whole chapter) emphasize gifts that "build up the church."

There is no need to "reestablish New Testament Christianity" by resuscitating long-neglected spiritual gifts, for the gifts are always with us, given to us as the people in whom the Spirit has been given (12:13)

Should the gifts themselves be considered as natural abilities, or as supernatural, or as natural with an added dimension? "Frequently, though not always, the gifts bestowed accord with natural talents and endowments, but they always transcend them." (Sanders, pp. 111-112) "What we usually call 'miraculous gifts' are not mentioned as a separate class, but are joined with other gifts which we usually call 'talents' or natural endowments." (Seyer, page 9) They "provide a spiritual capability far mightier than the finest natural ability could ever supply." (Gee, page 24) This does not mean that everyone is using his special gifts or is even aware of what they might be. Paul admonishes Timothy not to "neglect" his gift, not to fail to use what has been given to him. Through the means of grace the Spirit awakens and develops and directs the gifts given to us, to each and all of us whom the Spirit has called to faith. For a good discussion on this subject, see Carter, pages

B. The Individual Gifts of the Spirit

1. The word of wisdom

Not the common wisdom of knowing Christ (Ephesians 1:17) available to all Christians, but the kind of wisdom needed in difficult matters and dangerous situations, the wisdom for which Solomon asked and was given, cf. preaching of Stephen, “they could not stand up against his wisdom” (Acts 6:10). Also the promises of Jesus, Luke 21:15, “I will give you...wisdom” before the council, or Matthew 10:20, “the Spirit...speaking through you,” repeated Luke 12:12, “the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

2. The word of knowledge

Not merely a matter of knowing, but of being able to express that knowledge, even as Jesus “spoke with authority” (Matthew 7:28-29). “the old message spoken in the new situation in such a way that it still remains the old message” (Bittlinger, page 30). Ability to apply the truths of Scripture to a given situation. The word of knowledge and the word of wisdom relate to such concerns as exegetical skill, counseling, communicating.

3. Faith

Not saving faith, which is for all Christians, nor faith(fulness), which is a fruit of the Spirit, but a special faith, an intensity of faith, that can move mountains and offer one’s body to be burned, a faith that the Lord will indeed be there and will act and will support us. Cf. heroes of faith chapter, Elijah at Mt. Carmel, Jesus on the faith of the Canaanite woman and the centurion of Capernaum. “Faith as a gift is essentially a tremendous assurance; received only by divine grace, an assurance which draws the supernatural into the natural world,” (Bittlinger, page 32)

4. Gifts of Healing

The hot view is to take these healings in the supernatural sense as we meet them in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles. The cold view is to view these healings in the light of James 5:14-15, with its idea of intercessory prayer and medical healing under God’s direction. Perhaps it is best to say, this in our time refers to a cold view, though realizing, as God wills, and has been experienced, wonder miracles do happen in our time also. We are being reminded not to surrender the area of healing (of body and spirit and emotion and soul) to the medical profession (as did King Asa, in II Chronicles 16:12, “though the disease was severe, yet in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physician”), nor to the Roman Catholic perversion of the last rites, but we are to be seeking out and using those who have the special gift of a healing ministry

5. Working of Miracles

The comments on the proceeding apply here as well. Miracles involves a wider range than healing; they involve the physical world and averting a threat or danger. John 14:12: who believes in Me will do the works I do and greater; Acts 4:29-30: a prayer for the demonstration of God’s power in our midst. On the mission frontiers such miracles are more common. One specific form of healing or miracle is exorcism. Luther on this: “We should not now and cannot drive out the devils with specific ceremonies and words, as did the prophets, Christ, and the Apostles long ago. We must pray in the name of Christ and earnestly admonish the Church to pray that the dear God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would deliver the possessed person by his mercy. If such prayer now is said with faith in Christ’s promise: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for something, etc.,’ it is powerful and strong so that the devil must leave the person as I can tell several examples.” (quoted Froelich, pages 153-154)

6. Prophecy (In I Peter 4:11, “speaking...the very words of God”)

Not the hot phenomenon, of the inspired Old and New Testament writers, with the “Spirit taking over,” but the forth-telling of God’s message, the correct interpretation of Scripture and application of Law and Gospel to the needs of men. cf. its usage in I Corinthians 14, where it is

spoken of as a normal function in the congregation, speaking “for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.” (14:3) cf. also 14:29 (“weigh carefully what is said”) for a reminder that prophecy can have error in it and therefore is not the same as the inspired prophecy of the Bible writers.

Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2 are promise and fulfillment/example.

7. Distinguish spirits

As Paul reminds us in I Corinthians 2:6&7, there is a wisdom of God and a wisdom of man; this gift can distinguish them, distinguish the true and the false, the divine and the demonic. I John 4:1, “test the spirits.” Certainly an important gift in the formation of the NT canon, but important also now with the accretion of false doctrines through the centuries. In the Bible, exposing of Ananias and Saphira, of Simon Magus, of Peter’s temptation of Christ, of the opponents of John’s Gospel (I-III John).

8. Kinds of Tongues Different views on tongues:

1) Cold, refer to real earthly languages

So at Pentecost and other Acts references (Acts 11:15, tongues “just as on us at the beginning”), and therefore also at Corinth. The problem at Corinth was similar to that of the Catholics with their ununderstood Tridentine Mass, or too much the smell of the midnight oil in the pulpit. Also at Corinth the problem was that of counterfeiting heathen type ecstatic speech for show and for glory. Luther takes this position. For a thorough defense of it, see Carter, pages 192-219.

2) Hot, ecstatic speech at Jerusalem and Corinth

The classic Pentecostal/charismatic view, which distorts the whole discussion on tongues, aided and abetted by the KJV insertion of “unknown” tongues. Tongues are a “divinely inspired message” (Green, page 167) and “the understanding temporarily suspended under the rush of spiritual feeling” (Gee, page 62).

Problem with handling the Acts 2 account, to make these ecstatic tongues...all 120 use tongues, then Peter preach in real language, then ecstatic interpretation of tongues in real language!

3) Prayer language at Corinth, real language at Jerusalem

tongues as used at Corinth are seen as the prayer life of the Christian developed to a higher and more intense degree, “expressing the inexpressible and praising God in new language” (Bittlinger, 48). There are many Biblical references to this prayer language: Hannah in the temple, lips moving but uttering no sound; Christ’s sighings and groanings (Mk. 7:34 and 8:12); praying in the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18 and Jude 20; singing to the Lord in the heart in Ephesians 5:19; in Romans 8:26, the Spirit helping us when we do not know how or what to pray; praying with the spirit, not the mind (I Corinthians 14:14-15). The problem at Corinth was then the use of this prayer language in the public worship service, for show and display, with the resulting confusion and loss of intelligible messages, for such language of prayer “resembles worthless, ecstatic gibberish, which has no place in a meeting for worship” (Bittlinger, page 49)

4) A mixture of meanings to the word, tongues

different phenomena being described: real tongues at Jerusalem and in Acts, prayer language for all Christians (therefore Paul in I Corinthians 14:5, “I desire all to speak with tongues) and in its intense form the gift being referred to in the list of special gifts, and some form of ecstatic speech at Corinth. One notes the comment of the early father Chrysostom that we don’t know what went on in Corinth (and this only some 300 years after the event!).

It is clear that there are many angles on any discussion on tongues, that no answer is cut and dried, but that the charismatic view on what tongues are has colored how we view them and how we react to the very word “tongues.” Remember Paul in I Corinthians 14:34, “do not forbid.”

One of the most difficult problems is the inclusion of tongues in the list of special gifts and then their use in I Corinthians 14 along with the wish of Paul that all would use them.

