

A Popular Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12

[Presented to the 14th biennial convention of the Minnesota District of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States held at DMLC, New Ulm, Minnesota, June 19-23.]

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During the eighteen months of Paul's stay in the Greek city of Corinth, (Acts 18:11), he founded a sizable congregation there. Most of the converts through and to the preaching of Christ Crucified were non-Jews, and although most of them belonged to the poorer classes, still there were also people of wealth and high social standing among them (Acts 18:8; Rom. 16:23). Leaving Corinth, Paul sailed to Ephesus, once a large city in what is now Turkey, and from there went to Jerusalem. Returning from Jerusalem, he stayed in Ephesus for about 3 years. It was here that information about the sad state of the Corinthian congregation reached his ears. Its troubles were many. These disturbing conditions were brought to his attention by some members of that congregation (1 Cor. 1:11) as well as by a letter from the Corinthians containing questions about the unmarried state, divorce, the eating of the meat of animals, parts of which were sacrificed in the pagan temples, head coverings for women in church, and the use of the gifts of the Spirit of God. In the congregation there were divisions and factions, for soon after his departure they had begun to disagree about their preachers, although all taught the same doctrine, and to attach themselves to certain ones—some to Paul, some to Peter, some to Apollos, a brilliant speaker. There were other disturbing conditions: a lack of discipline and order, (indifference) on the part of some to immoral relations, suits of member against member in the civil courts, Christians misusing their Christian liberty and taking part in heathen temple banquets or feasts, drunkenness, and loveless conduct at the love-feast and at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the selfish misuse of spiritual gifts, a denial, on the part of some, of the resurrection (of the body) from the dead. That is why Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, about the year 57 A.D. Delegates from the congregation took it to Corinth. It answers the questions of the congregation and seeks to correct the abuses.

In that part of the letter which we today call the 12th chapter, Paul writes about Spiritual gifts and their use. The Corinthians did not understand or exercise them properly. The Old Testament prophet of Pentecost, Joel, already gives a glorious picture of spiritual blessings. Young and old are to have a special anointing that will set them apart as the Lord's chosen instruments. Joel said: "And after these things I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh..."(2:28). Kyle M. Yates states in his book, "Preaching from the Prophets," p. 197: "They will have a clearer conception of divine truth and will be able to interpret God's will for the people. Even the slaves will be favored with this mysterious power. The universality of God's purpose is revealed as Joel opens the door to people of all lands and assures them that no bar will be erected against anyone who calls on the name of the Lord. Peter claims the promise of Joel as not only fulfilled at Pentecost but as a fact yet to find richer fulfillment in God's own good time." (Acts 2:17-21).

The story of Pentecost is well known. Its wondrous happenings took place fifty days after Easter. The Lord had gone up into the heaven of heavens. The apostles and disciples were gathered in one place in Jerusalem. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing, mighty wind and filled the house (abode). Cloven tongues like fire appeared on the disciples' heads. Then we read, (Acts 2:4): "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak *with other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Not only had Joel, the Prophet of Pentecost, foretold these events, but after His Resurrection and before His Ascension, the Lord Jesus also foretold the coming of the same Spirit with his gifts: "And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17-18). And again he says: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with *power* from on high." (Luke 24:49), and once more in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Indeed, in the very might of his base betrayal, He told his disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to guide them in all truth. Thus when Pentecost came, these prophecies and promises of God and God's Son began to be fulfilled. Paging through that interesting book of Acts, or Doings of the Apostles, we learn how. Some disciples had the

gift of tongues, others the gift of prophecy, others that of miracles, etc. Thus, (Acts 5:12) we read: “by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.” We think of the story of the healing of the lame man at the temple gate, Philip, the deacon, did great miracles; Peter healed Aeneas and restored Dorcas to life; the non-Jewish Roman (Italian) captain Cornelius and members of his household received the gift of the Holy Spirit and spoke with tongues; Paul did various miracles. But we need not here give an exhaustive and complete list of examples.

Paul gives us longer, yet not complete lists of these gifts, speaking of them in his letter to the Romans (12), 1 Corinthians (12 and 14), and Ephesians (4). These spiritual gifts were of many kinds and the congregation at Corinth was richly blessed with them. But some began to misuse them in the spirit of false humility, selfishness, and pride. Since some of these gifts were more, shall we say, flashy than others, some people became discouraged and dissatisfied with their gifts and in a selfish way sought more attractive ones. Others were proud in the display of their gifts. To correct these attitudes toward spiritual gifts and to awake in the Corinthians a proper appreciation for them, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 12—our chapter.

Paul begins “Now concerning spiritual gifts...” This is the subject of this chapter and the following two. Paul says, “So far I have taken up and discussed my message of Christ Crucified, the matter of pastors and divisions in the congregations, church discipline and excommunication, law suits among church members, the abuse of the body, marriage, Christian liberty, proper behavior at services, especially at the Holy Communion, and *now* I shall take up this matter of spiritual gifts. You have also asked me about this (matter) in your letter and Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16:17) have told me of your wish to know more about it. I know your troubles and have your inquiries before me.”

So also we need to go to the prophets and apostles in order to grow in knowledge, to correct misunderstandings, misconceptions. Search the Scripture. “While the external truths and principles remain the same and are unchangeable, the conditions to which they are applicable change, and these changes must be studied and met. God himself took note of these changing conditions and, as the need arose, revealed his will concerning them.” (Dierk’s Preface “Social Teachings of the Old Testament” IV). It is this revelation made through the prophets and apostles which we must study and follow in order at all times to evaluate correctly events and conditions.

Paul writes: “concerning spiritual.” The word “gifts” is supplied by the translators. Fluent English requires that either the word things, or gifts, or persons be added. The Greek can write “concerning spiritual;” the Englishman cannot. The chapter concerns spiritual gifts, but of course persons have the gifts. These gifts are special spiritual gifts, but some are rooted in natural talents heightened by the Holy Spirit for exercise and use in the church, for instance, the ability to administer; others again are supernatural, as for example, the power to heal the sick or to speak in tongues. They are to be distinguished from saving faith and its fruit love for these two gifts of the Spirit are common in some measure to all Christians. We confess these latter spiritual gifts when we say with Luther, Article III, “enlightened me with his gifts,” and our Gausewitz edition of Luther’s Catechism has a neat summary of them, No. 229: “The knowledge that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, the assurance of faith that I am justified before God thru Christ; Peace with God; The Hope of Heaven; The witness that I am a child of God; Comfort in all Tribulation; Confidence to Pray; And all blessedness which Jesus Christ, my Lord obtained for me.” Of these Paul is not speaking here, but Paul here speaks of *special* gifts.

On the special spiritual gifts, says Paul, I, a servant of Jesus Christ and moved by the Holy Ghost, shall enlighten (instruct) you. *God* wants you to know. I want you to know. You have been misinformed, you value some gifts too highly and at the expense of others just as good or better.

God does not want us *ignorant*. He wants us to search the Scriptures, as did the Bereans (Acts 17:11) when Paul preached there. They “sifted” the Scripture, Luke tells us. Some remain satisfied with the knowledge they have gained in childhood, as I heard of one remark concerning Bible Classes, “they are not for us who have been in a Lutheran school, they are mainly for converts to our religion.” We can and should *all* grow in knowledge. A life-time of drinking at the fountain of divine knowledge will not (exhaust) make it dry. Pastoral institutes are commendable. In a good book, “The Preacher and His Work,” by Jewett we read (p. 119): “I would, therefore, urge upon all young preachers, amid all their other reading, to be always engaged in the

comprehensive study of some one book of the Bible. Let that book be studied with all the strenuous mental habits of a man's student days. Let him put into it the deliberate diligence, the painstaking care, the steady persistence with which he prepared for exacting examinations, and let him assign a part of every day to attaining perfect mastery over it. You will find this habit to be of immeasurable value in the enrichment of your ministry."

