

# SHOWING THE SPIRIT



A Theological Exposition  
of 1 Corinthians 12–14

D. A. CARSON



**BakerBooks**

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 1987 by D. A. Carson

Published by Baker Books  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
PO Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.bakerbooks.com

Repackaged edition published 2019  
ISBN 978-0-8010-9340-1

Previously published by Baker Academic in 1987

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the original edition as follows:

Carson, D. A.

Showing the Spirit: a theological exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14 / D. A. Carson

p. cm.

“Moore College lectures of September 1985”—Pref.

Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

ISBN 0-8010-2521-4

1. Bible. N.T. Corinthians. 1st, XII—XIV—Criticism, interpretation, etc.

2. Gifts, Spiritual—Biblical teaching. I. Title. II. Title: Moore college lectures.

BS2675.2C38 1987

227'.026—dc19

87-21457

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture references are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To the principal, faculty, staff, and students  
of Moore College, Sydney,  
on the occasion of my first trip to Australia,  
September 1985

# CONTENTS

Preface 9  
Introduction 11  
List of Abbreviations 15

1. The Unity of the Body and the Diversity of Gifts  
(12:1–30) 17
  - Reflections on the Background of the Argument in 1 Corinthians*  
12–14
  - The Bearing of Christianity's Central Confession on What It*  
*Means to Be Spiritual (12:1–3)*
  - The Bountiful Diversity of the Grace-Gifts (12:4–11)*
  - The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Body Metaphor: The*  
*Mutual Dependence of Believers on One Another (12:12–26)*
  - Conclusion (12:27–30)*
2. The Most Excellent Way; or, When Does Perfection Come?  
(12:31–13:13) 65
  - The Setting of Chapter 13*
  - The Indispensability of Love (13:1–3)*
  - Some Characteristics of Love (13:4–7)*
  - The Permanence of Love (13:8–13)*

## Contents

3. Prophecy and Tongues: *Pursuing What Is Better*  
(14:1–19) 99  
*Reflections on the Nature of Several of the Charismata*  
*The Superiority of Prophecy over Tongues (14:1–19)*
  4. Order and Authority: *Restraining Spiritual Gifts*  
(14:20–40) 139  
*The Relation of Tongues and Prophecies to Unbelievers*  
(14:20–25)  
*Order in Public Worship (14:26–36)*  
*Warning (14:37–38)*  
*Summary (14:39–40)*  
*Concluding Reflections*
  5. Unleashed Power and the Constraints of Discipline: *Toward a Theology of Spiritual Gifts* 179  
*Reflections on Tongues, Miracles, and the Baptism in the Spirit in Acts*  
*Reflections on Second-Blessing Theology*  
*Reflections on Revelation*  
*Reflections on the Evidence of History*  
*Reflections on the Charismatic Movement*  
*Reflections of a Pastoral Nature*
- Select Bibliography 249  
Index of Subjects 283  
Index of Names 285  
Index of Scripture 291

## PREFACE

**T**HE PAGES of this book were first prepared for oral delivery as the Moore College Lectures of September 1985. I am very grateful to the former principal, Dr. Broughton Knox, for issuing the invitation, and to the current principal, Dr. Peter Jensen, and his faculty for the warm welcome they accorded me. I cannot speak too highly of the many kindnesses shown me, far beyond more courtesy. The two happy weeks I spent “down under” brought renewed friendships with Rev. Allan and Pamela Blanch, Rev. Phillip and Helen Jensen, and Dr. Peter and Mary O’Brien, and a host of new friends and acquaintances too numerous to mention. But one very special friend was a three-year-old charmer, Anne Woodhouse.

The invitation to give the lectures became the spur to put into print some material I had been thinking about and teaching for some years. Without that incentive, it would still be formless. Because the issues are so complex and widely disputed both in academic circles and in the church at large, I have included fairly extensive notes and bibliography for the more advanced student, while retaining the style of the lectures in the body of the text.

One does not reach conclusions like those put forth in these pages without extensive interaction with many people. I am reluctant to begin a list of names; but in addition to the help I received from the largely technical sources mentioned in the notes, I am particularly

## Preface

indebted to three people: Dr. Max Turner of Aberdeen University, whose long conversations with me more than ten years ago helped to sharpen my thinking; Dr. Roy Clements, pastor of Eden Baptist Church in Cambridge, England, whose expository series on this epistle was a great and stimulating delight; and Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer, who kindly provided me with extensive class notes from a course he has been teaching for years. I am sure I have borrowed from these men without always realizing it. None of them will agree with everything I have written; but that probably means I have much more to learn.

Because the debate over the “charismatic movement” is far from being of merely academic interest, I have included in the bibliography and notes, as well as in the topics discussed, a representative number of more popular treatments along with the technical studies. Otherwise, I fear these lectures would have scratched where only a few fellow academics itch. My graduate assistant, Mr. Mark Reasoner, was indefatigable in tracking down obscure articles and books; and the staff of Roling Library, invariably helpful and courteous, must nevertheless be grateful the project has come to an end. One or two works in the bibliography, in particular the book by P. Benoit et al., arrived too late to be used—except for one essay by James D. G. Dunn, an offprint of which was kindly loaned me by Dr. Scot McKnight. I am grateful as well for the work of Rev. Dan Estes and Rev. Bruce Winter, who compiled the indexes for me at an extraordinarily busy juncture of my life.

The series was delivered in slightly abbreviated form at Menonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, and at Canadian Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, in the autumn of 1985, providing me with further opportunities for reflection and revision. I am grateful for the many kindnesses shown me on these occasions.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

D. A. Carson  
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

# INTRODUCTION

IN THE ENTIRE RANGE of contemporary Christian theology and personal experience, few topics are currently more important than those associated with what is now commonly called “the charismatic movement.” The label itself, as we shall see, is in the light of the biblical usage of χάρισμα (*charisma*) somewhat misleading; but because it is the common term, I shall continue to use it. What makes the subject difficult in any case is not so much the label as the substance. The movement embraces not only the traditional “Pentecostal” denominations but substantial minorities in most of the denominations of Christendom; and in some parts of the world—South America for instance—it is simultaneously the major Protestant voice and a successful invader of the Roman Catholic church. Whatever their theological commitments, young clergy will wrestle with questions raised by the charismatic movement as frequently and in some instances as painfully as anything else that comes their way.

