

Spiritual Gifts, Spiritual Fruit, and Spirituality

I CORINTHIANS 12-14

INTRODUCTION

A. The Phenomenal Controversy.

In an interview by *Christianity Today* of the late Kathryn Kuhlman, dramatic Pentecostal spokeswoman, after the style of Aimee Semple McPherson, she declared: “We believe in speaking in tongues because the Bible teaches it. Everything that happened on the day of Pentecost should be happening in every church in the world this very hour.”¹ Herein is evidenced the fundamental interest that has arisen over the last seventy years with regard to the craving for and ecstatic experience of sensual religious phenomena.

B. The Religious Climate of Corinth.

It is significant that the city of ancient Corinth, at the time the Apostle Paul writes, was also absorbed with sensual religious phenomena, even as I Corinthians makes plain. Geographically, it was placed at the west end of the isthmus dividing northern and southern Achaia, in Greece. Politically, it had been destroyed in 146 BC by the Romans. It was rebuilt under Caesar Augustus on Roman lines, using some old Greek buildings, a city square, so that in the midst of this reconstruction Paul came about 52 AD. Commercially, Corinth was a boom town controlling traffic between east and west, while trading its own products of ceramics, grapes, sheep, brass. Small ships were hauled across the narrow isthmus by means of wooden rails. Religiously, the state religion of the Macedonian and Hellenistic periods had lost its grip. The shift was to experience centered mysticism, imported from Asia and Egypt, with Gnosticism offering special, esoteric revelation and knowledge. There were many religious edifices.

1. A shrine for “all the gods” in case some were missing.
2. A prominent temple for Apollo, god of the fine arts.
3. A temple to Aphrodite (Venus), goddess of love, on top of an 1800' mountain.
4. A monument to Asklepios, the god of healing.

Of particular importance in Corinth were the Eleusinian, Isis-Osiris, Orphic, Dionysian, and Cybele-Attis mystery religions that originated from Phrygia, Egypt, Israel, Persia, and Greece. In general they stressed a future life, immortality, special communion with deity,

¹ *Christianity Today*, Vol. XVII, No. 21.

baptism, sacramental meals, ecstasy (tongues) common back to Plato in the 4th c. BC, astrology.

The most popular was the Cybelle-Attis cult from Phrygia stressing ritual and ecstasy, not knowledge and doctrine. In particular there was sexual wantonness and activity in its celebrations; cries, shouts, clashing of cymbals, cf. 13:1. It was noisy, chaotic, even orgiastic. The priests were eunuchs attired in female garb, with long hair fragrant with ointment, cf. 11:14; they were possessed by their goddess and hence able to prophesy and go into ecstasies. There was also mysterious idolatry using certain holy objects.

C. The Context of I Corinthians 1-11.

The problems of the church at Corinth provide amazing parallels with the general religious aura of that time and place.

1. Moral laxity, 6:9-10.
2. Confusion concerning marriage, 7:1-3.
3. Idolatry, 10:7; 12:2.
4. Confusion concerning the appearance of men and women, and their deportment in worship, 11:2-22.
5. Confusion about spiritual gifts, ecstasies, tongues, prophecy, knowledge, 12:1-14:40.
6. Confusion about order in worship, 14:26-40.
7. Confusion about the resurrection, 15:12-19.

D. The Definition of Spiritual Gifts.

They are, “gracious, spiritual, diverse endowments of God, sovereignly given, for the manifestation of His glory through the church.”

1. They are “gracious,” or “grace-gifts” (Eph. 4:7-8).
2. They are “spiritual,” or “spirituals,” πνευματικά, pneumatika, the inner source (I Cor. 12:1).
3. They are “diverse” in their manifestation while contributing toward the unity of the body of Christ, 12:4-30.
4. They are “endowments,” or “charismata,” χαρίσματα, charismata, the outer dynamic (I Cor. 12:31).
5. They are “sovereignly given” by God, hence not humanly contrived (Eph. 4:7-8, 11; I Cor. 12:11). But what of 12:31?
6. They are “for the manifestation of God’s glory” (I Pet. 4:7-11).

7. They are to glorify God “through the church,” the visible symbol (body) of Christ’s invisible presence (Eph. 3:21; 4:11-12, 16).

B. The Description of Spiritual Gifts.

1. According to biblical sources.
 - a. Romans 12:6-8; “prophesying, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, showing mercy” (7).
 - b. I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; “word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, discerning of spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, apostleship, helps, governments” (11).
 - c. Ephesians 4:11; “apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher” (gifted people, 4).
 - d. I Peter 4:10-11; “speaking, serving” (2).
2. According to biblical purposes.
 - a. Sign gifts, for the unbeliever, “tongues, miracles, prophecy” (I Cor. 14:22).
 - b. Serving gifts, for the body of Christ, “helps, mercy” (Eph. 4:12a).
 - c. Edifying gifts, for the body of Christ, “teaching, preaching exhortation” (Eph. 4:12b).

I INTRODUCTION 12:1-3

A. The commendation of purpose concerning “spirituals,” pneumatika, v. 1.

“Now concerning spirituals [πνευματικά, pneumatika], brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant/agnostic [ἄγνοέω, agnoeō].” Of course the Corinthians did know about Spiritual Gifts from experience, 1:7; their interest, harking back to their unbelieving past, had become quite competitive, 3:3-4. However Paul’s intent here is to indicate the spiritual *purpose* of these endowments as distinct from carnal, self-serving abuse!

B. The source of false “spirituals,” pneumatika, v. 2.

“Because you know that when you were pagans [ἔθνος, ethnos], before dumb [ἄφρωνος, aphōnos] idols, as being led, you were led away [in ecstasy?].” The Corinthian Christians were, as unbelievers, fervently involved in self-serving, degrading pagan excitement. Implicit here is the influence and leading of false spirits. The religious fervency here was of the devil, that perhaps also involved the invoking of curses upon other “gods”!