Spiritual gifts must come from a spirit. Paul says that they come from the Holy Spirit. He continues in verses 2 and 3 thus: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." The Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost are one and the same Third person of the Trinity. Note how the three persons of the Trinity are mentioned in this third verse. (Note also that Paul says in the Spirit, that is, in connection with the Spirit.)

Paul says (V. 2): "You do know this much, that you once were Gentiles, non-Jews, heathen. You were not of God's chosen people, the Hebrews. God did not reveal himself to you as he did to Abraham and Moses, our fathers. And while you were heathen, you didn't experience anything like this. You did not have spiritual gifts. To the Ephesians he wrote (4:18): "You were dead in trespasses and sin" and (2:12), you were "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." You know what he wrote about the heathen in his letter to the Romans, Chapter 1:18-32. The heathen, he says, made offerings to demons and not to God (1 Cor. 10:19), although they knew by nature that there was a supreme being whom they should worship and obey. All heathen religion is a mixture of truth and falsehood, in which even the truth "is given a false twist," and Dr. P. Kretzmann rightly says in his book "The God of the Bible and Other Gods": "There is not, and cannot be, an adequate understanding of the one Supreme God without the revelation offered in the Bible of the Christians. We are dealing throughout with the peculiar phenomenon of truth struggling for recognition but constantly repressed and falsified, because of man's perverted nature." (p. 58). Paul's language here is picturesque. He says: "When you Corinthians were heathen you did not know where you were going. You were being led away (masc. *constructio ad sensum* to be construed with neuter) as a prisoner is led away to prison and execution (the gallows). This their religion did. It led them away from the true God, who had revealed himself as the "Mighty God," "The Most High God," the Lord (Jehovah), to idols, whom they called "lord." And these were *dumb* idols—speechless, unresponsive, and lifeless like the Baal of whom Elijah made sport when he said to the priests of Baal: "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be waked." (1 Kings 18:27). The writer of 1 Kings remarks significantly "that there was neither *voice*, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." (V. 29b). Some indeed were said to give answers, but this was base on sly Satanic trickery and deception on the part of the heathen priests. As an example we have the mutterings of oracle at Delphi, and I refer you to the National Geographic Magazine, March 1944, p. 304, for an interesting explanation. Paul does not say here whether he is thinking of the statue which represented the god, but perhaps he is. The Corinthians followed the ancient religious customs (some no doubt without much (any) personal conviction; they repeated thoughtlessly what ancient and meaningless tradition and law required). How some worshipped their gods is to be gathered from Lucian's "Dialogue of the Gods" where a sea captain is presented as vowing hecatombs when in danger, but when out of it he offered a little stale incense and an asthmatic cock. They did not ask about the origins of these traditions.

They were led as they might be led (passive voice) by their misleading religion. In the spirit alone there is unity of heart. The heathen poets sometimes cursed, and then again blessed, the gods, all according to their feelings. Luther presents Paul as saying: "All your devotion was but a discordant worship. Each one—even the child in the cradle, the infant at the mother's breast—must find his own idol wherever he might turn." "These superstitions you followed as you were led; you flocked after them, praying and sacrificing, hanging your hearts upon dumb idols which could not teach and advise you, could not comfort, relieve, or help you. In return for your devotion you obtained only the privilege of being a blind, wretched, divided, miserable people..." Epistle Postil, Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, Leuker vol. 9, p. 200 "They possessed naught but a vain

dream and delusion of the human imagination; man devised and made his own idols.” St. Augustine tells us that the city of Rome alone had more than 400 gods.

Paul has described the natural state of man. The poet has said:

“Unser Wissen and Verstand
Ist mit Finsterniss umhUllet
Wo nicht deines Geistes Hand
Uns mit hellem Light erflUllet.”

We, too, need to compare our former state as natural men, lost and condemned sinners, with our present one. Before the Holy Spirit called us by the Gospel we were also blind, without faith, fear, love and trust in God, without the Savior, without spiritual life. Therefore the comparison must lead us to break forth with

Now thank we all our God with heart and hand and voices;
Thousand, thousand, thanks shall be, dearest Jesus, unto thee.

All this must impress upon us the need for consecrated mission work. Our church extension work must go on. Our foreign mission work continue, and although it has been hampered by the war, we must continue to prepare and store up resources in redoubled efforts for the time of peace. All heathenism, ancient and modern, worshipping a single god or many gods, fetishes, spirits, emperor—has this in common: It misleads men to eternal doom. There is only one power of God unto salvation—the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been entrusted with that power. Let us use it with greater zeal!

Paul continues in verse 3: “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” He had said that before their conversion by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel the Gentiles did not have the Spirit of God. They called others “lords,” namely, the dumb idols. The Romans used this word in addressing the Emperor to whom they ascribed divinity, similar to the Japanese today. When, for example, Polycarp of Smyrna, a disciple of St. John, was commanded by the authorities to say, “Lord is Caesar!,” he confessed instead, “Lord is Jesus” and paid for this confession with his earthly life.

Christians have no dumb God, they have a living, *speaking* God. He speaks through his Word and Sacraments. “We know that in the faith of Christ our works and lives are pleasing to God, and that he will hear and help when in distress and weakness *we cry* to him” (Luther). But he also causes *us to speak*. He leads men to call Jesus Lord. If anyone can honestly say with all that this saying implies, that “Lord is Jesus” he is in communion with the Spirit of God; he has the Spirit of God. Thomas had it and said: My Lord and my God! The name Lord is the divine title of Jesus. It means the same as Jehovah in the Old Testament—the eternal, almighty God of Grace (Exod. 3:13-15). Since the time of Moses this beautiful name of God has been used by the faithful. Jesus is the human name of the eternal Son of God who humbled himself and became a servant to redeem us. The word “Lord” (Kyrios) is the name used for the Hebrew Jehovah—in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament made several hundred years before Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians. The apostles knew this translation, used it, and moved by God’s Holy Spirit, consciously and deliberately used the same word in connection with Jesus. The word Lord means “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Heb. 13:8). It is the Savior-name of God. It includes all that Luther said in the explanation of the II Article: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, etc. If Jesus is not the Lord and not divine, then let’s have a motion to adjourn this convention now.

If Christ be not divine, then lay the Book away
And every blessed faith resign
That has so long been yours and mine
Through many a trying day.

Forget the place of bended knee
And dream no more of worlds to be.
If Christ is not divine,
Go seal again the tomb,
Take down the cross, redemption's sign,
Quench all the stars of hope that shine,
And let us turn and travel on
Across the night that knows no dawn.

The fact that we can confess Christ is a gift of the Spirit's grace. Where is our boasting? Let the Corinthians compare this blessed Spirit-wrought faith and confession with their former state as heathen when they called dumb idols "lords." Did they have spiritual gifts then?

Paul also brings the negative side. He tells us that the Holy Spirit never causes any man to say "Cursed is Jesus." Whoever says "Curse Jesus" does not speak in connection with, or through that Spirit. Luther: "...boasting of the Spirit will not answer the purpose. What you believe and teach concerning Christ must receive attention. You are either reproaching and cursing Jesus, or praising him and owning him your Lord. If your preaching and teaching fail to point to Christ, something else being offered, and you nevertheless boast of the Spirit, you are already judged; the Spirit you boast is not the Holy Spirit..." (ibid p. 206).