As the charismatic movement has grown, so also has it become more diversified, thereby rendering many generalizations about it remarkably reductionistic. But it is probably fair to say that both charismatics and noncharismatics (if I may continue to use those

terms in nonbiblical ways) often cherish neat stereotypes of the other party. As judged by the charismatics, noncharismatics tend to be stodgy traditionalists who do not really believe the Bible and who are not really hungry for the Lord. They are afraid of profound spiritual experience, too proud to give themselves wholeheartedly to God, more concerned for ritual than for reality, and more in love with propositional truth than with the truth incarnate. They are better at writing theological tomes than at evangelism; they are defeatist in outlook, defensive in stance, dull in worship, and devoid of the Spirit's power in their personal experience. The noncharismatics themselves, of course, tend to see things a little differently. The charismatics, they think, have succumbed to the modern love of "experience," even at the expense of truth. Charismatics are thought to be profoundly unbiblical, especially when they elevate their experience of tongues to the level of theological and spiritual shibboleth. If they are growing, no small part of their strength can be ascribed to their raw triumphalism, their populist elitism, their promise of shortcuts to holiness and power. They are better at splitting churches and stealing sheep than they are at evangelism, more accomplished in spiritual one-upmanship before other believers than in faithful, humble service. They are imperialistic in outlook (only they have the "full gospel"), abrasive in stance, uncontrolled in worship, and devoid of any real grasp of the Bible that goes beyond mere proof-texting.

Of course, both sides concede that the caricatures I have drawn admit notable exceptions; but the profound suspicions on both sides make genuine dialogue extremely difficult. This is especially painful, indeed embarrassing, in light of the commitment made by most believers on both sides to the Bible's authority. The stereotyped positions of the two sides are so antithetical, even though both claim to be biblical, that we must conclude one of three things: one side or the other is right in its interpretation of Scripture on these points, and the other is correspondingly wrong; both sides

are to some degree wrong, and some better way of understanding Scripture must be found; or the Bible simply does not speak clearly and univocally to these issues, and both sides of the dispute have extrapolated the Bible's teachings to entrenched positions not themselves defensible in Scripture.

We must in any case return to Scripture. That is the rationale for this series. I have no delusions that what I say is particularly innovative or will prove thoroughly convincing to everyone who has thought about these issues; and the narrowness of the primary focus—only three chapters from one New Testament document—necessarily circumscribes my conclusions. Nevertheless, I hope my concluding chapter will integrate enough other biblical material, especially from the Book of Acts, that the conclusions will not appear distorted. Moreover, although most of my attention will be devoted to the text of 1 Corinthians 12–14, my concern to make this a *theological* exposition (as the subtitle stipulates) will force me to interact a little with some other Christian doctrines, as well as with the findings of linguists, social anthropologists, historians, and the practical and popular beliefs of the contemporary church, even where such considerations range outside the domain of the student of the New Testament; for I am persuaded that if the church is to have peace on these issues, we must evenhandedly attempt to weight all the relevant evidence even while we insist that the authority of Scripture must prevail. That authority, of course, should not be transferred to me, as the interpreter; and so I shall from time to time indicate the degree of certainty with which I make interpretative judgments, so that even if we cannot agree on all the details, perhaps most of us can come to agreement on the most central matters.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BAG Arndt, William F., and Gingrich, F. Wilbur, trans. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by Walter Bauer, 4th ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- BAGD Gingrich, F. W., and Danker, F. W., trans. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, by W. Bauer, 2d ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- BDF Blass, F., and Debrunner, A., *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. Robert W. Funk. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- TDNT Bromiley, G. W., trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Original German work ed. G. Kittel.) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76.



# The Unity of the Body and the Diversity of Gifts

(12:1–30)

Reflections on the Background of the Argument in 1 Corinthians  
12–14

The Bearing of Christianity’s Central Confession on What It  
Means to Be Spiritual (12:1–3)

Paul’s Use of χάρισμα (*charisma*)

The Meaning of πνευματικῶν (*pneumatikōn*)

The Relationship between χάρισμα (*charisma*) and  
πνευματικῶν (*pneumatikōn*)

The Flow of the Argument in 12:1–3

The Significance of the Blasphemy “Jesus Be (or Is) Cursed”

The Bountiful Diversity of the Grace-Gifts (12:4–11)

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the Body Metaphor: The Mu-  
tual Dependence of Believers on One Another (12:12–26)

Conclusion (12:27–30)

## Reflections on the Background of the Argument in 1 Corinthians 12–14

Modern opinion on the background has been cataloged not only in commentaries but also in several recent studies, and need not be repeated here.<sup>1</sup> I shall merely summarize my own conclusions. From chapter 7 on, Paul appears to be answering a series of questions put to him in a letter from the Corinthians: “Now for the matters you wrote about,” he begins (7:1). That explains why the topics change so radically: at one point Paul is dealing with relations between the sexes (chap. 7), at another with meat offered to idols (8:1ff.). He can move from women praying and prophesying in the congregation (11:2–16), to the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34), to grace-gifts and love (chaps. 12–14), to the resurrection (chap. 15). Sometimes (as here in 12:1) he opens a new subject with a set expression, Περὶ δέ (*peri de*, now concerning . . .). But three features in his argument stand out.

First, one of the common denominators in the problems at Corinth was overrealized eschatology.<sup>2</sup> It is a commonplace that Paul places the church in dynamic tension between an “already” view of what God has done, and a “not yet” view of what he is still to do. Already the kingdom has dawned and the Messiah is reigning, already the crucial victory has been won, already the final resurrection of the dead has begun in the resurrection of Jesus, already the Holy Spirit has been poured out on the church as the down payment of the promised inheritance and the first fruits of the eschatological harvest of blessings. Nevertheless, the kingdom has not yet come in its consummated fullness, death still exercises formidable powers, sin must be overcome, and opposing powers of

1. E.g., John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965), 186–87; K. S. Hemphill, “The Pauline Concept of Charisma: A Situational and Developmental Approach” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1976), 45ff.; and see A. C. Thiselton, “Realized Eschatology at Corinth,” *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978): 510–26.