9. Interpretation of tongues

The explanation of this gift varies according to one's understanding of tongues, from the translation of real languages to the hot and miraculous explanation of the utterances of another to a revealing of the thought and intention of the prayers of another. Interpretation is not needed for private use of tongues, but only for their corporate use.

10. Apostle

An apostle is called by God, singled out by the Church, and recognized as such by all. He is confirmed by signs. He is an eye-witness of Christ, especially the resurrection (Acts 1:21-22, and Paul's need to assert his discipleship though he was not an eyewitness).

Can there be other apostles? cf. Ansgar, "apostle to the north"—only if one uses it in the looser sense of a messenger of God, as an honorific. With this, as with the other office gifts, the person with the gift is himself a gift to the church (Ephesians 4)

11) Prophet

Should be taken in the special sense of the inspired messenger of God, I feel, thus making it a different matter than the gift of prophecy. The Bible's use of the term prophet generally points to an inspired messenger of God (though Titus 1:12 of a heathen prophet). If one wants to take it in the cold sense, then the prophet of today is the powerful preacher of the truths and judgments of God for our world and time.

12) Teacher

Like Apollos of Alexandria, one who has the gift of teaching; in the qualifications of the ministry "apt to teach" is spoken of as something not all possess, that it is a gift. This is also an office gift, as Ephesians 4 indicates, not merely the act of teaching. Teachers are to be judged strictly because they are examples (James 3:1).

13) Helper

An obscure word; Bittlinger says it is a t.t. for a chief accountant in banking, and that this gift deals with the administration of money.

14) Administration (in Romans 12, "be at the head of, direct, rule")

The administrator is the steersman, the pilot. He knows how to set the course. The English word "cybernetics" transliterates the Greek. Cybernetics is the study of information development and storage and transfer in man and machine.

15) Serving

In I Peter 4:11, "serve with the strength God provides, that in all things God be praised." Deals with the physical needs of people—but do not underestimate or undervalue the gift of giving a drink...feeding...visiting...clothing. To have a real heart for people. The office of deacon dealt with the poor, the sick, the orphan, the prisoner, an office given properly to those who have the gift of serving. I Timothy 3:13: "Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."

16) Exhortation

The ability to stir up people, to create enthusiasm, to appeal to the heart and will rather than only to the mind.

17) Giving/sharing

The desire and ability to use one's earthly goods for the help of man and the glory of God, out of sincere motive and purpose; more than the ordinary kind of giving, but the will to give the widow's mite or the second cloak. The NIV overtranslates when it speaks of "contributing to the needs of others," for the literal translation is to "share generously."

18) Have Mercy

A direct, personal ministry to those in need, cheerfully brightening up their life and their day.

19) Evangelist

The type of office held by Philip and Timothy; the pioneer preacher to a people or an area, having the gift of making the initial contact with the heathen, of arousing interest and leading to response. A missionary.

20) Pastor

The shepherd of the established flock, caring for the people and feeding them with the word, seeking the straying and strengthening the weak. As Jesus is the "Good Shepherd."

C. Classification of the gifts

1. Office gifts

apostle, prophet, teacher, helper, administrator, evangelist, pastor

2. Service gifts

wisdom, knowledge, faith, serve, encourage, contribute, mercy, prophecy

3. Sign gifts

healing, miraculous powers, tongues, interpretation

4. Another classification: proclamation, helping, leadership, prayer, and special powers gifts

D. The variety of the gifts

Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386) compared the giving of the gifts to the outpouring of water upon this world. As the water brings forth a wild and splendid profusion of flowers and plants and fruits, so the Spirit brings forth a rich profusion of gifts. "Although the Holy Spirit is only *one* kind, He nevertheless makes, according to the will of God, every variety of witness. He serves the tongue of one, gives to another the power to drive out devils, enlightens the soul of another to prophecy, bestows on another the gift of interpreting divine Scripture. One he strengthens in chastity, another he teaches mercifulness, another fasting and mortification, another contempt of worldly desires, again others he makes martyrs." (Bittlinger, page 53, quoting from Cyril)