Paul does not mention the antagonistic Jews of his time, but we know from Acts that they did curse Jesus, as some still spit and curse at the name of Jesus. In Antioch (Acts 13:45) in Iconium (Acts 14:5) and at Corinth (Acts 18:6) Paul had this experience. (Whether Saul himself, the zealous Pharisee, did so we do not know, neither do we know whether the synagogue at Corinth used the blasphemous word "Curse Jesus.") Pagan priests may also have cursed and blasphemed Jesus since the Christians left their temples and altars. I believe that Luther completes the thought and hits the nail on the head when he said: (from the Wittenburg pulpit) (from the pulpit of the mother church of Lutheranism): "Paul refers rather to the Christian who, though boasting of the Holy Spirit, does not preach Christ as the ground of our salvation as he should, but, neglecting this truth, points the soul away to something else, pretending that this substitute is of the Holy Spirit and is something better and more essential than the common doctrine of the Gospel." Today we think of modernism and the social gospel. We are reminded of the words in the farewell address of a modernist preacher who said: "I have not pleaded with you to believe in God. I have not asked you to bring your sins to be forgiven. I have not asked you to believe in the realities of a spiritual world. I *have* asked you to believe in yourselves, in the divinity of men, in the greatness of the human soul." Of that kind Luther would have said: "All such teachers are in reality simply guilty of condemning, reproaching, and cursing Christ, though themselves bearing and boasting his name. To slight Christ's Word and ministry, and exalt in their stead other things as means for obtaining the Holy Spirit and eternal life, or at least as being equally-essential—what is this but scorning Christ and making him of no consequence?" (ibid. p. 207)

In the sermon quoted above, Luther mentions the pope who boasts that his kingdom represents the Christian Church. He says that the Roman church boasts of being led by the Spirit, yet it openly condemns and curses the doctrine of the Gospel, which assures us that to Christ we owe the undeserved forgiveness of our sins. The Roman church also condemns the use of the Sacrament according to Christ's command. Rome has not changed. Listen to this in modern illustration of Luther's statement: "She (Mary) is the breath of Christians, (the roof of liberty), (restored by her to the human race.) Better still, she is the cause of salvation, the mother of universal salvation... She is the common source of our happiness, of our renovation in a word of all blessings; the repairer and restorer of the human family, the redemption of mortals; through whom we have passed from death unto life, from darkness to wonderful light. She is the royal bridge uniting heaven and earth, the hope of Christians, and their only hope; our refuge and our strength." (p. 78, "Mary in Her Scapular Promise" by J. M. Haffert. Scapular Press, See Isle City, N.J. \$2.50.)

However, note further how Paul connects the Spirit and Jesus, Jesus and the Spirit. They are by no means identical, as the "new Sunday School literature for use in the entire Methodist Church" makes them

appear, set forth in Abingdon Quarterly (Oct.-Dec., 1941): “After the Ascension the disciples found that what Jesus had told them and promised them really did come true. When they were doing the work of the Kingdom, they felt the presence of God with them and within them as the deepest reality of their experience. They referred to the presence of God as ‘being in the Spirit,’ the ‘Spirit of Jesus,’ or most commonly, The Holy Spirit! Later, theologians, anxious to have a neat and orderly explanation for everything, developed the doctrine of the ‘Trinity’...” (Quote from the Christian Beacon, Feb. 26, 1942). The Spirit of Jesus and Jesus are by no means the same. Paul knew the words of Jesus, John 16:13-15...when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. He therefore also wrote Romans 8:15—“ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father,” and Philippians 2:10,11. Paul thus connects the Spirit with Jesus and the Father, but he does not identify them. If anyone confesses Jesus as the Lord, he honors the Father. (John 5:23)

How can Christians then fraternize with Jews today,—a Baptist church paper, the Watchman-Examiner protests against the participation of Protestant ministers in the dedication of a Hebrew synagogue at Hebron, Connecticut. An Episcopal minister was one of the main speakers and praised the event as a sign “of closer relations existing between religious groups today.”

The Examiner says: How can any of the followers of Jesus give their money to perpetuate a blind unbelief that denies Him His claims. After all, we must be sincere even when we would be kind.”

The religion of the Lodge also is inconsistent with true spirit-wrought confession of Jesus as the Lord, together with all that it implies, and this is one of the questions which the Lutheran Church in America must face squarely when it talks “union now.”

The Corinthians need no pope to test the Spirits, as John says: (1 John 4:6) “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” Without the grace of the Holy Spirit, no man can confess Jesus as Lord. But Paul goes farther and says: *Without the Spirit no man has spiritual gifts.* Spirit-called, (and gathered), enlightened Christians have true spiritual gifts. Should the Corinthians not be thankful for their rebirth and for these wonderful spiritual gifts?

The Corinthians are now ready for the subject. Again Paul begins with *now*. (V. 4-6) It is the gift of grace that they are able to confess Jesus the Lord. But there are other gifts—all favors bestowed without merit or worthiness. Fathers give their children food, clothing, and shelter, but they also give them special gifts on birthdays and at Christmas.

There are distributions of gifts. Each Christian has his own gift or gifts. They are not all given to one, or to a few, nor are they all present at all times, but the Spirit gives them “as he will” and as the church needs them to meet any emergency. Similarly we give different kinds of gifts to different kinds of people according to the times, ages, sexes, temperaments, needs or customs. Paul’s statement is as true today as it was then—there are distributions. In the words of Jesus quoted in my introduction (Mark 16:17,18) “And these signs shall follow *them that believe*. In my name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues, etc.” Jesus does not speak of the Eleven only, but of believers in general. He does not say—signs shall follow *you*, my Apostles—but he says: they shall follow *them that believe*.” He does not limit in regard to persons or time. The Bible does not anywhere teach that the special gifts of grace were confined to the early church. Read Luther in the Church postil (St. Louis ed. XI 988f.) Miller, in his book “China Inside Out” tells the story of a missionary in China who is authority for the existence of demon possession and the driving out of the demon by a Christian pastor. Other similar instances are on record. (CTM, August 1933, p. 593)

The Apostle uses three different names for these gifts in verses 4-6, namely, gifts, services, energies, or as our Bible version translates—gifts, administrations, operations. I do not believe that these are three rigid classifications, but names depending on the point of view. The same Holy Spirit gives all of them without merit, but the whole Trinity shares in the Spirit’s work, the persons being mentioned in inverse order” Spirit, Lord, God (as in Eph. 4:4-6).

There are distributions of *services*. A variety of gifts would presuppose a variety of services. No Christian lives to himself. The Christian life is a life of service, but not all can serve in the same capacity (cp. Luther sermon p. 216). Thus Paul's work as the Apostle to the Gentiles was a service. (Rom. 11:13). Paul gives a partial list of services in Ephesians 4:11, where he mentions the services of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. It is all service. We are actually more than servants, we are *bondsmen* of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he has bought us with his holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death that we should be his own. We are his slaves or bondsmen, as the Greek has it, in a blessed slavery; owned in body and soul by our Lord and King, his word and will being supreme for us. It is to be obeyed without question. We are to serve the Lord with gifts he himself imparts through his Holy Spirit. The *same Lord*, says Paul, is here to distribute his talents. Remember the parable of the talents. Do not neglect the gift which is in you. The Lord himself, in his humiliation, is the best example of service. He says: "...the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many," (Mt. 20:28).