C. The source of true “spirituals,” pneumatika, v. 3.

“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by means of/in the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed [ἀνάθεμα, anathema],’ and no one is able to say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by means of/in the Holy Spirit.” Thus you cannot claim a valid experience if at the same time you are proclaiming error. The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of the truth” (John 14:16-17; 16:13). It is the truth of God that is the final arbiter of valid Christian experience. Hence, when Jesus is authentically declared to be Lord, that is sovereign deity, there is a true work of the Spirit of God. So when Jonathan Edwards describes the positive signs of a true work of the Spirit of God, his first evidence is as follows:

When the operation is such as to raise their [professing Christian’s] esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Savior of men; it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God.²

II THE DIVINE MANIFESTATION OF DIVERSITY IN UNITY 12:4-31a

A. The diversity in unity of spiritual gifts, vs. 4-11.

It is quite amazing to consider just how broadly God includes the principle of diversity in unity in the Word of God. There is the Bible itself comprised of sixty-six books, two major divisions, and one unified revelation from ruin to redemption. There is marriage, the union of a man and women who become one flesh while retaining their distinctiveness. There is the unity of the church of Jesus Christ which is comprised of distinctive people who have received a diversity of spiritual gifts. And there is the character of God, who is one and yet manifest in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, man often wants to level the playing field beyond what God intended, and do away with the distinctive roles that God appointed for a man and a women in local church life; many are expected to exercise all of the gifts of the Spirit in local church life; and he relegates God to Unitarianism whereby His triunity is denied, and thus the Son and the Spirit are demeaned.

1. The triune distribution of diverse gifts, vs. 4-6.

However, here the Apostle Paul is not hesitant to uphold diversity within the unity of a local church, in the realm of Spiritual Gifts, and this he does three times, vs. 4-6, employing the illustration of the triunity of God. In other words, if God is one and yet diverse in His personality, then it ought not to surprise us that a united local church should, at the same time, manifest an operational diversity. Or to simplify this concept, a watch is comprised of harmoniously working parts that synchronize according to the power working within, to accomplish a vital purpose. This is the same point that Paul makes in Ephesians 4:16 concerning the harmonious working of church life.

a. The *gifts* of God the Spirit, v. 4.

“Now there are distributions [διάρσεις, diairesis] of spiritual gifts/ manifestations [χαρίσματα, charismata], but the same Spirit.” The change of emphasis from

² Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, II, p. 266.

πνευματικά, pneumatika, v. 1, indicates that it is the Holy Spirit who apportions gifts varying in their outward manifestation. In other words, God the Holy Spirit has in store a variety of distinctive gifts and dispenses them Himself.

b. The *ministries* of God the Son, v. 5.

“And there are distributions of ministries/services [διακονία, diakonia], but the same Lord.” The Lord Jesus Himself said that, “the Son of man did not come to be served/ministered, but to serve/minister [διακονέω, diakoneō], and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). He is eminently qualified to dispense that which He embodied; so He is a model for those likewise gifted.

c. The *effects* of God the Father, v. 6.

“And there are distributions of performances/effects/workings [ἐνέργημα, energēma], but the same God, who works [ἐνεργέω, energeō] all things in all [persons, everyone]. Spiritual gifts are active; they perform and accomplish; they are expressive; they are productive; they operate so as to benefit and edify others, as Paul now explains. In the unity of the godhead, this is the Father’s work.

In other words, in his very nature, God delights to incorporate diversity within unity; and He therefore delights in the same principle operating in local church life. He does not expect a strict uniformity, though He does expect a unified purpose. The Father and The Son and the Holy Spirit are somewhat distinctively involved with regard to “gifts,” “ministries,” and “manifestations,” yet their purpose is one, that is the overall blessing of the fellowship of God’s people.

2. The sovereign distribution of diverse gifts, vs. 7-11.

Now the source of these “distributions” has become quite obvious. It is not by means of a priest with the laying on of hands, an answer to a prayer request for a specific gift, a course on spiritual gifts that we take. It is rather by means of the sovereign bestowment of the triune God, vs. 4-6, and in particular the agency of the Holy Spirit, v. 11. Hence we do not shop for spiritual gifts, but rather accept the wise allocation of God. A child of God who covets a gift given to another, who attempts to mimic a gift not received, or who neglects the gift actually received, will have serious problems in fruitfully serving the Lord. Selfish focus on spiritual gifts results in the pursuit of selfish ends, and this was at the heart of the problem with the church at Corinth. Whereas the Christian who submissively employs the gift divinely received, best serves and worships and accomplishes for God. His focus will turn from “what” gift to the “why” or end purpose of the gift received. Identification and ready acceptance of the divine bestowal should lead to appreciation of the divine intention which is now made clear.

a. The *purpose* of spiritual gifts, v. 7.

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profitability/advantage [of all persons].” Cf. 12:25; 13:5; 14:3-5, 12, 19, 26, 31. It is an old, but nevertheless true statement that the Christian has been “saved to serve.”

- (1) If my gift is preaching and teaching, what is to be my goal? It is the spiritual advancement of others, not the enhancement of self by way of reputation (cf. Matt. 7:22-23)
- (2) If my gift is helps and showing mercy, what is my goal? It is the welfare and relief of others, not the applause of those who observe my service, or even the gratitude of those given aid.
- (3) If my gift is giving, serving, ruling, what is my goal? It is the better functioning of the fellowship of God's people, in a "proper and orderly manner," 14:40, not a lust for authority.
- (4) If my gift is speaking in tongues, what is my goal? It is for the impartation of understanding, 14:2-5, 12-13, 19, that is provided interpretation is given. It is *not* for self-stimulation.

In other words, my use of spiritual gift(s) is not to be governed by self-interest, but loving concern for the benefit of other Christians. This is the whole point of I Corinthians 13:1-13 (1-3, 5). A local church is a place for serving, not simply feeling good about oneself!

b. The *variety* of spiritual gifts, vs. 8-10.

There are nine spiritual gifts listed here, while in v. 28 there is further mention of "apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues." It is well to distinguish here between natural and spiritual gifts. The former are variously bestowed upon the whole human race and relate to physical characteristics that incorporate mental, psychological, and physical capacities. The latter are variously bestowed upon all of God's elect and relate to spiritual characteristics that are endowed upon the regenerate soul, *but specifically for the purpose of benefiting the body of Christ*. This is not to deny that a spiritual gift may employ natural gifts in a manner that God originally intended. However, a natural gift employed alone strictly involves itself with the citizenry and business of this world.

