

working of His power" (Ephesians 3:7). And then in connection with the gifts given to each Christian, he brings across the same relation: "But

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to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7). So we can

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF GIFT

bestowed by God's grace."

The spiritual gifts are easier to describe than to define. Perhaps that is because they are more a kind of operation or process than they are a thing. Yet it is often useful to us to have some operating definitions, something that states what is involved in each gift in a simple phrase. But before we attempt to deal with each gift individually, let us try to first understand just what is a "spiritual gift." There are several words which are used in the New Testament in this connection; these together lend to give us an understanding of gifts. Let us see what they are.

Whereas a dorea is something that is given, a charisma is something that is possessed. Once we receive a dorea, it is then our

DEFINITION WORDS

A Bestowed Gift (dorea)

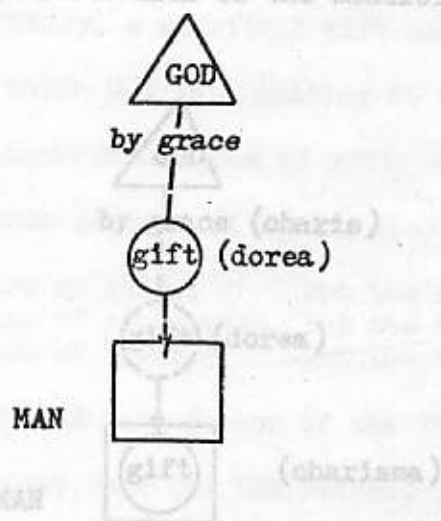
The first of these words is the term dorea. This word is always translated as "gift." It is the most general of the words and can refer to anything that is given. But it usually denotes a formal endowment.¹ In the New Testament passages concerning spiritual gifts, a dorea is always something given by God's grace. Paul said concerning his own ministry in the gospel, "I was made a minister, according to the gift (dorea) of God's grace which was given to me according to the

Thus one could set up a simple formula something like this:

¹Cf. Michael, in Kittell II: 167.

In fact, charisma is simply the word charis with the ending ma

working of His power" (Ephesians 3:7). And then in connection with the gifts given to each Christian, he brings across the same relation: "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7). So we can say at this point that a gift is a "formal bestowal by God's grace."



A Free Gift (charisma)

Whereas a dorea is something that is given, a charisma is something that is possessed. Once we receive a dorea, it is then our charisma, our spiritual gift. Notice how these words are used together to show how this works in an interesting passage of Scripture, Romans 5:15:

But the free gift (charisma) is not like the transgression; for if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift (dorea) by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Notice the contrasts in each half of this verse:

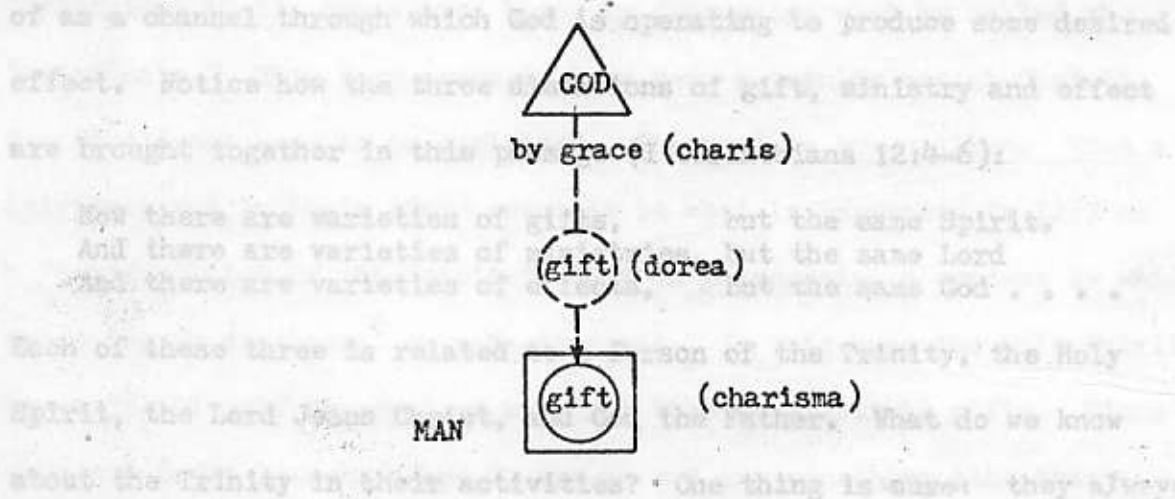
17a transgression / free gift (charisma)
 17b transgression / grace + gift (dorea) by grace.