Paul also speaks of these gifts as operations, energies, workings, (V. 6). The German says "Kraftbetätigung," the effect of a thing done. In order that Christian service might be fruitful, it must have a working power. Now God, the Creator, is also the energizer of all things *in every way* (neuter) not only in the Church but also in the *universe*. Robertson reports Dr. W. R. Whitney, a world figure in science, as declaring: "I say that the magnet floats in space by the will of God."

In sum, the spiritual gifts are gifts of grace—note their source. They are ministrations or services—note their purpose. They are operations, power—workings—note their effect. We note that the very word Paul uses for these gifts comes from a Greek word (*χαρίζω*) meaning to bestow or receive a favor without merit (cf. Rom. 1:11). He points to the unity of these gifts and traces them to the Triune God.

The invisible Holy Spirit reveals his presence by these gifts (V. 7). Paul now proceeds to connect the gifts with the persons. Each Christian receives (verb is present passive) but each one receives for the good of *all*. Here he makes the statement. Later on, in verse 12, he will show *how* each one benefits *all* with his gift or gifts. We live in a world of social relations; God made man for fellowship; the individual's gifts are to profit the Christian community and human society. (Paul's principles are stated in 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23,33). That makes us responsible stewards, carriers and bearers of these gifts, bestowed not for personal gain or glory, and never intended to cause discouragement, strife, sinful rivalry, envy or disorder, but they are for the upbuilding of the church.

The good which the Christian does with his gifts, both that which is done in the open and that which is done in secret, profits the whole Christian community. Take prayer for example. When Joshua fought against-Amalek, Moses climbed to a hill-top. When Moses lifted up his arms in prayer Israel was victorious (Exod. 17:10f). On the other hand, it is also true that the sins the Christian commits harm not only himself but more or less the whole Christian community.

There are misconceptions of Christian service current today. Many are those who are anxious and troubled about what they call church-work. The activities of some "to make money for the kingdom," as they say, would make Martha blush, and would surely shock Mary. The hustle and bustle of the social-gospellers to make the community and the world a better and more comfortable place are examples of misconceptions of real Christian service. "Preach the Gospel," if that command is kept in mind there will be less going off at a tangent and more Christ-centered service with spiritual gifts.

Paul says "to each one *is* given." That reminds us of remarks one hears occasionally to the effect that we have lost the Holy Spirit in our Lutheran churches *today*. We hear no loud hallelujahs from individuals during the sermon, there is no speaking with tongues, there are no spectacular miracles; our worship is formal. On the other hand, there are religious groups today which claim to have some of the more spectacular gifts in a rich measure. Some of them say that we are not converted. Examples of such sects are Irvingites (Quakers and Mormons), Pentecostals; and Catholics also lay claim to miracles. (1826 a revival group in Pomerania spoke in tongues for days and testified of Calvary, its blood, future glory and began to curse and blaspheme; another instance at Rixdorf when Pentecostals spoke. It made the impression of demons speaking.) We make no such claims and we doubt whether others have such powers from the Spirit. We have many beautiful spiritual gifts in

our church and the highest—wisdom and knowledge, a faith which confesses Jesus the Lord in the real sense of that confession, any many others in rich measure. Even the fruits of gifts possessed by Christians in bygone ages are preserved for us. We have the beautiful prayers called collects, the common service, hundreds of hymns, beautiful music, the catechism of Luther, great confessions like the Creeds, and our own Lutheran confessions. We are the beneficiaries of the glorious gifts of our fathers.

The Holy Spirit is present in our churches with his Word and Sacraments. Some special signs are not necessary today. If they were, they would be done, and to an extent, they are done every day when Christians pray and God answers. It is possible that the Holy Spirit does not send some of these gifts today in order to prevent Satan, who likes to pose as an angel of light, from deceiving and tricking men, especially as he notices the end drawing nigh. Miraculous gifts used for self-glory are from the devil, (Acts 8:18) signs followed the pure Gospel; if they are in the foreground of the preacher's activity, he is evidently a false prophet. They accompany, they do not lead (Mt. 16:7). Certainly, if such signs are used to spread false teaching, they are not of God (W. Arndt CTM, Oct. 1930, 735). The question of Paul: Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you came to faith, can be countered by the question, Have you the fruits of the Spirit? The Spirit still gives to each his gift.

Paul is now ready to mention some of the gifts of grace which appeared at Corinth and by which the Spirit revealed himself, (Text 8-10). It makes a little difference how we group them or whether we do so at all. However, the first two—word of wisdom and word of knowledge—clearly belong together as having to do with thought, the next three seem to be related. They have to do with deeds; the third group prophecy, discerning of spirits, kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, has to do with speech. We may prefer another division, also logical: The first group involves the mind (2 gifts—wisdom and knowledge). The second (5 gifts) involves faith, the third group (2 gifts) involves the tongue. We are ready now to take up the various gifts.

To discuss wisdom from the viewpoint of philosophy or psychology would take us too far afield and would hardly serve our purpose. Besides, it is our duty to compare Scripture with Scripture. This is a biblical principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. Therefore I prefer at this point to follow Lenski in his "Interpretation of First Corinthians." He states that Paul clearly differentiates this divine God-given wisdom from mere human wisdom. In 1:20 Paul writes: "Where is the wise?...Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" In 2:5, and 6 and 7 he writes again: "...Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, but we speak...the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." In 2:13, he continues this thought: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual with spiritual." In 3:19, and in 2 Corinthians 1:12, he speaks in the same way. But let the quotations be enough. We may explain spirit-wrought wisdom as *all the gracious thoughts of God toward us, which he revealed in and through Jesus Christ for our salvation*—that is, Gospel wisdom or all that is included in the biblical expression—*Name of God*. But Paul does not speak of the gift of wisdom alone, but of the word of wisdom—that is the gift to express such Gospel wisdom in human language for the benefit of others. Paul, Appollos, Agrilla, and Pricilla had this gift. Our Dr. M. Luther had it. We think especially of his sermons with their timely applications.

The gift of the word of knowledge we may take to be the ability to unfold and explain the teachings of Scripture in their relation to one another. The apostles were thus blessed. In the Christian church of the second century, Irenaeus (ca. 200) who was opposed to all philosophical speculation in matters of religion, was, in my opinion, thus gifted. Luther also possessed this gift in great measure. Surely his catechisms are examples.

(V. 9 and 10a). Paul is speaking of gifts which are not common to all. "To another faith" is given. All Christians have saving faith, that is, faith in Christ which makes it possible for the Christian to say: "I believe that Jesus Christ...is my Lord." Paul is not speaking of that faith here, although it too is a gift. We call that faith "justifying faith" which brings forgiveness of sins. But Paul here speaks of a particular faith—a power of the Spirit in operation in the church "whereby certain ones can effect great and glorious things by reason of their remarkable and confident courage" (Luther loc. cit.). Paul writes of it in 1 Cor. 13:2: "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains." (cp. Mt. 17:20; 21:21). "To another (is given) gifts of healings by the same Spirit." Each healing act is a gift in itself. It is possible that the one so gifted received some indication from the Holy Spirit

that he was to heal. Paul evidently does not imply that the gift was permanent in the one so gifted, making it possible for him to apply it at will in all cases of sickness, but on the other hand, the person gifted to heal the sick might receive the gift repeatedly. St. Luke was perhaps so gifted. These healings were performed *in the same Spirit*, that is, in connection with the Spirit. The manner of healing is not mentioned.