- (1) The word of wisdom, v. 8a.

This is mature articulation, accompanied by discerning practical application (Jas. 3:13-18), especially with regard to salvation (I Cor. 1:23-24, 30; 2:6-8; Col. 1:28). Consider Stephen (Acts 6:3, 5, 8, 10).

- (2) The word of knowledge, v. 8b.

This is articulation of deep truth from maturity (I Cor. 1:4-6; 8:1-13), that intends to effect spiritual growth (Eph. 4:13-14), the development of Christian character (II Pet. 1:5-7), and the approval of things excellent in others (Phil. 1:9-10).

- (3) The gift of faith, v. 9a.

This is the exercise of great faith on a consistent basis, in the midst of the faithful, after the manner of George Mueller (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 11:22-23; I Cor. 13:2; Heb. 11:3-39). Such strength of faith is illustrated in *The Pilgrim's Progress* by Faithful, in contrast with Christian, when they encounter Doubting Castle and the River of Death.

- (4) The gifts of healing, v. 9b.

These are miraculous signs, dealing with human ailments, that were chiefly worked by the apostles in establishing their unique authority (Acts 5:12-16; II Cor. 12:11-12; Heb. 2:3-4), especially during the inaugural founding of the church.

- (5) The working of miracles, v. 10a.

These include gifts of healing as well as a wider variety of supernatural events after the manner of Christ (Acts 2:22; 8:6-7; 19:11-12; II Cor. 12:12), again especially manifest during the commencement of the church/Pentecostal age.

- (6) The gift of prophecy, v. 10b.

This is a God-given ability to tell forth the revealed message of God, under the Spirit's moving (II Pet. 1:21). Included would be exhortation with unction, accompanied with evidence that this ministry is of supernatural rather than natural origin (I Cor. 2:1-5).

- (7) The distinguishing of spirits, v. 10c.

This is the ability to distinguish between good and evil powers (I Tim. 4:1; I John 2:20-21; 4:1). Here is spiritual discernment and discrimination that avoids earthly snares and validates the authentic working of God.

- (8) The gift of various tongues, v. 10d.

This is the ability to speak "languages," γλωσσα, glōssa, as a sign gift (I Cor. 14:22). But were they unlearned, bona fide, identifiable languages? Consider Acts 2:1-11 where unlearned languages, glōssa, were spoken supernaturally by the twelve apostles and recognized as such by an unbelieving audience. Or here were they ecstatic utterances, not so objectively interpreted, in which case we would have two kinds of tongues? Most likely not. Paul declares, "I speak in tongues more than you all" (I Cor. 14:18)! Remember that Acts was written some five years after Paul wrote I Corinthians without any hint of confusion as to the meaning of "tongues" here by the Apostle. And if "tongues" here are bona fide languages, then the claims of the modern "tongues movement" are spurious! Where are they validated by unbelievers?

(9) The gift of interpretation of tongues.

This is the “interpretation,” ἐρμηνεία, hermēneia, or translation, or exposition (Luke 24:27, διερμηνεύω, diermēneuō) of tongues, the objective meaning (John 9:7; Heb. 7:2), not something conjured up in the mind.

c. The *origination* of spiritual gifts, v. 11.

“But all these things are working [ἐνεργέω, energeō, through] the one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one individually as He wills [βούλεμαι, boulemai].” In other words, all of these spiritual gifts operate in accordance with the sovereign, distinguishing impartation of the Holy Spirit, not human creativity. This being so, what is required is submission, recognition, and employment with Christian grace.

B. The analogy of the body, vs. 12-31a.

It would be beyond dispute to claim that men and women are very conscious of their own personal bodies. What happens to the body of someone else is one thing, but what happens to our own bodies is a matter of far greater importance. We are particularly concerned about the harmonious, healthy, efficient, happy, presentable operation of all of its parts. But are we similarly concerned about the harmonious, healthy, efficient, happy, presentable operation of the church of Jesus Christ? The reason why Paul was inspired to make his famous analogy here may very well have been for the purpose of our sensitivity about ourselves leading us to be sensitive about the overall nurture of the church of Jesus Christ, but especially its local manifestation.

1. The unity of the body of Christ, vs. 12-13.

We start with the priority of the *unity*, the *oneness*, the *wholeness* of the local church, before we ever consider the particulars. We see ourselves as a wonderfully packaged unit, one complete body, and we hope for others to see us this way. So the local church is first to be appreciated as one, unified body. There is no place for fragmentation, or even being disjointed!

a. It is a bodily unity, with diversity, as is Christ, v. 12.

“For just as the body [σῶμα, sōma] is one and has many members/parts [μέλος, melos], yet all the members/parts of the body being many are one body, so also is Christ.” As the human body is an organism, certainly well organized, so is the body of believers. As “the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7), so the Christian Church, the body of true believers, is also a type of one living being; it is “the church of the living God” (I Tim. 3:15); it is “one new man” (Eph. 2:15).

- b. It is a spiritual unity, with diversity, through Spirit baptism, v. 13.

“For also in/by one Spirit we were all baptized [βαπτίζω, baptizō] into one body, whether Jews, whether Greeks, whether slaves, whether freemen, and we all were made to drink [ποτίζω, potizō] one Spirit.” In the complexity of a watch, the frame of a building, or even a human body, there has to be a basis of cohesion, whether screws in a watch, nails in a building frame, or muscle and ligaments in a body. So in the church of Jesus Christ there is one vital element that enables individual members to adhere together in a complementary manner, the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:16).

How does this incorporation come about? In other words, how does a Christian really become a member of the Christian Church? Primarily by means of divine enrollment; by placement in the body of Christ through the baptizing agency of the Spirit of God. This is not a selective baptism for those who are more earnest; it is a baptism that *every* true child of God participates in at regeneration, at conversion! This is not a selective baptism for certain types of individuals, Jews or Greeks, slaves or freemen, males or females, Baptists or Presbyterians, Calvinists or Arminians! This Spirit baptism did not come about through water baptism, though water is used here to represent the relationship of the soul to this experience. Man is portrayed as thirsty, and Christ comes to that soul bringing refreshment. He declared that, “whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:14). And this Holy Spirit establishes “one body,” in spite of being, “in schisms rent asunder”!