2. See especially Thiselton, *ibid.*

darkness war against us with savage ferocity. The new heaven and the new earth have not yet put in an appearance. Maintaining this balance is crucial to the church's maturity. If we think only in terms of what is still to come (i.e., if we focus on futurist eschatology), we may not only play endless speculative games but we may also depreciate the climactic nature of the incarnation, cross-work, and resurrection of Jesus that have *already* taken place. We may so pine for the future that we neglect to serve God with enthusiastic gratitude for what he has done in the past. On the other hand, if we think only in terms of what Christ has already accomplished (i.e., if we focus on realized eschatology), we fall into the errors that characterized many of the believers in Corinth. We may feel that as children of the king we have the *right* to unqualified blessings; we may go so far as to let this stance transform our belief structure until we insist that the crucial experiences of grace we have enjoyed constitute the true "resurrection," and that no other awaits us. That is why one recent commentator on chapters 12–14 includes a study of chapter 15 as well.<sup>3</sup> The Corinthian eschatology was probably reinforced by some brand of Hellenistic dualism that took a dim view of present bodily existence while vastly misunderstanding the nature of spiritual vitality. Perhaps nowhere does the overrealized eschatology of Corinth surface more strongly than in chapter 4: "Already you have all you want!" writes Paul with considerable heat and not a little sarcasm. "Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!" (4:8). The apostles, Paul goes on to say, are treated like scum; the Corinthians are above the dirt and delight to think how full of knowledge and wisdom they are. This overrealized eschatology, it can be argued, stands behind many of the pastoral questions Paul faces in Corinth, and is related to the theme of chapters 12–14.

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

Second, the church in Corinth is a divided church. This is seen not only in the party labels reported at 1:12 (“What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’”) and treated in the first four chapters of the book, but also in a style of argumentation that pervades much of chapters 7–12. It might be called the “yes—but” form of argument. If people in the church take different sides of an issue, Paul’s aim is not only to present his apostolic judgment on the matter but also to reconcile the warring factions. To do this, he tips his head to each faction in turn, and says in effect, “Yes, yes, you have something of the truth on your side, I largely agree with you—but. . . .” To those more ascetically inclined, he writes, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman” (7:1);<sup>4</sup> *but*, he goes on to say, marriage helps reduce promiscuity and in any case it is also a good gift from God (7:2–7). In chapter 8, he acknowledges that Christians know an idol has no real power and constitutes no evil in itself, and therefore food that has been offered to it cannot have undergone some kind of poisonous transformation that makes it dangerous for the Christian (8:1–6). “*But*,” he goes on to say, “not everyone knows this” (8:7), by which he is referring to other Christians in the Corinthian church; and on this basis he works out some mediating principles.

Not every “but” in 1 Corinthians is traceable to Paul’s concern to unite warring factions; and in one or two instances the apostle sets his stance in diametric opposition to the church (e.g., “In the following directives I have no praise for you” [11:17]). Nevertheless the feature is common enough that we must ask what stands behind it when it occurs. “I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, *but* I would rather have you prophesy. . . . I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. *But* in

4. The translation of the NIV, “It is good for a man not to marry,” is incorrect: see Gordon D. Fee, “1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23 (1980): 307–14.

the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (14:5a, 18–19).<sup>5</sup> Few doubt that Paul’s primary interest in these chapters is to curtail somewhat the excesses of certain tongues-speakers; but in these texts he first aligns himself with the tongues-speakers. Are there also hints in these chapters of those who do *not* speak in tongues?

I think there are, although nowhere do they appear behind an analogous “yes—but” argument. At the end of his discussion, Paul can write, “Do not forbid speaking in tongues” (14:39)—which surely suggests that is what some would have preferred. They cannot be the tongues-speakers themselves, since not only would tongues-speakers have a vested interest the other way, but also nothing Paul has said up to that point demands abolition of this gift.<sup>6</sup> Again, in the metaphor of chapter 12, some seem to be threatened by the gifts of others, and are therefore withdrawing in some form (12:14ff.). In the context of these two chapters, the only threatening gift is the gift of tongues.<sup>7</sup>

These reflections turn out to be important, for some scholars have argued that Paul’s concerns for divisions within the church have come to an end with chapter 4.<sup>8</sup> The letter from Corinth that occupies Paul from chapter 7 on must have come from the *whole* church, they say, not some faction within it; Paul’s

5. The varied forms of adversative (e.g., ἀλλά, μάλλον δέ) are no impediment to the observation, since the argument turns on the logical relationship of a pair of clauses within a context, not to a purely lexical feature.

6. The “but” that immediately succeeds 14:39 does not belong to the “yes—but” form of argument, since it is immediately preceded by a prohibition.

7. See Mattie Elizabeth Hart, “Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy as Understood by Paul and at Corinth, with Reference to Early Christian Usage” (Ph.D. diss., University of Durham, 1975), whose primary ambition is to demonstrate that there were both “procharismatic” and “anticharismatic” forces at Corinth, while Paul adopts a stance that is open to every work of the Spirit yet critical of much of what he observes at Corinth.

8. E.g., Hurd, *Origins of 1 Corinthians*, 193–95; Gordon D. Fee, “Tongues—Least of the Gifts? Some Exegetical Observations on 1 Corinthians 12–14,” *Pneuma* 2/2 (1980): 4–7.

responses suggest that the Corinthian church was more divided *against Paul* than internally. I remain unconvinced. In the first place, this seems to divorce chapters 7–16 from the factionalism we know about from chapters 1–4. Second, a letter may come from an entire church, and with a belligerent tone, while asking questions that betray difference of opinion *within* the church. After all, if the church were unified on the points that it raises, it is not at all clear why the Corinthians would have questions to raise (except perhaps purely theoretical ones). Third, the central chapter of the three under scrutiny emphasizes love so strongly that it is not hard to believe that the Corinthian church was singularly lacking in this commodity, again doubtless owing to factionalism.

Third, the dominant focus of these chapters is the conduct of the church as it is assembled together. That is equally true, of course, of chapter 11; but the observation becomes especially important when we try to integrate this stance into the flow of the argument at several crucial points (e.g., “in the church,” 14:19; “when you come together,” 14:26).

These reflections set the stage for the exegesis, to which we must now turn.