(V. 10). Next come the *workings of miracles* or the *workings of powers*, that is, workings brought about by powers. The healings required divine power also, but the miracles were not always healings. Compare the miracles of Moses or Elijah, Elisha, in the Old Testament, and the instance of Paul afflicting the Jewish sorcerer and false prophet Bar-Jesus with blindness (Acts 13) or his driving out of the demon from a slave girl at Philippi. Remember that Luke writes that Paul facing Bar-Jesus was “filled with the Holy Ghost” and set his eyes upon him. Workings of miracles were done *in the one Holy Spirit, that is, in connection with him*.

Mentioned next is the gift of prophecy. This word comes from a Greek word meaning “to speak forth.” In Mt. 26:28, “Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee,” and its parallel passages, Mark 14:65, and Luke 22:64; it means to reveal hidden things. It was not always a prediction of the future, however, but a preaching with power (14:3,24,30), a speaking forth of the oracles of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a divinely guided application of God’s law to the needs of the times. The prophet had “special insight into the revealed truths and the faculty of making them and their consequences known to others” (International Critical Commentary). Sampey, quoted by Yates in his book, “Preaching from the Prophets,” p. 6, says: “Their mental processes were stimulated and guided by the Spirit, who clothed them with power. Imagination, memory, and reason were no doubt heightened, as well as intuition and spiritual insight. The Spirit of God chose proper men for his purpose, and then turned to account all their powers. The mind of the prophet perhaps varied from the extreme of trance and ecstasy all the way to a quiet thoughtfulness over which the Holy Spirit presided.” Prof. August Pieper wrote as follows in the *Quartalschrift* of April, 1942, p. 86: “So traten auch damals (in the early Christian church) in öffentlicher Versammlung einzelne, von Stellen des Alten Testaments so ergriffen, auf, dass sie dieselben nicht nur zitierten, sondern auch, je nach dem besondern Fall, in überschwänglich freudigen oder warnenden Worten aussprachen.” Luther says: “The gift of prophecy is the ability rightly to interpret and explain the Scriptures,” (*loco cit*) and “it includes, further the ability to use the Scriptures for admonition and reproof, for imparting strength and comfort...”

Prophecy must be in harmony with God’s revelation. “The Spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets” (1 Cor. 14:21). The prophet is there to serve. He is one of the members of Christ’s church. Therefore the congregation received also another gift—complementary to the gift of prophecy—namely, the *disarming or testing of the spirits*. This is the ability to expose false prophets regardless of their orthodox-sounding language. Thus the congregation would be protected against lying spirits. St. John gives a standard for such testing in 1 John 4:1ff.

This brings to mind the duty of God’s people to judge all doctrine on the basis of God’s word. They are to try the spirits, to beware of false prophets. This right and duty belongs to every Christian. “Prove all things, writes Paul, (1 Thess. 5:21), “hold fast that which is good.” The pope denies this right to Christians by the bull *Unam Sanctum* (A.D. 1302). Luther restored this right to judge all doctrine by the standard (on the basis) of Scripture. Not reason, not feelings, not private ideas, but Scripture is the testing ground of the spirits. At Worms, Luther said: “My conscience is bound in God’s Word.” The Formula of Concord says: “The holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all teachings (dogmas) shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong” (Triglott, p. 779). But Christians have the right to go directly to Scripture and judge for themselves. The Corinthians had no Pope. Each one had the right and the duty of private judgment, that is, he was authorized to go to the Scripture directly and search it to discern the spirits. Some were especially gifted for this discerning of the spirits. Let all Christians exercise this privilege and duty to judge all preaching. Let no one say: “I bring my reason into captivity to the obedience of the Church.” Every Christian must himself be concerned before God, about what he believes. (cf CTM, April, May, 1944).

To another divers kinds of tongues. This is a gift, the value of which the Corinthians overestimated because it was sensational. Paul, by no means considered it useless or valueless. How could he? Was it not a

spiritual gift? Paul speaks of kinds of tongues given to one person, so we must not think of one as speaking in this tongue, another in that. No, the person so gifted spoke in kinds of tongues. Certainly also we must not think that once he spoke in a supernatural, heavenly, angelic tongue and then again in natural human tongues. The utterances were not always in the same language, nor did they always have the same sense, nor were they always in the same form. According to 1 Corinthians 14:14-17, some were prayers, some psalms, some blessings.

I cannot possibly state the meaning of this gift better or more briefly than A. T. Robertson has in "Word Pictures in the New Testament," p. 170, vol. IV. He here compares Scripture with Scripture, drawing upon Paul's own words on tongues in 1 Corinthians 14. However, he also refers to the tongues at Pentecost as mentioned in St. Luke in The Acts. This is proper since the promise of speaking with new tongues, a promise made by Our Lord and recorded in Mark 16:18, was first fulfilled at Pentecost in Jerusalem, and after that, on occasions mentioned in Acts. Luke explains what tongues are and Paul's purpose in our chapter and in 1 Corinthians 14 is to correct the misinformed Corinthians. He, of course, assumed that they knew what tongues were. What were they? Robertson says: "...The gift was essentially an ecstatic utterance of highly wrought emotion that edified the speaker (14:4) and was intelligible to God (14:2; 28)." It was not always true that the speaker in tongues could make clear what he had said to those who did not know the tongue (14:3). It was not mere gibberish or jargon like the modern "tongues," but *in a real language* that could be understood by one familiar with that tongue as was seen on the great Day of Pentecost when people who spoke different languages were present. In Corinth...it required an interpreter to explain the tongue to those who knew it not. Hence Paul placed this gift lowest of all."

With this gift God gave a partner gift—the interpretation of tongues. Sometimes these two gifts were to be found in the same person, but not always. In case no one was present who understood the tongue, an interpreter was necessary in order that the whole congregation might profit. For this gift the speaker of tongues ought to pray. (1 Cor. 14:13).

Although this particular gift of tongues has disappeared—yet we might say a few words about the use of foreign languages. There is no danger that our church will use Latin in its services, but provision should be made for the younger generations. Even now some are handicapped because they learned the catechism in German or the Scandinavian languages only. English will (apparently) be the language of the future in our country. Our children must have the opportunity to learn their catechism and bible history in the language of the country and to have services in that language. We dare not become narrow on this question. Language is only a vehicle (for the preaching of the Gospel). We can be saved in English, or German, or any other language. On the other hand, we dare not as a Lutheran Synod give up the training of men in at least one living foreign language. Dr. E. Tappert, writing in the "Lutheran," of Feb. 16, 1944, on "Language and Church Progress" has some interesting things to say. In speaking of the efforts made by other denominations to win immigrants of Lutheran background for their faith, he says: "Before the depression set in the Presbyterian church used to spend the enormous sum of \$1,105,000 on linguistic (language) work alone... The Congregationalists are working with great success among our Lutherans from Russia. They maintain a seminary for the training of German pastors for them at Yankton, South Dakota, and have succeeded in building up a synod of 94 pastors serving synodical congregations and 26 pastors serving elsewhere. These pastors are receiving Lutheran training at the seminary; they use Luther's Catechism in their churches, but they call themselves German Congregational churches, and have no connection with the Lutheran Church...Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, all are busy working in our Lutheran field."