2. The diversity of the human body with its necessary unity, vs. 14-26.

So Paul elaborates upon his basic illustration concerning the human body. And his intent seems to be that by means of further explanation and illustration, much cause of contention and division will be eliminated, v. 25. It is especially in the realm of misunderstanding and misuse of spiritual gifts, with resultant tension, that division and dissension arises. So we now approach vs. 14-26 in a summary manner, and merely extract some basic principles that emphasize Paul’s main thrust.

- a. The principle of selfish ranking of gifts results in friction, vs. 14-17.

Here some members have a sense of inferiority, detachment, because they consider their spiritual gift to be of lesser importance, and those with the more prominent gifts like to have it this way. The foot is probably ranked below the hand; the ear is probably ranked below the eye. But in fact the hand needs the foot, and the eye needs the ear. And in local church fellowship, the leadership is very much in need of the other gifted members, and they should make it known.

- b. The principle of understanding divine appointment, vs. 18.

This is a reinforcement of vs. 7, 11, whereby each member of the body of Christ should be content with his spiritual gift. To act otherwise is to insult Christ, the giver of good and suitable gifts. Discontent here is sure to breed division and tension amongst the members. Covetousness here is proud, selfish acquisitiveness!

It results in the misplacement of parts according to human design, not God's. But submission finds satisfaction with God's endowment of spiritual gifts in our lives.

- c. The principle of complementary interdependency, vs. 19-21.

Here *selfish* interest is to turn to *selfless* dependency. In other words, the Christian's concern is not so much about being needed by others as recognition of our need of others. The eye, seeming more vital than the ear, yet needs the hand; the hand, seeming more elevated than the foot, yet needs the eye. If the body were merely a hand or an eye, it would be a monstrosity. These seeming more esteemed parts have need of one another; we all need one another!

- d. The principle of divine compensation for weak members, vs. 22-25.

It is admitted that some members, as with some spiritual gifts, have greater visible prominence, such as the eye or hand, indeed the gifts of pastoring/teaching, tongues, or working of miracles. But other members, such as the brain or heart, as with the gifts of helps and showing mercy, although far less prominent, are of great necessity. So the local church should be pleased to especially honor those who are less up-front in their ministry, since they really are vital parts. Thus the members should have "the same care for one another," v. 25, and not tolerate partiality.

- e. The principle of selfless sensitivity that promotes unity, v. 26.

If a toe is trodden upon, the tongue will cry out; infection from a cut spreads throughout the whole body; loss of sight causes the feet to stumble; thirst depletes every member. And in a local church, spiritual pain, spiritual infection, spiritual blindness, spiritual thirst, effect and deplete the whole body of members. But if a church "member is honored [glorified], all the members rejoice with it." The thought is probably that if we honor other members, by acknowledging their vital part in church life, instead of seeking honor for ourselves, we cause the whole fellowship to be enhanced. If we encourage someone with the gift of mercy or helps, the end result will be the betterment and rejoicing of the whole body. If we seek a spiritual gift for personal gratification, there will only be resultant self-gratification! Thus the overriding principle is, "to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good*," v. 7. As Charles Wesley has written:

He bids us build each other up;
 And gathered into one,
 To our high calling's glorious hope
 We hand in hand go on.
 The gift which He on one bestows,
 We all delight to prove;
 The grace through every vessel flows,
 In purest streams of love.

We all partake the joy of one,
The common peace we feel,
A peace to sensual minds unknown,
A joy unspeakable.

3. The unity with diversity that is God's pattern, vs. 27-31a.

Whereas the diversity in unity has been well illustrated, now the unity with diversity is declared, that is the application of the preceding illustration concerning the oneness of the body of Christ.

a. The principle of unity in the church with diversity, v. 27.

“Now you [plural] are [the] body of Christ and a member of members/members individually [of it].” The unity here principally concerns the local church at Corinth, though it is to be a micro of the macro, that is a local representation of the universal church. This suggests that there will be individuality within the unity of the completed Bride of Christ. However this “oneness” is comprised of distinctive individuality; a church of apparent clones indicates the manifestation of counterfeit gifts.

b. The particulars of diversity in the church with unity, vs. 28-30.

(1) The sovereign appointment of diversity defined, v. 28.

Ministers are diverse, such as with apostles, prophets (Acts 13:1; Eph. 2:20; 3:5), and teachers, as is gifted ministry such as with healings, helps, administrations, tongues. Note that tongues then is not to be expected of all believers (cf. Acts 1:26-2:4).

(2) The sovereign appointment of diversity defended, v. 29-30.

All seven questions here expect a negative answer, and thus they argue for the diversity of gifted ministry, and cautious expectations.

c. The particulars of diversity in Corinth with disunity, v. 31a.

“But you are seeking [ζηλόω, zeloō] the greater gifts [χαρίσματα, charismata],” not as the NASB. The verb here can be translated either indicatively or imperatively, though the indicative is by far the more common grammatical usage (Gal. 4:17; Jas. 4:2), and makes the best contextual sense here. However, the imperative is rightly used to translate 14:1; 39. The point here is that many Corinthian believers were coveting the more spectacular, showy spiritual gifts; many were wanting to be eyes and hands, up front ministers receiving recognition and approbation; they wanted to be center stage in church life. However Paul will now repudiate this self-centered approach, though his *modus operandi* is not as might be expected.

III THE SUPERIOR EMPLOYMENT OF GIFTS BY GRACES 12:31b-13:13

A. The priority of a better way of regulating spiritual gifts, 12:31a.

“And yet I show you a more excellent/an incomparably superior [ὑπερβολή, hyperbole] way [in the administration of spiritual gifts in local church life].” There is a gentleness of correction that follows here; it aims at a change of attitude leading to a change of behavior, and not simply the winning of an argument.