### **The Bearing of Christianity’s Central Confession on What It Means to Be Spiritual (12:1–3)**

The principal turning points in these verses are five.

#### *Paul’s Use of χάρισμα (charisma)*

In the New Testament, the term is found sixteen times in the Pauline writings, and once in Peter (1 Pet. 4:10). Clearly cognate with χάρις (grace), at its simplest it refers to something grace has bestowed, a “grace-gift” if you will. It is not that Paul coined the term: that is most likely going too far, although admittedly pre-Pauline

occurrences are textually uncertain.<sup>9</sup> But for the apostle who so delights to discuss grace, it is eminently appropriate that he should devote attention to the things of grace, to the concretizations of grace, to grace-gifts.

Of more importance is what the word refers to. Outside 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul uses it to refer to the “spiritual gift” he wishes to impart to the Romans when he sees them, in the context of a mutual encouragement of faith (Rom. 1:11); to the “gift” that generates life over against the trespass of Adam that generated death (Rom. 5:15–16, where the word is also in parallel with δῶρημα [gift]); to the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, that alone can offset the wages of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23); to the election of Israel, since God’s “gifts” and call are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29); to the list of “gifts” presented in Romans 12:6–7: prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, and showing mercy. That accounts for the uses in Romans. In 2 Corinthians 1:11, χάρισμα (*charisma*) refers to “the gracious favor” granted to Paul in response to the prayers of many—presumably deliverance from an unspecified “deadly peril.” There are two occurrences in the Pastoral Epistles. In 1 Timothy 4:14 Timothy is told not to neglect the “gift” that was given him through a prophetic message when the elders laid their hands on him; but the gift itself is not further specified. Similarly in 2 Timothy 1:6 he is told to “fan into flame the gift of God” that is in him through the laying on of Paul’s hands. Perhaps we may deduce from these two contexts that the gift was the ministry to

9. E.g., in Eccles. 7:33, the correct word is probably χάρις; not χάρισμα; and in 38:34[30] the original may be χρίσμα: see Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1914). There is no textually certain pre-Pauline example: see Siegfried Schulz, “Die Charismenlehre des Paulus: Bilanz der Probleme und Ergebnisse,” in *Rechtfertigung: Festschrift für Ernst Käsemann*, ed. Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, and Peter Stuhlmacher (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1976), 445–46; U. Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt*, 2d ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1975), 128–29.

which he was called, in danger of being curtailed by timidity and insufficient self-discipline. The usage in 1 Peter 4:10 tightly ties “grace-gift” to “grace”: each believer is to use whatever gift (χάρισμα, *charisma*) he has received to serve others, thereby administering God’s grace (χάρις, *charis*) in its various forms.

We have now scanned every instance of the noun in the New Testament, except for those in 1 Corinthians. In the first chapter, Paul assures the Corinthians that they do not lack any “spiritual gift” as they wait for the Lord’s return (although one wonders if the reference to the Lord’s return is a not-too-subtle reminder that even such spiritual wealth is nothing compared with the glory that is to come [1:7]). In one of the most intriguing occurrences, Paul tells his readers that each person has a particular gift from God—one this, and another that—in a context where “this” and “that” refer to marriage and celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7). Presumably, one cannot enjoy both of these χαρίσματα (*charismata*) simultaneously! The remaining five instances are all found in 1 Corinthians 12. The word stands behind the different kinds of “gifts” in 12:4, and behind the word *gifts* in 12:31a (rendered in the NIV, “But eagerly desire the greater gifts”). Finally, it is found three times in the plural expression *gifts of healing* (12:9, 28, 30). The word χάρισμα (*charisma*) does *not* stand behind what the New International Version calls “spiritual gifts” in 12:1, 14:1, and elsewhere.

So much for the raw data. What shall we make of them? Dealing first with the superficial, it is very clear that the term is not a technical one for Paul that refers only to a select set of supranormal gifts like healing and tongues. Not only can it embrace gifts like encouraging and generous giving, but it can be used repeatedly for the gift of salvation itself—not to mention the gift of celibacy and the gift of marriage. In that sense, therefore, every Christian is a charismatic. Moreover, if the term can extend to celibacy and marriage, every person, Christian or not, is a charismatic; that is, every person has received gracious

gifts from God. It is for this reason that I do not like to talk about the “charismatic movement” unless I am given space to define terms: it seems like a terrible reduction of the manifold grace of God. Having clarified what Paul’s range of referents is under this term, however, I shall bow to popular coinage and speak of the “charismatic movement.”

But if χάρισμα (*charisma*) should not be turned into a technical term by the charismatic movement, neither should it receive such treatment from other voices in the field. Grau, Käsemann, and Dunn have made attempts;<sup>10</sup> but these attempts cannot be judged successful.<sup>11</sup> It is reductionistic to think the word refers only to the fundamental gift of salvation, or only to specific acts or events immediately imparted by the Spirit but having no underlay in the individual’s “natural” gifts. On the one hand, the χάρισμα (*charisma*) of Romans 6:23 (“the gift of God is eternal life”) must not be made to stand as the source of all the other χαρίσματα (*charismata*); for although the *referent* of the word in Romans 6:23 (i.e., eternal life) may be the source of all the other χαρίσματα (*charismata*), nevertheless “it is a blunder in the realm of lexical semantics to confuse the *referent* of a predicate (in a referring expression) with its *sense*, and it leads to forced interpretation of Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Romans 5:15 and 11:29.”<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, it is not clear that the word acquires a semitechnical force in 1 Corinthians 12–14, meaning concrete events or actions, specific events or occasions of leadership, prophecy, teaching, and the like. Dunn uses this distinction to apply the term *charismatic* only to specific acts or events, refusing to apply it to gifts of grace that

10. F. Grau, “Der neutestamentliche Begriff χάρισμα” (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen University, 1946 [I have not been able to secure a copy; I know of this work only from secondary sources]); Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 64–65; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 209.

11. For excellent discussion, see M. M. B. Turner, “Spiritual Gifts Then and Now,” *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 30–31.