There will no doubt be waves of immigration from Lutheran countries of Europe after the war, to Canada and South America. The aforementioned article closes with the words of Dr. Luther on language and the church, and it may be well to hear them again: "I do not agree with those who give themselves entirely to one language and despise others; for I would like to train young people who could be useful to Christ in strange lands, able to talk to the people so that we may escape what happened to the Waldensians in Bohemia, who have tied up their faith with their language in such a way that they cannot explain it or talk to anybody except he learn their language. This is not the way the Holy Spirit acted in the beginning. He did not wait until all the

world would come to Jerusalem and learn the Hebrew language, but gave all kinds of tongues to the office of the ministry, so that the apostles could speak to the people wherever they went. I would rather follow this example, and it is entirely proper to expect the young to practice in many languages; who knows how God will use them sometime.”

The speaker is to edify the congregation, says Paul, speaking on this topic in 1 Corinthians 14. This applies also to choirs or soloists. If their words are not understandable the singing is of no value to the congregation.

Finally, we thank God for having given to his church men who are well equipped in the original Hebrew and Greek of the Scriptures, able to interpret these tongues, and we pray that he might continue to send such gifts to men.

You have heard the gifts mentioned. All these one and the same Spirit works. (V. 11). He empowers, for he has the power. But he also has a free will. No one can force him to give them and certainly no one can buy them as Simon, the Sorcerer, tried to buy them from Peter and John (in Acts 8) because they belong to the Holy Spirit. Thank God it is so. He gives them and parcels them out separately as a Father does at Christmas time to his children, according to his will. Throughout he is fair, considering each person separately. One may pray for gifts, as children ask their fathers, for oneself and for others, remembering to pray not my will but thine be done, and in Jesus name. So John and Peter prayed that the Samaritans might receive spiritual gifts (Acts 8).

The gifts are many and varied but there is a unity of purpose in them. They are for the benefit of the whole church. The variety in unity is illustrated by Paul in the figure of the body. This picture he carries out til the end of the chapter. He introduces the picture in verse 12. The inscription on our coins, *E pluribus unum*, of many one, sums up the picture. This we have in the human body. Consider yours in all its parts. Think of the “astonishingly exact fitness of all its parts for the duties they are required to fulfill.” No telegraphic system is so exact and delicate as the brain, and nervous system, no mechanical pump so efficient as the heart, no chemical apparatus so efficient as healthy digestive system. Consider the wonderful skeleton or bone structure alone—there are over 200 bones. A machine will not repair itself even if it lies til doomsday, broken bones will under proper conditions knit themselves together. Any good book on anatomy or physiology will do wonders in opening our eyes to the beauty of God’s words on the sixth day of creation—Let us make man. Physiology teaches us how the parts operate and cooperate. It is the case of one body with many members, of many members as one body. This latter case he wants to stress. So, says Paul, is Christ. Sometimes Paul speaks of Christ as the head of the church, his body. Here he does not use quite the same picture. In Gal. 3:28, he writes: “Ye are all *one man* in Christ Jesus.” Similarly here he says: “The body is of many parts, but the many make one. So also is Christ. Here Christ and the church are combined as one. Let us call it the ‘Christ-body.’”

A recent current misapplication of this picture of Paul should be noted here. Some Protestant writers have made the misapplication in speaking about Protestant unity. They apply the picture used by Paul here in 1 Corinthians 12 to the various church denominations, Reformed, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc. The slogan of such unionists is “unity in diversity.” A Dr. H. M. Woods, in writing on Protestant unity falsely, said: Protestant unity is clearly taught in Holy Scripture and is a part of that precious ‘liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free’ (Gal. 5:1). This liberty consists of *oneness in essentials* and a reasonable latitude in one-essentials. St. Paul illustrates this by the human body, which has many members differing from the other and each having its own special function, as the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot; yet all sympathizing and cooperating, and together constituting one living organism. Variety of members, so far from hindering the action of the body, really helps it, and makes it more useful. So says the Apostle; it is with the church and its members. God in His wisdom has bestowed on different *groups* of men various gifts of thought, character, education, etc. These various gifts he allows to have play within reasonable limits so *that each denomination contributes something which others do not possess*, and the sum total brings to all variety and enrichment of Christian faith and service. Variety in the branches of the Church no more militates against true

spiritual unity than variety in the members of the human body militates against the oneness and efficiency of that body. (CTM, Oct. 1942, p. 785.)^{*} (See footnote)

However, the illustration which Dr. Woods quotes from 1 Corinthians 12 does not apply to the false unity of church denominations (differing in doctrines and practice) which he defends, but to the true, invisible Christian Church, the true communion of saints and to the different forms of Christian service rendered by its members to the whole. The glory of our Lutheran church does not consist in “unity in diversity” but in unity of faith and practice as Paul says (1 Cor. 1:10): “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be *perfectly* joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” How does Dr. E. Stanley Jones explain this?

Corinth was a commercial center and a cosmopolitan city. There were people of various nations, races, classes, slaves and free men, women, children, rich and poor, there. The congregation showed some of these elements. Yet *all* members, Jews and non-Jews, were baptized into one body. All became members of the body, Christ, by baptism. The spirit of God is at work in holy baptism. Baptism is a means of grace. We are born again of water and the spirit. The Spirit is the one who really baptizes us into the one body which Paul has called Christ.

Of this Spirit we were all made to drink. This is, of course, a figure of speech. At the Feast of Booths, Jesus stood in the temple and called (John 7:37 and 39a) “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink”...But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive (39a). Thus all who are baptized by the Spirit also drink of him, that is, they have spiritual life (John 4:14) and enjoy the spiritual fellowship of the church. Note the words *all—one*. Here is variety, but unity. Luther’s words on this point in the Large Catechism are masterful. He says: “I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms.” “I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it...”

V. 14 explains itself. Paul is speaking of the human body, but he is using that as a picture of the “Christ-body” with its many members incorporated into it by the Holy Spirit.

He now takes up various members of the body and introduces them as speakers. Here in verse 15 the foot speaks. Listen. It is foolishly saying: I am not a hand, but I want to be a hand; but because I’m not a hand, I’m not a part of the body. Surely, says Paul, that dissatisfied grumbling does not make the foot less a part of the body. It remains a foot and a part of the body in spite of all. Here we have the voice of an inferiority complex. A member dejectedly looks upon itself as no member because it feels inferior. Note how the less important members are made to grumble and complain. St. Chrysostom said that the foot envied the hand, rather than the eye or ear, because we do not as a rule envy those who are very much higher than we are, but those who stand just a little higher.

(V. 16). Another member, ear, is introduced as speaking in the same way as the foot did. This strengthens Paul’s argument. The body needs the foot for walking, the hand for taking hold, the eye for seeing and the ear for hearing. Their feeling of inferiority does not make them less a part of the body. They are in spite of all wishing or envy still parts of it. The foot and the ear should learn to appreciate their position as useful parts of the whole body. So members of the church should learn to appreciate their particular gifts and thank the God of grace that they are still members. Certainly the preacher and the listener are not exercising the same office and gift, yet the listener serves the “man in Christ” by his listening and the pastor by his preaching. The listener hears in obedience to Him who commands us to hear the Word; the pastor preaches in obedience to him who says, “Feed my lambs, my sheep; preach the word in season and out of season.” “When I baptize,

^{*}Dr. E. Stanley Jones, a Methodist, who recently spoke in Minneapolis, also said in an article in the Christian Century of Dec. 16, 1942: “No church has the whole truth. What we, as denominations, hold are varying approximations to Christ, who is the Truth beyond us all. We need, therefore, to pool denominational emphases so that the sum total may be a closer approximation to Him who is the Truth.”

administer the Sacrament or absolve, and you accept my ministrations,” said Luther to his congregation, “We are both engaged in the service of the same Lord and in harmony execute his command. You and I, however, so far as office and gifts are considered, may be of different capacities.”