B. The priority of love, vs. 1-3.

The sentimental misuse of vs. 1-7, such as at weddings, is widespread. Even unbelieving man is right to a degree in sensing that here we have something, not only beautifully expressed, but also noble and of high importance. Nevertheless the whole gospel dynamic is ignored (I John 4:10-1, 19). The context is Spirit baptized Christians, being the possessors of spiritual gifts, who ought to operate these spiritual skills by means of “the fruit [singular] of the Spirit [which] is “love” (Gal. 5:22-23), not personal gain through self-interest.

Try to define “love.” It is not basically emotion, though emotion is very much resultant, but determined, covenant, loyal love (John 3:16; I John 4:10). The love of God is the active expression of His goodness that is distinctively evident in His grace, longsuffering, mercy, and benevolence.

1. The gift of tongues, v. 1.

“Tongues of men and of angels” is hyperbole and not a reference to a heavenly language that is distinct from any earthly language as some claim. It is exaggeration to prove a point. Further, the speech of angels in the Bible is always intelligible. However symphonic my language may be, if my intent is not loving, that is desirous of edifying other believers, then I am as useless as the pagan clashing sounds employed in the Corinthian mystery religions.

2. The gift of prophecy, v. 2a.

Again hyperbole represents someone of great eloquence, knowledge, and perception, who performs so as to receive acclamation and recognition. There is even unction, seeming anointing from heaven, but if this is a presentation not motivated by love of the fellowship of believers, their edification and spiritual improvement, then such impassioned preaching is quite worthless. This is pulpiteering, a dramatic act, that is looking for the applause of men!

3. The gift of faith, v. 2b.

Paul understands faith here as being productive, effectual. Great faith results in mighty works, even as the Son of God taught (Matt. 17:20; 21:21). But suppose, according to further hyperbole, I do not merely remove a mountain, but a whole range of mountains, and am not constrained to do this out of love for others because I am seeking my own glory, then my stupendous display in the name of a “faith ministry” is less than an empty bubble; it is vain in the sight of God!

4. The gift of giving, v. 3.

Yet again, in terms of hyperbole, should I sell all of my possessions for the sake of the poor, which sacrifice few men have made; indeed, should I make the ultimate gift and act of self-sacrifice which is intentional martyrdom; and should my motive be the establishment of personal nobility and sainthood, and not “love for the brethren,” then seeming virtue in the sight of man is of no account in the sight of God; there will be no expected reward, only the exposure of phony resolve.

C. The glorious character of love, vs. 4-13.

In contrast with counterfeit love, which is the absence of real love in a religious person, we now consider the genuine currency. Like a watch with its main spring that drives the working of every cog, ratchet, and wheel, so love, indeed the constraint of love (II Cor. 5:14; I John 4:19), gives enablement and right direction to spiritual gifts. All of the religious activity in the world is worthless if love is absent. Nevertheless love is not an easy word to define, especially since it is often used so loosely, so abstractly. Hence Paul understands this difficulty and explains. Again, the context here is of “sincere, fervent, love *for the brethren, from the heart*” (I Pet. 1:22; I John 3:14), not a self-serving desire for ecstatic experiences.

1. Love is selfless, v. 4.

“Love [ἀγάπη, agapē] is patient/longtempered [μακροθυμέω, makro-thumeō], kind/gracious [χρηστεύομαι, chrēsteuomai], love is not jealous/fervently envious [ζήλος, zēlos], love does not brag/boast [περπερεύομαι, perpereuomai], is not puffed up/arrogant [φυσιώω, phusioō]. Here religious activity is a given; however the motivation is either selfless or self-serving. Selfless Christianity serves; selfish Christianity desires satisfaction. Selfless Christianity is directed by grace; selfish Christianity is directed by merit. Selfless Christianity desires relief for others; selfish Christianity desires reward.

2. Love is modest, v. 5.

“[Love] does not behave shamefully/indecently [ἀσχημονέω, aschēmoneō], it does not seek its own things, is not provoked to anger/a paroxysm [παροξύνω, paroxunō], it does not hold evil to account [λογίζομαι, logizomai, that has been suffered].” In other words, brazen appearance and activity in church fellowship have no place. A spiritual gift is not for personal advantage. Nor is the Christian to be loud, provocative with his opinions, quick in defense of himself, easily offended with a short fuse. He does not hold grudges, but patiently attempts to break down needless barriers.

3. Love is moral, v. 6.

“[Love] does not rejoice [χαίρω, chairō] in unrighteousness, but rejoices [συγχαίρω, sunchairō] in the truth.” Thus love is grieved by ungodliness; it is not taken lightly; it is not accommodating toward sin. Rather love is regulated by righteousness; love is always holy, pure, unassociated with defilement; it gravitates toward the truth. Hence, what is this “truth? It concerns saving, transforming grace, whereby unrighteousness is

vanquished by the gospel (II Thess. 2:10; II John 2:4). This rejoicing is akin to the “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

4. Love is comprehensive, v. 7.

“[Love] covers/bears [στέγω, *stegō*] all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Love is very tolerant when personally offended; though love is not naïve; it may be innocent, but it is not foolish; rather love lacks a skeptical spirit; it desires that good prevail; it would rather run the risk of being deceived than a person be deprived of kindness and assistance; thus love shuns harshness; it tends to see the bright side of a situation, whereby the cup is half full rather than half empty; it endures personal hardship for the cause of the gospel (9:12). And this attitude prevails over life as a whole, not mere specific items.

5. Love is enduring, vs. 8-13.

At an earthly level, gifts are good for a time. But then they age and deteriorate, they discolor and break down, they are displayed and then stored in the garage and finally given away to a charity! Spiritual gifts are the same. Even a preacher rises and falls in his usefulness. But a loving attitude of heart abides, even when the flesh is failing.

a. Love does not fail, v. 8a.

So, “[The] love never falls/fails/ends [πίπτω, *piptō*].” There is something specific and definitive here. It is that this love has a divine origination, which is so distinguishable from the more common categories, since it is *selfless*, *modest*, *moral*, and *comprehensive*. It never breaks down, becomes obsolete, loses its usefulness. The love of God may have had a beginning in the life of a saved sinner; but it will never have a conclusion. Eternity will always be adorned with the love of God, that is love from God, love toward God, and hence love among the brethren whom God loves.

b. Gifts of the Spirit will fail, vs. 8b-12.