12. *Ibid.*, 30.

might be latent or temporarily hidden.<sup>13</sup> The term simply cannot have that force outside 1 Corinthians 12–14; and even here, as Hemphill remarks, if Paul thought of the *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*) primarily as Spirit-given *events* or *acts*, he could have curtailed much of the Corinthians' boasting by pointing out that no one can in fact *possess* or *have* such gifts. In fact he freely speaks of people *having* certain gifts, and gives instructions on the *use* of the gift one *has*.<sup>14</sup>

What is clear, then, is that the particular “spiritual gifts” Paul wishes to discuss in these chapters are gifts of God’s grace. To say more than that,<sup>15</sup> we must extend the discussion first to another word for spiritual gift, and then to the relationship between these two words.

#### *The Meaning of πνευματικῶν (pneumatikōn)*

When Paul opens the chapter with the words *now about spiritual gifts, brothers* (12:1), he is setting the agenda of the ensuing three chapters. Clearly, then, the word rendered “spiritual gifts” is important; but in fact it hides a difficult ambiguity. In Pauline usage it can be taken as masculine and refer to “spiritual people” (see 2:15; 3:1; 14:37), or as neuter and refer to “spiritual things” (i.e., “spiritual gifts”; see 9:11; 14:1; 15:46). Which is the meaning here? Both interpretations have been strongly defended; and the fact that these chapters close with the personal use (14:37) might be taken as a point in favor of the masculine. In that case Paul is dealing less with the nature of spiritual gifts than with the nature

13. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 209.

14. Hemphill, “Pauline Concept of Charisma,” 78 n. 92.

15. As many do: e.g., John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 277, argues that Paul’s authority rests precisely in his ability to help his readers experience the same “charismatic” power he enjoys; and John Koenig, “From Mystery to Ministry: Paul as Interpreter of Charismatic Gifts,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 33 (1978): 167–74, associates *χαρίσματα* and *μυστήριον* to argue that the ultimate concern behind even the “mysteries” to which Paul as a charismatic has access is ministry.

of spiritual people, although obviously the two are in some way related. There would also be an immediate effect on the way the first three verses (12:1–3) are interpreted. Nevertheless, the word is probably to be taken as a neuter. After all, if it occurs in 14:37 as a reference to spiritual people, it also occurs in 14:1 as a reference to spiritual gifts. More important, the word is conceptually parallel in certain respects to *χαρίσματα* (*charismata*), and the latter never refers to persons.

The crucial point to recognize is that in 12:1 Paul is bringing up a point in the Corinthians' letter. What question were they posing to him to generate so ambiguous a response? For reasons that will become clear in a moment, I suggest that at least one of the questions being put to him ran something like this: "Is it really true that spiritual manifestations (*πνευματικά, pneumatika*) constitute unfailing evidence of spiritual people (*πνευματικοί, pneumatikoi*)?" This question, I shall suggest, had opposing barbs. As phrased by the Corinthian "pneumatics" it was shaped like this: "Is it not true that . . . ?" As shaped by the "non-pneumatics" it sounded more like this: "Surely it isn't true that . . . ?" Paul responds with a reference to their discussion of "the question of spirituals" (*περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, peri de tōn pneumatikōn*), knowing that his readers will recognize thereby the subject he is about to broach.

*The Relationship between χάρισμα (charisma) and πνευματικόν (pneumatikon)*

It is widely recognized that the introductory formula of 12:1 means that Paul is introducing the subject in the terms preferred by his Corinthian readers (*πνευματικόν, pneumatikon*),<sup>16</sup> and that at least through chapter 12 he then proceeds to use the term he

16. E.g., Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 66; Brockhaus, *Charisma und Amt*, 150ff.; D. Moody Smith, "Glossolalia and Other Spiritual Gifts in a New Testament Perspective," *Interpretation* 28 (1974): 311; Birger Albert Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1973), 44.

himself prefers (χάρισμα, *charisma*). But what does he intend to achieve by this change?

An easy guess, and almost certainly right in itself, is that Paul wants to remind his readers that whatever might truly be considered “spiritual” is better thought of as a gracious gift from God. The quest for an individualizing and self-centered form of “spirituality” was in danger of denying the source of all true spiritual gifts, the unbounded grace of God. This does not mean Paul depreciates the term πνευματικόν (*pneumatikon*); for elsewhere in his epistle, with only one possible exception (14:37, and in my judgment that possibility is not a real exception), Paul always uses the word with positive overtones of spiritual maturity. The apostle who so persistently insists that God’s πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) is the down payment of the age to come is in no position to despise any πνευματικόν (*pneumatikon*). Still, in this context the switch to χάρισμα (*charisma*) serves to lay emphasis on grace. But are there sharper lines to be drawn between these two words?

One way of proceeding has become especially popular. Some have argued that πνευματικόν (*pneumatikon*) should be restricted to prophecy or to prophecy and tongues.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation is usually tied in with an attempt to make prophecy at Corinth ecstatic; and Paul’s aim in effect is to replace the emphasis on the ecstatic by the broader category of gracious gift that results in service. But outside

17. E.g., Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, argues that the reference is to prophecy alone; Max-Alain Chevallier, *Esprit de Dieu, Paroles d’Hommes* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1966), followed by David L. Baker, “The Interpretation of 1 Cor. 12–14,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 224–34, argues for both prophecy and tongues. See also D. W. B. Robinson, “Charismata versus Pneumatika: Paul’s Method of Discussion,” *Reformed Theological Review* 31 (1972): 49–55, who draws attention to the parallel between 14:1 and 14:5 both with μᾶλλον δέ. But this does not mean that the only πνευματικά in the Corinthians’ mind were prophecy and tongues, but only that the gift of tongues was the principal focus of abuse, and the gift of prophecy was the foil Paul used to show how ideally spiritual gifts should serve others. The particular use of the disjunction made by Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation*, is compounded by his retrieval of quotes from the Corinthians’ letter—a point that will be discussed later.

these three chapters the word certainly does not have that meaning. If then someone argues that what is important here is what the *Corinthians* mean by the word, not Paul, since he is quoting their correspondence, we still face two difficulties: (1) If Paul knows that the Corinthians use the word in a special sense, it is surprising to find him using it three times earlier in this epistle in his normal way (2:15; 3:1; 9:11), and then switching here without warning to *their* meaning. (2) A specialized meaning in 12:1 such as “concerning persons whom you designate ‘spiritually gifted’” makes a poor heading to a chapter where Paul is repeatedly concerned to show that *all* Christians are spiritually gifted, unless he takes explicit pains to point out their faulty *category* and not just their distorted *theology*.<sup>18</sup>

These first three points have not drawn us into the flow of the passage; but they had to be discussed, for the results come back to bless us (or haunt us) in what ensues. May main point so far is that a number of studies have overspecified what can be learned from a few individual words.