Part III: The Use of the Special Gifts

A. Do Not Despise the Gifts

These gifts do have their worth and their place in our Christian living, otherwise they would not be given nor would they be so prominently stressed in the New Testament. That these gifts may be abused is no argument against their validity or use. Rather these abuses are matters to correct, as Paul sought to do with the Corinthians: Luther's attitude is summarized by Froelich:

"In all of this, Luther never attempts to do away with the ambiguity which accompanies the exercise of all these gifts in the human situation. 'Among the Christians there have been many who had fine charismatic gifts (Gnadengaben). Some were able to do miracles, and yet this served the devil.' The gifts themselves are capable of use and misuse, and the law of the danger of having them is utterly clear: 'The more beautiful the gifts, and the greater the honor they are paid, the more they tend toward sectarianism. He who has them thinks he understands Scripture and does not allow anyone else a valid place next to him.' This, and only this, is the enthusiastic threat: division and sectarianism growing out of human pride. But this threat does not warrant staying away from the gifts. It simply warns Christians to be realistic about them." (pages 154-155)

B. The positive contribution of the gifts

Though their use has been tarred with the stigma of Pentecostal/charismatic enthusiasm, the gifts do have something to offer to our Christian community: From the LCMS assessment of 1977:

“Like many other Christians they the (charismatics) are deeply concerned over conditions within the institutional church. They see a lack of commitment on the part of many who claim church membership. They sense that many Christians do not find in their faith the joy, peace, and certainty which members of the apostolic church evidently experienced, that many Christians do not demonstrate the love for one another that they should, that in many congregations there is a lack of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, and that church services are often too impersonal and formal.” (Opsahl, ed, page 272)

From the ALC assessment:

“The charismatic movement should be welcomed as a judgment against mechanical worship, non-biblical preaching, preoccupation with church structure and congregational success, lukewarm faith which expects nothing, compromise with the life-style of the world, etc.” (Opsahl, ed. page 266)

We could point to these reminders the charismatic movement has given us:

- remember and use the gifts of the Spirit
- we do have Christian freedom in worship
- religion is more than teaching and doctrine, it is living and discipleship also
- the insistence upon prayer
- we have a valid healing ministry, that is not to be forfeited to modern medicine
- every Christian, each Christian, is a valid and functioning member of the body of Christ and should be encouraged and directed to use his gifts for the good of the wider body of Christ

C. Warnings in the use of the gifts

1. Paul’s comments on their use are well-established in I Corinthians 13, that they be used in *love*!
From the LCMS report of 1972:

It appears that in the congregation at Corinth the possession of certain spiritual gifts had led to senseless pride and chaotic confusion. Paul, therefore, admonished them in a most forceful manner that love must permeate and motivate their use of spiritual gifts or they become meaningless and useless... Thus it is not the miraculous nature of a gift nor the spectacular willingness to sacrifice that makes spiritual gifts unambiguous marks of the Spirit’s presence and power; it is only the spirit of Christian love in which the gifts are exercised. (page 20)

2. The gifts are given in grace; though they can be developed, they are not to be “invented” or pulled down out of heaven by our own efforts. They are given for the common good, not for private advancement. They are to be used decently and orderly (does one have the call?)
3. Beware of envy. Each Christian should realize and accept his places not all are pastors/professors, and in truth, not all would want to be. No single pastor has all of the gifts, nor even most or many of them. Therefore do not expect of oneself that he is and has everything. Do not expect of others that they should be/have everything. Do not put down others we may feel are not as “complete” as we are. Luther on this point:

When I see someone who knows Hebrew and Greek well, and I do not know it, why should it harm me if I honor him? When someone is a real prophet, what harm does this do to me? When I see that someone has the gift to interpret Scriptures well, what harm is there for me in tipping my hat and thanking God who has given you these gifts? When someone has the authority to cast out devils, but I don’t, why should I cross myself? How can we fall into such shameful blasphemy that we stand in the way of God’s gifts; since we cannot have the same gifts? I know well how to write and teach, and others do not—why should they? (Froelich, page 154)