We must keep in mind the big picture here and not simply focus on the question of tongues “ceasing,” v. 8b. All of the spiritual gifts will come to a conclusion. That is why they must not be lionized. Hence we come to certain conclusions.

- (1) The gift of *prophecy*, a “part gift,” cf. v. 9, will be done away with [καταργέω, *katargeō*, future passive], v. 8b.
- (2) The gift of *tongues*, not a “part gift,” will cease of itself [παύω, *pauō*], future middle], v. 8c.
- (3) The gift of *knowledge*, a “part gift,” cf. v. 9, will be done away with [καταργέω, *katargeō*, future passive], v. 8d.
- (4) The time of the “part” gift’s dismissal, excluding tongues as a “non-part gift,” will be when “the perfect comes,” v. 10, probably the future eternal state, cf. v. 12, not at the completion of the canon of Scripture.

- (5) The time of tongue's cessation will be when "I [Paul] became a man, I did away with foolish things," v. 11, that is following the infancy of the Christian church and his apostolic ministry.
- (6) For the present the "part" gifts of prophecy and knowledge allow us to "see in a mirror dimly," though at the time when the perfect comes, then "we will know fully just as we have been fully known," v. 12.
- c. Love reigns supreme, v. 13.

"But now [νυνί, nuni] abide/endure faith, hope, love, these three [more enduring] things, but the greatest of these is love." "Faith" and "hope" are added since they also are virtues that transcend the gifts of the Spirit. Yet even then, as Bishop Ryle points out: "Faith will one day be swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty. Their office will be useless in the morning of the resurrection and like old almanacs, they will be laid aside."³ But furthermore, they do not go to the heart of the goodness of God as does love (I John 4:16). Hence, "love" is the greatest virtue of all, but especially for the fallen, alienated race of Adam. That is why Paul further explains to the Christians at Colosse: "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a new heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity" Col. 3:12-14).

IV THE ORDERLY EMPLOYMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS 14:1-40

A. The general regulation of spiritual gifts, vs. 1-12.

Now that the principle of regulating Spiritual Gifts, by means of the fruit of love, has been established, yet the right, orderly functioning of the gifts of the Spirit must still be considered. Implicit here also are principles for the God-honoring organization in general of any local church.

1. The pursuit of love through prophesy, v. 1.

"Pursue [διώκω, diōkō, "you plural," the] love; yet seek [ζηλώω, zeloō, "you plural,"] after the spirituals [τὰ πνευματικά, ta pneumatika], but more/especially that you [plural] may prophesy." Since, as we have already seen in vs. 7, 11, 18, Spiritual Gifts are received according to God's sovereign appointment, the intent here is not the pursuit of these Gifts according to personal preference. Rather, the desire is for the encouragement of spirituals being operative in the assembly of God's people, according to selfless, loving motivation. A church ought to help to identify, awaken, foster the use of Spiritual Gifts and not allow them to remain dormant. Church leadership has an important role here.

³ J. C. Ryle, *Practical Religion*, p. 126.

2. The preference for edification, vs. 2-5.

We now need to understand a pivotal word for Paul here. It is “edification,” or “to edify,” οἰκοδομέω, oikodomeō, vs. 3-5, 17, 26. It literally means to build a house, an edifice. Its spiritual application, commonly used by Paul (Rom. 14:19; 15:2; I Cor. 3:9; 8:1; 10:23; I Thess. 5:11), but preeminently in this chapter, has reference to both the individual believer and the local Christian assembly, that is their spiritual growth through nourishment of the truth. Here is further evidence of the vital place of progressive sanctification in the life of a Christian,

- a. A tongue (an unknown language) not understood by the audience, cannot lead to edification. Such a speaker only communicates “mysteries” to God and himself, and nobody profits, v. 2.
- b. A prophecy understood by the audience in a known language brings edification by means of exhortation that is understood, en-couragement, consolation, comfort, παραμυθία, paramuthia, v. 3.
- c. A prophecy is superior to a tongue in developing edification. The speaker in an unknown language only edifies himself. But prophecy edifies the whole congregation, and this is what gifts are for, v. 4.
- d. A prophecy is more desirable than a tongue in edification, v. 5. Paul would like all to speak in languages, even as he is able, v. 18; it has advantages in ministry, although he is quite hypothetical here. But prophecy is superior because the church is immediately, more readily edified. Of course a language can edify with interpretation, but this has complications, as v. 27 suggests.

3. The portrayal of edification, vs. 6-12.

For Paul, the great necessity in local church ministry is profitable teaching that is fruitful in the area of understanding. Dr. Lloyd-Jones tells the story of a lady who, in hearing a notable preacher, was asked what she thought of his sermon. She responded that it was very good indeed. Then on being asked what it was about, she replied: “Far be it from me to understand such a great and learned man!” If a speaker merely communicates gibberish, his ministry is useless for the church.

- a. Paul’s hypothetical illustration, v. 6.

The apostle, doubtless well known for his ability with languages, v. 18, raises a hypothetical situation. Instead of his normal method of communicating with preaching and teaching that is understood, suppose he used foreign tongues that were not understood. He could easily do that. However, his ministry would be of no profit.

- b. Paul’s musical illustrations, vs. 7-8.

So Paul, with his vital concern for clarity of understanding, uses some illustrations that illuminate the importance of using common terms of meaning, that is words

and expressions to which we attribute the same meaning. Otherwise intelligent communication is impossible.

- (1) The instrumental, symphonic distinction, v. 7.

So differing instruments must nevertheless be played according to agreed terms of melody, harmony, and composition. I cannot play random notes and expect you to understand this noise as music. To *play* and *listen* requires common understanding.

- (2) The instrumental, military distinction, v. 8.

Similarly a trumpet that calls troops to battle requires mutual understanding between the trumpeter and the listening troops. The soldiers must be able to interpret the melody as an understood call to combat, and not mere trumpet practice!

- c. Paul's linguistic illustrations, vs. 9-11.

Now the apostle presses home his argument further because he is so committed to the communication of Bible truth to the church as a whole, and not self-serving ecstatic experiences.