### *The Flow of the Argument in 12:1-3*

The statement “brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant” (12:1), or its near equivalent, is a Pauline expression (cf. 10:1; Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13) by which the apostle assures his readers that what he is passing on is part of the heritage of central Christian truth; and sometimes it introduces content that cannot be more than a reminder of material previously taught. In the dominant interpretation of 12:1-3, it is presupposed that the truth of which the apostle does not wish the Corinthians to remain ignorant is found in verses 2 and 3. This has the effect of tying those two verses tightly together, reinforced by the strong “therefore” (διό) at the beginning of verse 3; that is, *because* you were led away to serve dumb idols when you were pagans (v. 2), *therefore* (v. 3) I am telling you that no

18. See especially Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 157-62.

one who speaks by the Spirit of God can say “Jesus is anathema,” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. By forging so tight a link between verses 2 and 3, this interpretation has two important consequences. First, it entices the interpreter to look for clues in verse 2 that suggest the Corinthians had been heavily involved in ecstatic frenzies connected with their pagan worship before they became Christians; and this pagan worship offered, perhaps, instances in which Jesus might well have been cursed. Second, the pagan ecstatic frenzy presupposed under this interpretation is in certain respects compared with the work of the Spirit (v. 3); and the conclusion is drawn that the proper test or criterion for appropriate inspiration is the acknowledgment of Christ as Lord. So, for example, Professor Bruce:

In classical literature, Apollo was particularly renowned as the source of ecstatic utterances, as on the lips of Cassander of Troy, the priestess of Delphi or the Sibyl of Cumae (whose frenzy as she prophesied under the god’s control is vividly described by Virgil); at a humbler level the fortune-telling slave girl of Acts 16:16 was dominated by the same kind of ‘pythonic’ spirit. Paul does not suggest that any prophecy or glossolalia at Corinth proceeded from such a source; he simply reminds his readers that there are ‘inspired’ utterances [not from] the Spirit of God.<sup>19</sup>

But this line of reasoning is not very compelling. First, there is nothing in verse 2 itself that testifies to a background in pagan ecstasy. For instance, the verbs themselves (NIV “influenced and led astray”), despite many statements to the contrary, do not conjure up visions of demonic force.<sup>20</sup> And second, quite apart from such

19. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971), ad loc.

20. See especially Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 162–64; C. Senft, *La première épître de saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1979); contra C. Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther. Zweiter Teil: Auslegung der Kapitel 9–16* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982); K. Maly, “1 Kor. 12, 1–3: Ein Regel zur Unterscheidung der Geister?,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 10 (1966): 82–95, prefers

questions as whether the Pythia used unintelligible language truly parallel to the Corinthian Christians' glossolalia,<sup>21</sup> it seems very difficult to imagine a Paul who could forbid any fellowship with demons (10:21) now drawing an ambiguous comparison between pagan "inspiration" and Christian "inspiration" with the sole difference being the resulting confession. True, Paul knows that not everything from the spirit world is the Holy Spirit; but the antitheses he draws in this arena are normally sharp.

In fact, de Broglie and Mehat have pointed to a better way to understand the flow.<sup>22</sup> It is better, they argue, to take verse 2 with verse 1, as an expansion on the theme of the Corinthians' ignorance. After all, elsewhere when Paul uses the formula "I do not want you to be ignorant," he can insert some kind of explanatory or parenthetical aside before he turns to the content he wishes to convey (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1–4; 15:1–4; 1 Thess. 4:13–15; and then he always introduces the content with a ὅτι (*hoti*). But no ὅτι (*hoti*) is found at the beginning of verse 2. For that we turn to verse 3, where Paul uses γνωρίζω (*gnōrizō*, lit., I make known) in a resumptive fashion. The connective διό (*dio*; NIV's "therefore") connects verse 3 not with verse 2 but with verses 1 and 2. In short, the flow runs like this: I do not want you to be ignorant of certain central truths (v. 1). You know of course that when you were pagans your ignorance on such matters was profound (v. 2). Now (since I do not want you to be ignorant in these matters, vv. 1–2) I am making them known to you (v. 3).

---

to draw a distinction between the *dumb* idols (v. 2) and the Spirit-impelled *talking* believers in v. 3, and thus necessarily avoids detecting ecstatic pagan cults in v. 2.

21. See David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *Aufstieg und Niedergänge der römischen Welt* II.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 1549–51; and J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 212–24.

22. G. de Broglie, "Le texte fondamentale de Saint Paul contre la foi naturelle," *Recherches de Science religieuse* 39 (1951): 253–66; André Mehat, "L'Enseignement sur 'les choses de l'Esprit' (1 Corinthiens 12, 1–3)," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 63 (1983): 395–415. Mehat also points out that this interpretation was favored by some older commentators, e.g., Cajetan and Bisping.

This means we no longer have to interpret verse 3 in the light of verse 2, and vice versa. That link broken, we shall be less inclined to detect pagan ecstasy behind the words of verse 2; and we are freer to explore how verse 3 ties in with the rest of the chapter, and especially with verses 4ff. These latter verses insist on the diversity of the gifts, but the oneness of the source. This suggests that Paul's correspondents were at least partly made up of charismatics (in the modern sense of the term) who wanted to elevate their gifts to the place where they could give exclusive authentication for spiritual life and who wanted Paul to approve this judgment; and partly they were made up of noncharismatics (again in the modern sense) who were profoundly skeptical of the claims of the charismatics, and wanted Paul to correct them. Their skepticism, it may be, arose from their own pagan backgrounds (for nothing that I have said denies that the majority of Corinthian believers emerged from paganism, but only that pagan ecstasy is in view in 12:2), just as the pagan backgrounds of certain people made them uneasy about eating food that had been offered to idols (see 1 Cor. 8). Mehat prefers the latter group;<sup>23</sup> I see no reason why both groups could not have been among Paul's correspondents in Corinth, reflecting different factions in the church. To both parties, Paul offers a telling rebuttal: your horizons are too narrow, he says, for participation in the things of the Holy Spirit is attested by *all* who truly confess Jesus as Lord. Both parties must expand their horizons: the charismatics should not feel they have some exclusive claim on the Spirit, and the noncharismatics should not be writing them off.