(V. 17). If the whole body were just one great eye rolling about, think of the grotesque picture that body would present. Suppose all members wanted to become an eye and the wish were granted, where would the hearing be? Or if all members wished to become ears, where would the nose and the sense of smell stay? It’s all absurd and ridiculous, but the grass is always greener in the other fellow’s yard.

(V. 18). God, the all-wise creator, arranged the body with its members purposely and wisely. He formed every organ to fit its function. Every bone, muscle, nerve, tissue, and organ is made of the right kind of material; it is of proper form and size; it is in the correct place to serve the purpose for which it was designed. We cannot see with our ears, smell with our eyes, walk with our nose, think with our lungs. We must admit the wisdom of God and exclaim with David that “we are fearfully and wonderfully made.” So God willed it. Who dares challenge his will? Shall the clay say to the potter: Why have you made me so? Remember Paul is using the body as a picture of the Christ-body—the Church.

Paul brings (another) a fifth condition—a fifth “if” in verse 19: “And if they were all one member, where were the body?” The answer to Paul’s question is naturally “no where.” There wouldn’t be any fitly-joined, well-arranged, inter-related, inter-dependent body. So also with the Christ-body. Not every member of the Christ-body can have the same office, position, gifts, and powers. But all members alike are dear to Christ. That is the beauty of the Holy Spirit’s work and distribution of gifts. Therefore let no member be discouraged and say “I have no great gifts, and so I am in doubt whether I am a member of Christ’s church.” Let each be satisfied with his place and gifts and let each use them to the full. What a power for good the church could be in the world if all cooperated with their gifts! As it is, some must always compensate for others, because some refuse to do their full duty. It is thus with giving, yes, with all gifts and services. One can saw a plank better, using both hands, but best of all with both hands and knee. One can drive a car or pilot a plane best when all senses and members work together. Feelings of inferiority, false humility, jealousy and selfish pride have no place in the Christ-body—the Church.

(V. 20). Here is Paul’s whole argument in a nutshell. The holy Christian church is a communion of saints, not so many hermits, not even a casual hermit’s gathering on market day. The Lord has made it an intimate union of hearts. If it were not for the fact that the big printing presses of the Chicago Tribune are dead machines, we might compare the church with such a press and its many related and meshing gears and parts which all have their own function. In the Northwestern Lutheran of April 22, 1943, Prof. John Meyer asks: What might be the Lord’s purpose in doing this? Are there any advantages to be gained by grouping Christians in a body? He answers: Many indeed. It is a common saying that in unity there is strength. We are all familiar with the parable of a bunch of twigs which a father asked his sons to break. When they failed, he opened the bunch and with the greatest of ease broke each twig separately.—We certainly need strength to stand against the assaults of our old evil foe, of the world, and of our own sinful flesh. To increase the strength of the Christians, the Holy Ghost joined them in the communion of saints. Take another illustration. Try to keep an isolated coal burning. Practically impossible. Put several coals together, even only two, and one will help to keep the other aglow—our faith is to shine as a light in the dark world; our love is to bring cheerful warmth into a cold world. United, our faith will shine brighter, our love will glow warmer. One Christian’s faith and love will help to strengthen the others. We see the importance of the communion of saints.

Thus far Paul has regarded the lesser organs which were dissatisfied because they were not greater. *Now* he takes up the superior, who look down on the inferior ones in proud superiority. (V. 21) The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of the hand, and still be truthful and sensible; neither can the head say so to the feet. On the contrary, the eye needs the hand very much; the head needs service of the feet. Things are not always what they seem. The heart is not visible, but don’t try to get along without yours! It’s hundred thousand beats per day, its 40 million per year, are necessary. Let no brain despise it. Notice also Paul’s combinations in this verse “eye-hand” and “head-foot.” We still say “The hand is quicker than the eye,” and “from head to foot.” So the humblest worker in the church is as necessary to Christ and as dear to Him as the highest. Moses, the leader,

needs Aaron, the speaker. Dorcas, with her needle and thread, was as dear to Christ as was Simon Peter. Luther appreciated his.

The eye and the head are very important members, but they should not despise the hand or the foot. The experienced leaders of a congregation should not despise those other members who may be compared with hand and foot—the working classes, the laborers, the average Christian who is very necessary for the good, life, and support of a congregation's work. The keeper of a lighthouse on a rock-bound coast is less impressive in his raincoat than the sea-captain in navy blue and brass buttons, but he is not at all unimportant for commerce. The section-hand, the switchman, or the engineer is not so refined looking in blue denim overalls, but he is highly important, and the president of the railroad in his \$100 wool worsted, behind a mahogany desk, cannot afford to despise him. The Postmaster-general needs his mail carriers. Every form of gift and service has its use. What a happy family if all members of the church worked together heart and soul for the common good! Instead, we sometimes find rivalry based upon the fancy that one is superior to another. A narrow provincial spirit prevails at times that expresses itself in bragging terms of self-importance. We find it in individual congregations, but pastors of a conference or district are also in danger of vaunting themselves over other districts or conferences. Very often those who brag about their superiority must do so as a sort of "defense mechanism" to cover up inferior qualities. Also, isn't it true that at times we ride out little hobby horses to the exclusion or the neglect of other activities more needful, while we ought to be riding on in majesty with the King of Kings? Isn't it true that we sometimes act like little barons of the middle ages in their castles on the hilltops, little kings of our own domain, refusing to cooperate with others for the good of the kingdom at large?

In the next three verses, 22-24, Paul speaks of three kinds of members: (1) the seemingly feeble, (2) those we think less honorable and (3) our uncomely members. Says Paul, there are parts which seem to be feeble, but remember things are not always what they seem. Men sometimes err. The pituitary gland is a small organ (only about 7 grains) projecting from the base of the brain. It seems evident that this gland and the thyroid have an interaction in their influence on nourishment and growth. Experimental removal of this gland results in serious disease (cachexia) and death. Seemingly feeble but a vital organ! Christians with knowledge, judgment, and experience should not in pride despise others who are seemingly feeble—the simple humble Christian. Paul also mentions those parts which we think less honorable. But do we despise them, get rid of them? No, indeed. We give them more honor. We clothe them. (to clothe). Socialites look upon some workers, upon the coal-miner or the laundress, as less honorable than they are. They do not invite these people to their table or their debuts, but the thinking of the socialite does not make the coal-miner or the laundress unworthy of honor and consideration. They are necessary. This is the point here—the importance and necessity of those members of the body which we have come to think of as less honorable. Paul gives us no hint as to which members of the congregation he means, but there are members whom we do not address as "Reverend Sir" or "Your honor" or Dr. and still these humble workers are very necessary.

The uncomely members, says Paul, have more abundant comeliness. They are the members which lack decency by nature. We hide these. Even most of the uncivilized people wear a grass skirt or a loin cloth. After the fall Adam and Eve made an apron of fig leaves to hide these parts. They have their own abundant decency which, as Lenski, p. 539, says, consists "in the natural feeling of shame, in the natural modesty, which they inspire." This, however, does not mean that they are evil; they were there when God saw everything that he had made—and behold, it was very good. And they serve a need.

The comely parts need no hiding, no covering, no decoration. We do not hide the eyes.