- (1) The unknown tongue lacks clarity of meaning; it is sound that does not connect; it does not convey gospel truth; it serves no useful purpose in church life, v. 9.
- (2) The tongues of the world all have meaning, even though they may sound meaningless to others. That is, none of these sounds are really vacant of truth, v. 10.
- (3) The lack of communicated meaning by means of an unknown language is barbaric. That is it erects a barrier in church life whereby we treat one another as foreigners, strangers v. 11.

- d. Paul's exhortation to edification, v. 12.

“Therefore, since you are zealous [ζηλωτής, zēlōtēs] for spirituals [πνευματικά, pneumatika], seek [ζητεω, zēteō] that you may abound/increase for the edification of the church.” *Whatever* my Spiritual Gift may be, I am to have the goal of edification for the local church at the forefront of mind. My vision is for the enhancement of the Body of Christ. With other members of the church having the same intent, then I also will be edified. Then “the household of God, . . . the church of the living God” (I Tim. 3:15) will become the Palace Beautiful, as Bunyan portrays it, built up, harmonious in the interworking of complementary members.

B. The particular regulation of spiritual gifts, vs. 13-36.

The assumption here is that love directs those Christians who Paul is addressing. In other words, they deeply long for the edification of the church at Corinth. They are motivated with genuine affection for the saints, their spiritual growth, and the local church as a whole. But the congregation most likely has considerable racial variety. So if a gifted person ministers in a particular language, the problem concerns whether others in the congregation, of a different background can understand. Thus Paul addresses this problem, but especially the person who desires to speak. *Negatively speaking*, confusion must be avoided; *positively speaking*, understanding and edification are to be aimed for. What fundamental principles these are for any local church today.

1. The right *operation* of spiritual gifts, 13-19.

Paul must have been a wonderful teacher; his great passion was to “instruct others,” v. 19. Here was part of his success in establishing church after church; he communicated well not only with formal Judaism, but also with paganism and secularism (cf. Acts 19:8-10; 20:18-21). At least he was understood, even if not always appreciated!

a. The exhortation to interpretation of a tongue, v. 13-17.

- (1) The speaker in a foreign language is to pray that he can interpret for his congregation, at least a sizeable part of it. It depends on the ethnic groups he addresses, and his own ability to translate into their particular languages, v. 13.
- (2) The speaker may know what he is talking about, but without interpretation that communicates to a multi-racial audience, it is likely he alone understands, while his outreach is fruitless, that is it gains no response, v. 14.
- (3) Consequently, if I *speak*, or *pray*, or *sing*, or *bless* in a church service, in an unknown tongue/language, the words of my mouth must be understood by the listener. Otherwise, in not understanding what is being said, it will not be possible to respond with an “Amen!” Whereas an “Amen” is a declaration of understanding. Thus interaction between the speaker and the congregation, resulting in edification, is of vital importance, vs. 15-17.

b. The example of Paul the tongue speaker, vs. 18-19.

The Apostle now sets himself up as a personal example, but only for the purpose of pressing home his point that leads to the blessing of others. Being esteemed as proficient in many languages is of no consequence.

(1) His proficiency in tongues, v. 18.

“I give thanks to God, [for] I speak in tongues/languages *γλώσσαις*, *glōssais*] more than you all.” Whether the meaning here concerns supernatural or natural languages, though in either case they must be *bona fide languages*, we have little testimony of either being spoken on Paul’s part. However he surely knew Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin, though there is no evidence

of his speaking in some ecstatic language. Nevertheless, as we now see, the end purpose of his argument is not effected. Comprehension, understanding are everything!

(2) His priority for instruction, v. 19.

“But, in [the] church, I desire to speak five words with my mind, in order that I might instruct others, than myriads [ten thousand] of words in a tongue/language.” Here is the bottom line, which is the instruction of believers rather than the appearance of seeming babbling that profits nobody who is listening. He *must* be intelligible; he *wants* to be understood, and not merely wondered at, and it ought to be the desire of every earnest Christian that he be comprehended. Yet for centuries, the laity were kept from the truth by means of the church hierarchy speaking and ministering only in Latin!

2. The right *purpose* of spiritual gifts, vs. 20-25.

What then is the basic purpose of tongues? It is common today for it to be claimed that speaking in tongues is especially for private devotion as a prayer language, as an ecstatic experience that is unlike the form or regular languages. The mind is put in neutral and, even with some coaching, the encouragement of others showing the way with their tongues, and the laying on of hands, there suddenly erupts this meaningless chatter. This experience is a great personal blessing.

a. The recommendation of mature thinking, v. 20.

Yet Paul here does not take us in this direction. Rather than being childish, we are encouraged to be mature in our *thinking*. The mind is *not* to be jettisoned so that our hearts might take over.

b. The reference to Scripture, v. 21

Thus we are to go to the Word of God, specifically Isaiah 28:11-12, where God declared that He would speak in judgment and captivity to His drunken, rebellious, unbelieving people by means of “stammering lips and a foreign tongue,” that is the Babylonians speaking their Assyrian language. So Paul uses this as an illustration of the fundamental purpose of tongues/languages, that is not what is expected today.

c. The reason for tongues, v. 22.

“So that the tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy [is for a sign] not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.” Here is the only specific, explicit declaration concerning the purpose of tongues in the Bible. And J. B. Phillips became utterly confused here when he footnoted in his “Letters to Young Churches,” that Paul made a slip and needed to be corrected. Nevertheless, tongues were not only a sign to faithless Israel in the time of Isaiah, but also in a similar way at Pentecost, when Israel was largely in unbelief again.

This verse contradicts so much of the modern tongues speaking movement that has become intoxicated and self-absorbed with scintillating experiences.

d. The response to the rationale, vs. 23-25.

So Paul applies the principle of tongues, being a witness to unbelievers, to the local church at Corinth.

(1) Consider tongues encountered by visitors, vs. 23.

If unbelieving visitors hear unknown tongues, especially without any interpretation, they will not believe that they are witnessing an ecstatic experience. Rather they will conclude that the congregation has gone raving mad because there is no recognition or comprehension of truth, no mental connection.

(2) Consider prophecy encountered by visitors, vs. 24-25.

But suppose the visitors hear prophetic preaching, the exposition of the Word of God, the gospel, that is in the common language of Corinth, then there will be mental connection, fruitful communication, the invasion of darkened souls.