4. The gifts are not to be used for personal advancement, for then they would be of the devil (Acts 8:18):
 The gifts are not to be used to defend or spread false teaching (Dt. 13:1-3, II Thessalonians 2:9).
 The gifts are not to be used apart from necessity or only for show (Matthew 4:7).
 The gifts must accompany and serve the pure Gospel; they must not draw attention to themselves or to the doer (I Corinthians 14)
5. Gifts, like the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), are to be used faithfully, to the best of the ability God has given to us.

D. The use of the gifts in the ministry

1. What makes a minister is not merely a degree and a call; he must also have the gift for a valid ministry. We must be careful in our recruitment programs that we do not give the impression any and all have the necessary gift. We must be willing to “weed out” those who do not have the needed gift, whether this is done during the years of education or after entrance into the ministry proper. On the other hand, those who do have the gift of the ministry should consider it a sacred obligation which they dare not repudiate and “hide in the ground.”
2. We must sincerely acknowledge that all do not have the same gifts in the public ministry. Some are better suited for being evangelists or administrators or teachers than for being parish pastors. We should not and cannot expect that somehow our seminary graduates are multi-faceted geniuses who have the gift for any and every form of ministry. We must continue to evaluate ourselves and one another to determine the gifts God has given and to put them to use where they are best used. The call does not confer the gifts; it should rather be a matter of acknowledging the gifts that a person does have. If a person finds himself in a calling where the required gifts are not present, he should be moved to a position in which the gifts he does have can be fully used.
3. Since no one minister has all the gifts, to allow a congregation to be blessed with a variety of gifts in its pastor, should a church worker remain in one position for a great length of time?
4. Let no, office or gift despise another or strut about as if the possessor of certain gifts is of a higher level than the other members of the body of Christ.
5. Cultivate the gifts one does have, not the gifts one does not have, “according to the measure of faith” (Ephesians 4:7; cf. also I Timothy 4:7,14; II Timothy 1:6)

E. The use of the gifts in the congregation

1. “The tendency has been to limit the presence of the charismata, beyond the apostolic age, to the official ministry.” (Fowler, page 177) We must rather develop an awareness and appreciation and utilization of the gifts among, all of our fellow members in Christ.
2. In his essay to our district eleven years ago, Pastor Gerlach commented:

“make sure that the Holy Spirit is not a half-known God in our churches” (page 20; note that the Augsburg Confession refers to the Holy Spirit only eleven times!) “use the gifts of ‘the -word of wisdom and the word of knowledge to talk up the gifts of the Spirit among our people to encourage a diligent and God-pleasing use of these gifts for the upbuilding, the *oikodome*, of the body of Christ” (page 20) “we need to give more attention to that aspect of our work of equipping saints for the work of the ministry” (page 21)
3. The stewardship of gifts should be listed among the traditional triad of gifts (money) and time and talent. We have to encourage our members to understand that the abilities, the characteristics they possess are not for their private use only, but were given to them for the common good of the body. (Several years ago I used this approach for our stewardship emphasis program. Three sermons on I

Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 emphasized the diversity of our abilities, diversities united in service to the body. Information on the nature of the gifts—primarily the service gifts—was distributed to the members for their self-evaluation.) Perhaps the best way to proceed with this growth of gifts stewardship is through individual and personal contact rather than through an organized program.

4. Allow the gifts to be used. “Each believer is to consider himself a vital and responsible participant in the life of the congregation” (LCMS, 1972). “Quench not the Spirit!” Let us not fear, what others might do or say as they use their spiritual gifts or fear a diminishing of pastoral authority. For example, must all of our worship services be under the tight limits of our self-imposed liturgy with others beyond the leader having little to contribute except response?

May God the Father and Son
AND SPIRIT
be praised by
us all!