Thus one could set up a simple formula something like this:

charisma = grace + dorea by grace.

In fact, charisma is simply the word grace (charis) with the ending -ma

affixed to it. This ending added to a word usually has the meaning of "result."² So in some way, a charisma is "the result of God's grace." Therefore the Bible says that we "have gifts that differ according to the grace given us," (Romans 12:6) and that "each one has received a special gift, . . . as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Peter 4:10).



A Ministry (diakonia)

"There are varieties of gifts," the Scriptures assure, "and there are varieties of ministries" (I Corinthians 12:4-5). Where there is charisma, or gift, there is always ministry to be performed. The two always belong together. "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving (ministering to) one another," exhorted Peter (1:4:10). Paul himself was "made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace" (Ephesians 3:7). Likewise all believers, having received grace (4:7), are to be equipped "for the work of service (ministry)" (4:12). A gift, as a ministry, is always used in service rendered

² A. R. Robertson, Grammar, 151, 153. Colet, in Romans, p. 87, remarks, "A charisma, gift is a concrete manifestation of grace (charis)."

to another person.³ *It + the Lord Jesus Christ + Father God*



An Effect (energēma) *energēsis, pneumatikon*

As well as a ministry, a spiritual gift can normally be thought of as a channel through which God is operating to produce some desired effect. Notice how the three dimensions of gift, ministry and effect are brought together in this passage (I Corinthians 12:4-6):

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit,
 And there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord
 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God

Each of these three is related to a Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God the Father. What do we know about the Trinity in their activities? One thing is sure: they always work together and in perfect harmony. Is it not likely, then, that the gifts, ministries and effects should do the same? An effect is an energēma. It is the divine "energy" (energe) with the -ma ending (as in charisma) which indicates a result. Hence a gift somehow is "that by which God's energy produces an effect."⁴ This is God's activity;⁵ He is the One "who works all things in all persons" (12:6).

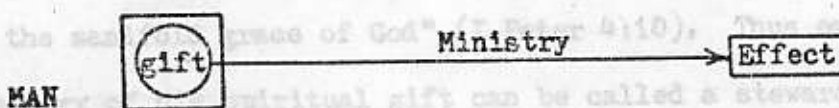
³ Beyer, in Kittel II:81, where Beyer distinguishes *diakoneo* from other Greek terms for service as having "the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another. It is . . . a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love."

⁴ Bertram, in Kittel II:652, *energēma* means "what is effected."

⁵ Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 265.

Arndt & Gingrich, 361.

Holy Spirit + the Lord Jesus Christ + Father God

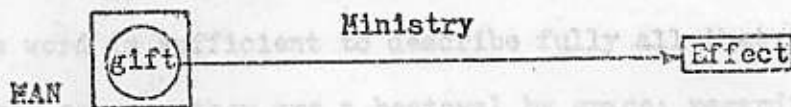


A Manifestation (phanerōsis, pneumatikon)

Introducing the lengthy discourse on spiritual gifts at I Corinthians 12-14, the writer began by discussing what he called the "spirituals." This term seems to have been a popular one at Corinth, for it did not need to be explained. The word is pneumatikon. What a spiritual was in their minds seems to be what is expressed in 12:7 as a "manifestation of the Spirit." This is phanerōsis, a process by which something is disclosed⁶ or made apparent. In this case the Holy Spirit is making Himself apparent or manifest through spiritual gifts. Since verses 4-6 fit between 1 and 7, can we not say something like this: Spiritual (gifts) are a manifestation of the Spirit with the three dimensions of gift, or ministry and of effect.