(V. 24b). It was God who blended (tempered) the body. Remember that. He is the giver in every case. He gives to men the natural sense of propriety and decency.

God is the one who did the blending. He wants no breaks or disunion. Animals have cunning and violence and use it to feed themselves and to exist. They often devour other animals. The Church is no forest or jungle of wild beasts biting and tearing one another. On the contrary, there should be care for one another, yes, an anxious care for fellow Christians. So well did God blend the body that if one member suffers, all suffer with it. The Greek philosopher, Plato, wrote in Republic V, 462, that when one's finger is hurt, one does not say, "My finger is in pain," but "I have a pain in my finger." You have heard people say: If one has trouble with the

feet, the whole body aches. Sympathy is one of the qualities of Christians. If one part of the body is healed the others feel better also. The good of one is the good of all, the suffering of one is the suffering of all. That is true Christian sympathy.

We Christians are to share one another's joys and burdens. This is the law of the Lord: Bear ye one another's burdens. (Gal. 6:2). Sometimes this requires but a word of comfort. Never should a Christian need to feel lonely in sorrow, life, or death. Others pray with him and for him. Every gift, every power, every note of peace in our lives is to be a quiet contribution to the lives of others.

Here again Christ is our example. He did not keep his divine peace and joy to himself as a booty he would not share (Phil. 2:6) but took upon himself the form of man. He entered into communion with men, bearing our griefs, sorrows and sins. He assumed our burdens and did not try to evade.

So we are to help bear one another's burdens, the needs of the body, the burdens of sorrow and discouragement, of doubt and temptation, of despair and little faith.

The Holy Spirit has placed us into the Christian community, a community of the strong and the weak, the fallen and the faint; bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.

The early Christian congregation, after Pentecost, was of one heart and one soul. Joy and sorrow were shared; every Christian congregation ought to be so. Our own bodily organs are sympathetic one with another, how sad if the members of the Christ-body are not! Christians should not defeat God's purpose of careful blending by despising their fellow Christians. We dare not be indifferent.

(V. 28). The Christians of Corinth are Christ's body, but not, of course, to the exclusion of other Christians of other congregations elsewhere. The Christ-body includes all true Christians everywhere. Paul uses the word "church" in verse 28, and probably things of the Christians at Ephesus, Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi, Salonicki, Colasse, etc. As each Corinthian Christian is a member of Christ, so also are all Christians. Each should have as his aim to work together in peace and harmony in the unity of the faith.

Paul now mentions certain offices, services and power deeds. He says that God has for himself placed some as apostles, some prophets, some teachers. All of these men do not stand above the church, but they are a part of it. God placed or set some, says Paul. That means he equipped some to be apostles, etc. The word "set" is to be understood in the sense in which the same Greek word which Paul used here appears in John 10:11—the Good Shepherd chapter—where Jesus says: "I give my life." So Paul writes in Ephesians 4:11, a passage similar to ours "God gave." God never set up offices of rank in the church. Our passage does not say that God established ranks of officers. No new Testament passage says that God established a hierarchy of rank, pope, bishops, priests, deacons. The church does need gifted men. Paul here speaks of activities and gifts, not commandeering or ruling powers. When he mentions apostles, prophets and teachers, he uses titles, to be sure, but if we look closer we will see that these men are occupied especially with the Word and Sacraments—the means of grace. That is their first function. In the apostles all gifts were originally combined, but of necessity (cp. Acts VI - the seven deacons) or for the greater benefit of the whole body of Christ God as and when he wished wisely distributed these gifts. A passage like 1 Timotny 3:1f seems to indicate a uniting of these separate functions in one person.

The apostles were called and chosen directly by Jesus himself (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:24 - Matthias; Acts 9 - Paul) They had a universal call and possessed all gifts in some measure. Their preaching was inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus was God's Word and the source and standard of all true doctrine. The church has its origin through them. Of prophets we have spoken before. The teachers were not only teachers of children but teachers of the whole congregation, especially, of course, of the catechumens. This teaching ability is not confined to a certain class. At the time of Paul and in the age following, upon the death of the apostles, (Dedache 13:13; 15:1) prophets, and teachers were the real leaders in things spiritual. The prophets offered free prayer at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Robertson (Word Pictures, p. 174) says it is a calamity when the preacher is no longer a teacher but only an exhorter. Doctrinal sermons are still and ever will be, necessary. Thank your minister if he still believes in them.

Paul is not listing ranks of clergy, nor is he giving a complete list of gifts; he nowhere does so. The gifts of miracles and , as well as the distribution of tongues, we have considered. Two remain—helps and

governments. The Greek word Paul used for “helps” brings us the picture of a “laying hold on” or, as we would say, “giving a hand.” Thus the Jerusalem deacons helped the apostles by taking over the care of widows and orphans. Today we have “helps” also. We have committees for the visiting of the sick, we have committees for the poor, we have the work of deacons, and deaconesses and nurses, institutions of charity, with their personnel, social workers, collectors, secretaries, choir masters, and many others. All these are helps. The word *governments* means the gifts of piloting and steering. The Greek word which Paul used means just that. It is the ability of leadership, the direction of policies, or management in the church.

(VV 29-30). God has given numerous gifts. All do not have the same gifts. God has wisely apportioned them—some being greater, others lesser. Are all apostles, etc.? The answer is no.

This does not mean that it is impossible to strive for other gifts than one has. By no means. God’s gifts are gifts of grace. A child can ask its father for additional gifts and this is no less true of children of the heavenly Father. Certainly we dare not ask in selfishness. Paul has been fighting this very spirit. Does a teacher wish to become a pastor and does he feel qualified? Let him strive to become one. Paul does not mean that each member should strive for all gifts. There are naturally certain restrictions to this striving for higher gifts. Common sense, fitness, divine prohibitions, natural abilities must be taken into consideration. A man with very limited natural gifts would not strive to become a teacher or a pastor, neither should a woman strive to become a pastor of a congregation, no matter how high her I.Q. might be, because God has forbidden it. However, one who has the ability of “helps,” or the gift of administration might strive for wisdom or knowledge. The gift of healing or prophecy (cf 14:1)—the gift of personal evangelism—winning souls for Christ.

Strive with zeal, says Paul. Pray, study and work. In the Preface to the first volume of his collected German writings, published in 1539, Luther gives this advice from experience: “Kneel down—and pray God in true humility and earnestness to give you his Holy Spirit, who is to enlighten, guide and give you understanding,” and further he says: “...you are to meditate, and that not only in the heart alone but also externally, by turning over and over again... the words in the Book, letter by letter, reading and rereading with diligent attention and reflection as to what may be the meaning of the Holy Spirit.” Does a Christian woman wish to become a deaconess, for instance, she should pray, study and work. Let all sensibly strive for gifts that are of most benefit to the church.

The very opposite is sometimes the case. Christians neglect the gifts which are in them, refusing to take up duties and responsibilities when that is humanly possible. It is a truism that false humility is false. Laziness is still a sin.

In v. 31 Paul says: “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.” This far better way he shows us in Chapter 13—It is the way of Christian love. Paul is not going to show us a way to attain to the better or higher gifts. He has already done that. Besides this hymn on love (Chapter 13) is far too complete for that purpose (as Prof. A. Pieper wrote in the article mentioned above...“für den...Zweck ist dies Hochlied Pauli von der Liebe viel zu selbständig and vollständig.”) Paul shows that without Christian love the greatest gifts are worthless (1-3). He shows the beauty of love (4-7). He shows the eternal value of love over against the gifts which pass away. Love is superior to all gifts.