This interpretation, I suggest, makes much better sense than those which see in "Jesus is Lord" a sufficient criterion for distinguishing the true from the false in all prophetic utterances. After all, taken as such a criterion it is disturbingly broad and indiscriminating: for instance, it is quite helpless in the face of the false spirits confronting John (1 John 4:1–6). There the problem lay with those

23. Mehat, *ibid.*, 410–15.

who denied Jesus was the Christ. But if 1 Corinthians 12:3 offers a criterion *not* to establish true and false ecstatic utterance but to establish whether or not any particular spiritual manifestation may be used to authenticate the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, then Paul's answer is in line with the entire New Testament. To be able to confess that the Jesus of the incarnation, cross, and resurrection is truly the Lord, especially in the face of a society that has lords aplenty, already attests the powerful, transforming work of the Holy Spirit. To put the matter another way, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Rom. 8:9). Both to those who want to exalt spiritual manifestations as the infallible criterion of the Holy Spirit's powerful presence, and to those who want to question the genuineness of the spirituality attested by such manifestations, Paul provides a profoundly christological focus. As Schweizer puts it (perhaps too simply): "The Holy Spirit makes us receptive to Jesus."<sup>24</sup> In short, the purpose of 12:1–3 is *not* to provide a confessional test to enable Christians to distinguish true from false spirits, but to provide a sufficient test to establish who has the Holy Spirit at all.

Moreover, this interpretation offers a smooth transition to 12:4–6; for here Paul's point has nothing to do with the way true and false spiritual manifestations may be detected, but with the diversity of spiritual manifestations from the Triune God. But before turning our attention there, I must say something about another point.

#### *The Significance of the Blasphemy "Jesus Be [or Is]<sup>25</sup> Cursed"*

What shall we make of this foul curse? As long as verses 2–3 are understood to provide a criterion to distinguish true spiritual

24. Eduard Schweizer, *The Holy Spirit*, trans. Reginald and Ilse Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 126.

25. Since there is no verb, it is uncertain whether Paul means εἶη or ἔστιν; but by analogy with "Jesus is Lord" (equally without a verb, but with an unambiguous meaning), the latter is marginally more likely.

manifestations from false manifestations *in the church*, we are forced to scramble around to find some situation in which this might actually be said *in a Corinthian assembly*, a situation where Paul's criterion would have some force.

Many suggestions have been put forward, none of them convincing. The more important ones are the following.

It has been argued that some Christians had been dragged before a court and forced to deny Jesus (see Pliny, *Epistles* 10.96) and then, once released, had returned to the Christian congregation and attempted to justify their actions by appealing to the Spirit's leading. Paul's words then serve to remove their defense. But this reconstruction not only "presupposes the circumstances of a later date";<sup>26</sup> it also provides a test that must be judged needless. Would any first-century church have entertained much doubt as to whether the Holy Spirit had prompted the blasphemy in such cases?

Many suggest that Paul is thinking of some specific pagan worship setting. Appeal is often made, among others, to Origen's statement (*Celsus* 6.28) that initiates into the Ophite sect were required to say that Jesus is anathema.<sup>27</sup> But the parallels are not convincing; and even the Ophites may not have cursed Jesus in so many words, but cursed him *de facto* by equating him with the serpent.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Origen is a late witness for sixth-decade Corinth; and in any case Paul is dealing with *Christian* worship, not pagan utterances.

Many envisage some sort of background in the Jewish synagogue. People in that environment would after all remember that

26. C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2d ed. (London: Black, 1971).

27. See Ceslaus Spicq, *Agapé dans le Nouveau Testament*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1958–59), ad loc.

28. The question is extremely difficult: cf. the relevant text from Origen cited and discussed in Hans Conzelmann, *First Corinthians: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. George W. MacRae, trans. James W. Leitch, Hermeneia series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 204 n. 10, with a contrary position taken by Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 168–69.

Jesus had died on a cross, a cursed man; and believing that God's Spirit was with them, they might well have uttered "Jesus is anathema!" while claiming to be led by the Spirit.<sup>29</sup> Again, however, this fails to recognize that Paul is dealing with a *Christian* context; and there is too little emphasis in the surrounding context on the Judaizing controversy to believe that he is taking a general swipe at the local synagogue as a kind of foil to the proper confession, "Jesus is Lord." In any case, the expression ἀνάθεμα (*anathema*) makes the association with the synagogue less likely than would have been the case if other expressions had been used.<sup>30</sup> Some have tried to sidestep one or more of these difficulties by ingenious speculation. Derrett, for example, proposes that a synagogue ruler may have actually tutored a would-be Jewish Christian in this curse, in order to help him save his membership in the synagogue.<sup>31</sup> The ingenuity of this proposal is not helped by the fact that such a breach would be so outrageous the Corinthians would surely not have needed Paul to set up an appropriate test. More believably, Bassler suggests this is an oblique *self*-description of the apostle. He is making reference to his own pre-Christian days as a foil for the basic Christian confession.<sup>32</sup> Even so, it is surprising that a self-reference can be so obscure that it has taken almost twenty centuries to find it. Was it not similarly opaque to the Corinthians? Van Unnik suggests there were "Christians" who believed that Jesus died on the cross as a curse to bear our sin, but did not believe he rose from the dead and therefore could not confess him

29. Adolf Schlatter, *Paulus—Der Bote Jesu: Eine Deutung seiner Briefe an die Korinther*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1962), 333.

30. Schlatter draws special attention to inter alia Deut. 21:23; but for the Masoretic Text's קללת אלהים (cursed of God) the Septuagint offers κεκατηραμένος, and Paul elsewhere uses ἐπικατάρατος (cf. Gal. 3:13); so it is unclear that a passage like Deut. 21:23 would have suggested itself to the reader. On the bearing of 1QpNah 1.7–8, see Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*.

31. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Cursing Jesus (1 Cor. XIII.3): The Jews as Religious 'Persecutors,'" *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974–75): 544–54.

32. J. M. Bassler, "1 Cor. 12:3—Curse and Confession in Context," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 415–18.

as Lord.<sup>33</sup> But I know of no evidence for such a hybrid; it is not clear how such people might have been accepted as Christians in the first place; and in any case ἀνάθεμα (*anathema*) is never used in a sin-bearing context.<sup>34</sup>

Still others detect a docetic Gnosticism in the background.<sup>35</sup> Adopting a radical dualism that elevates spirit and associates flesh with evil, they might well (it is argued) prove their commitment to Gnostic insight by loudly proclaiming that Jesus the man is cursed. Paul's desire is to exclude such people from the church. This proposal might make sense of verse 3 in isolation. Indeed, much of the best criticism of this position has come from those who see verses 2 and 3 tightly linked together<sup>36</sup>—a position I have already rejected. But the position is weak even if verse 2 is more tightly tied to verse 1 than to verse 3; for quite apart from the difficult question regarding the date of full-blown Gnosticism's rise, it remains unclear why Paul should introduce a test for Gnostics in the context of these chapters.

Albright and Mann find the question so difficult that they propose to emend the text in favor of an Aramaic construction they detect behind *Didache*. Textual emendations should be the court of last appeal; and as we shall see, there is an easier solution.<sup>37</sup>

Several commentators suggest that Paul is referring to Christian ecstasies who are *resisting* a Spirit-given trance or ecstasy as it

33. W. C. van Unnik, "Jesus: Anathema or Kyrios (1 Cor. 12:3)," in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 113–26.

34. Cf. Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 170–71 n. 93.

35. E.g., Walther Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); Norbert Brox, "ΑΝΑΘΕΜΑ ἸΗΣΟΥΣ (1 Kor. 12,3)," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 12 (1968): 103–11; R. H. Fuller, "Tongues in the New Testament," *American Church Quarterly* 3 (1963): 162–68.

36. See especially Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, 48–49.

37. W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, "Two Texts in 1 Corinthians," *New Testament Studies* 16 (1969–70): 271–76.

comes on them by resorting to blasphemous utterances.<sup>38</sup> Parallels are drawn to the Sibyl who foamed as she resisted being possessed, or to Cassander who cursed Apollo in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. But I know of no parallel in which a *Chrisitan* is so committed to resisting the Spirit's power as to utter christological blasphemies in an attempt to ward the Spirit off—assuming in any case the Holy Spirit manifested himself to the Corinthian believers by taking them up into some sort of ecstatic trance, even though the evidence suggesting that ecstatic trances constituted a major part of the Corinthians' spiritual experience is extremely thin on the ground.

And finally, not a few commentators propose that the curse part of verse 3 is a Pauline creation, cut out of whole cloth to stand in savage juxtaposition to the true Christian confession, a kind of shock treatment to tell the Corinthians to recognize that not all that is spiritual is divine.<sup>39</sup> But if the warning is entirely hypothetical (i.e., without any instance in the life of the Corinthian church where someone was actually crying out, "Jesus is cursed!"), it is hard to see why the Corinthians should not dismiss this part of the verse as a bit of overblown rhetoric.

There are other attempts at solutions, of course;<sup>40</sup> but most of them depend heavily on the presupposition that Paul is

38. E.g., Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, following E.-B. Allo, *Première épître aux Corinthiens*, 2d ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1956).

39. E.g., Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*; de Broglie, "Le texte fondamentale"; David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 256–57.

40. E.g., F. W. Grosheide (*Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953]) suggests that some Corinthian believers were worried that some of the utterances spoken in unintelligible tongues might actually be blasphemous statements, possibly unrecognized even by the speakers; and Paul reassures them by saying that no one who has the Spirit of God could possibly say such things. But it is difficult to see how this fits with the second part of the verse. H. D. Seyer, *The Stewardship of Spiritual Gifts: A Study of First Corinthians, Chapters Twelve, Thirteen, and Fourteen, and the Charismatic Movement* (Madison: Fleetwood, 1974), 7–8, casting around for a modern instance in which tongues-speaking led to blasphemy, urges the example of Edward Irving, who (he claims) became enmeshed in tongues and thereby became so distorted in

attempting to provide a quick if rough criterion to enable his hearers to distinguish between true and false “spiritual gifts.” If we free ourselves from that presupposition and perceive that Paul’s interest lies rather in establishing who truly has the Holy Spirit, then the pressure to identify a precise and believable background is reduced. If Paul is not wielding the curse language of verse 3a as a test for detecting false prophets *in the church*, then the objections raised against several of the backgrounds just listed disappear. It is no longer necessary to hold that “Jesus is cursed” was actually ever uttered in a Corinthian church meeting: Paul’s point is to draw a sharp contrast between what those who have the Holy Spirit (i.e., Christians) say about Jesus, and what those who do not have the Holy Spirit say about Jesus. The latter group might include Jews and Gentiles, whether within cultic contexts or not. Paul’s concern is quite simply to establish an essentially christological focus to the question of who is spiritual, who has the Holy Spirit.

### The Bountiful Diversity of the Grace-Gifts (12:4–11)

As in Ephesians 4:1–16, so here: Paul first sets a foundation in unity, in the one confession prompted by the Holy Spirit, and then introduces the diversity.<sup>41</sup> The connecting  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  (*de*) is probably

---

his Christology that he was eventually deposed from the ministry. But the parallel is both inappropriate and historically distorted: inappropriate because there is no suggestion that tongues were the vehicle of blasphemy, and historically distorted because Irving’s root christological deviations antedated his tongues-speaking experiences (most recently, see Arnold Dallimore, *Forerunner of the Charismatic Movement: The Life of Edward Irving* [Chicago: Moody, 1983]).

41. The parallel to Eph. 4:1–16 has been strenuously denied by Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Christus, Geist und Gemeinde (Eph. 4:1–16),” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule*, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 279–96, especially 290–91, who argues that the “each” in Eph. 4:7 introduces a change of subject and refers to official office-bearers in the church, thus apparently breaking the flow from the stress on unity (4:1–6) to the stress on diversity (4:7–16). He has been decisively rebutted by Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Ministry in the New Testament,”