Spiritual gift = manifestation of Spirit

Holy Spirit + the Lord Jesus Christ + Father God



A Stewardship (oikonomia)

When God gives grace, it is, granted, a free gift. But there is a responsibility connected with it. Christians become stewards of

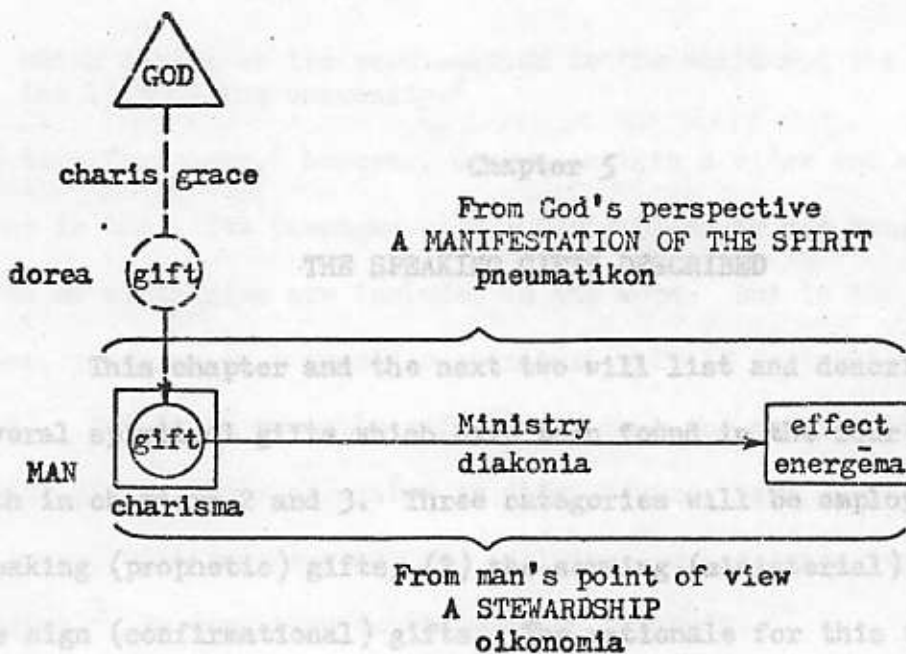
⁶ Arndt & Gingrich, 861.

that grace. "Each has received a special gift . . . as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (I Peter 4:10). Thus each believer's ministry of his spiritual gift can be called a stewardship, even as the Apostle Paul so viewed his ministry, "If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you" (Ephesians 3:2).

The word steward is oikonomos, from oikos, house, and nomos, law. That is, he is someone who rules another man's house or property, and must give an account to that man of how he conducted the stewardship. An illustration of this is the parable of the unrighteous steward in Luke 16:iff. So as stewards of God's grace we shall some day have to give an account of how we used our spiritual gifts. For "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy" (I Corinthians 4:2).

SUMMARY

The grace of God is "manifold" (I Peter 4:10), that is, many-sided. One can therefore view our graciously given spiritual gifts from different angles. Spiritual gifts are a complex matter, and no one word is sufficient to describe fully all that is involved. As to their source, they are a bestowal by grace; regarding their recipients, they are a free gift; from the point of view of activity, they involve various ministries, respecting what they do, they have various effects; all are manifestations of God's Spirit; and all bring with them a divine responsibility, a stewardship.



This chapter and the next two will list and describe each of the several gifts which are found in the New Testament. The first gift dealt with in this chapter is the gift of prophecy. Three categories will be employed: (1) the speaking (prophetic) gifts, (2) the ministerial (diakonia) gifts, and (3) the sign (confirmational) gifts. The rationale for this three-fold breakdown will be presented progressively. Both I Peter 4:11 and Romans 12:6-7 speak of prophetic and ministerial gifts. The Romans passage includes two specific speaking gifts, teaching and exhorting. Prophecy as a specific gift occurs in the listing at I Corinthians 12:8-10 as do also two more gifts of a prophetic nature. These are the utterance of wisdom and the utterance of knowledge.

PROPHETCY

Prophetic ministries¹ receive both prominence and priority among all the spiritual gifts in Scripture. Note, for example, Romans 12:6; I Corinthians 14:1, 24-25, 30; I Peter 4:11. Bartling observes:

One thing is clear: Pride of place in all of the lists is given to those gifts which magnify the Word of God's grace and

¹ *prophetevo; prophetos; prophetai; prophetikon; prophetai.* The etymology of "prophet" is *pro-*, forth, *-ph-*, to shine, *-et-*, agent, or "an agent of speaking forth." For the sense of the related word "preaching" (*kerysso*), see the appendixes.