(a) They are *convicted*, vs. 24-25a.

Here is effective evangelism, for the truth has been powerfully, meaningfully conveyed, the result being conviction of sin, accountability, the soul being stripped naked before God.

(b) They are *converted*, v. 25b.

The further result is a bowing of this soul before God, an earnest crying out to God for mercy, a vision of His holy greatness, a change from a feeling of woe to worship and adoration and the new enjoyment of the presence of the Spirit of God. This fruit of ministry is Paul's great intent in all of this, not greater and more rapturous experiences, spiritual ecstasy. He has a passion for the clear communication of the saving truth of God. The direction of his thought is men and women who are lost and in darkness, not his own personal excitement. His approach is flexible. This is born out in 9:22-23: "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel." Again in 10:33, "I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved." For Paul, then, Spiritual Gifts are for selfless employment, both for local church edification, and for gospel outreach to the world we encounter. They are not entertaining toys.

3. The right *ordering* of spiritual gifts, vs. 26-36.

When you consider the preeminent characteristic of churches today, the most dominant quality, what is it that would most frequently be mentioned? Many would say it is the music program that is so grand and impressive; others would indicate it is the youth ministry; some would suggest the social programs, the missionary support, the counseling services, the evangelistic witnessing teams extending throughout the neighborhood, etc. And yes, there would be those saying that the most significant feature is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Now when you consider Paul's emphasis in I Corinthians 12-14 as a whole on the interaction between Spiritual Gifts and Spiritual Fruit, and how this works itself out in an orderly manner in local church life, here in vs. 26-40, it becomes very obvious that one concern dominates. Paul's controlling passion is for "edification," v. 26, "that all may learn and all may be exhorted," v. 31, "the word of God," v. 36, "the Lord's commandment," v. 37. In other words, it is *proclamation* of the truth of God that *penetrates* and is *productive* in the soul of the believer. Yet this priority must be implemented with right order, not a haphazard style. Thus a faithful local church is *not* a casual, hang-loose society, but rather an orderly, well-arranged body.

a. For public worship, vs. 26-33.

- (1) This order is for the enhancement of edification within the church as a whole, not individual advantage, v. 26.
- (2) This order is to limit those who speak in *tongues* to two or three, so as to avoid weariness, impatience in the congregation. Even with *prophecy* the same holds true if a seeming endless line of speakers is in prospect. Again, edification must prevail, not an endless display of preachers, vs. 27-29.
- (3) This order is to curb the enthusiasm of the audience. There is not to be rude, interruptive ministry in the pew while another is speaking from the main pulpit, v. 30.
- (4) This order is to be sequential, not simultaneous. The assembly is not to sound like a barnyard of competitive speakers who attempt to minister at the same time v. 31.

- (5) This order is to reflect the necessity of spiritual self-discipline. The anointing of the Holy Spirit does not mean a speaker is impulsively beyond self-discipline since the legitimate Old Testament prophet yet remained in control; he could speak under constraint, and yet determine to be silent, v. 32.
- (6) This order is to result in peaceful worship. Here is a universal principle that addresses “all the churches of the saints.” God was not content with a world that was “formless and void [and covered with] darkness” (Gen. 1:2). His desire was for the beauty of order and design. Nor was He prepared to tolerate society in which “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21:25). His further desire was for a world of holy peace in the place of turbulence and conflict. And the establishment of this godly tranquility is to begin with the people of God. Thus anything that is discordant, raucous, aggravating, irreverent, is out of place in Christian worship, v. 33.

b. For women at worship, vs. 34-36.

Hence, Paul is now most courageous in confronting the problem of women vocally asserting themselves in the public assembly of Christians. The matter of man’s headship over the woman has already been dealt with in 11:3, 7-9.

- (1) Women are not to minister publicly the Word. This is a matter that is even supported by the Old Testament Law (Gen. 3:16; I Tim. 2:11-13), and now still stands, vs. 34-35.
- (2) Women are not to minister publicly the Word as a universal principle. This is not simply a matter of distinctive Corinthian culture and preference, v. 36.

c. The overall regulation of spiritual gifts, vs. 37-40.

Now Paul asserts himself in a church that has tended to allow every opinion to be presented, and where carnal indulgence and factionalism has become rampant (1:12-13; 3:1-5). Hence his concluding principles are vital for the reestablishment of a former spiritual state that delighted Paul (1:4-8; cf. Acts 18:10-11). They are timeless for the maintenance of healthy church life.

1. The recognition of Pauline revelatory authority, v. 37.

Here is the assertion of uncompromising apostolic authority. It concerns inscripturated apostolic truth that calls for submission. The right ordering of a local church must be according to revelation, not culture, expediency, novel strategies. Paul repeatedly tells us that much of his teaching was “by revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12, 16, 2:2); it was “received from the Lord” (I Cor. 11:23; 15:3; II Cor. 12:1).

2. The repudiation of anti-Pauline criticism, v. 38.

Here is the uncompromising repudiation of those who would challenge Paul’s apostolic authority to declare, “Thus saith the Lord.” Years ago, in discussion with a lady concerning the role of women in the church, I quoted the apostle and received the response, “But that is just Paul’s opinion.” Then what shall we say of Peter’s opinion, or the opinions of Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah. Here authority is demolished.

3. The recommendation of prophecy’s superiority, v. 39.

Here is the restatement of the priority of the communication of truth that transforms, that edifies. Prophecy, that is the proclamation of the Word of God, is to have the priority because it enables immediate edification of the church assembly. Tongues are legitimate, even though edification is delayed, that is provided there is interpretation. Here is the fundamental reason which preaching is primary in local church life.

4. The requirement of orderly church life, v. 40.

The principle of God’s preference for order and design rather than chaos and randomness, pervades all of Scripture and His creation. It is of the essence of the divine nature to design, to structure, to plan according to a pattern. If this be so in the material and natural creation, how much more it is true concerning His supernatural creation. It means that there will be order, pattern, organization in the *life* of the individual Christian; and there will therefore be order, pattern, organization in the life of Christians when they assemble together; and this will result in godly peace, v. 33, not confusion, schism.