

CALVIN AND THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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With the onset of world interest in Christocentric pentecostalism¹ and its outgrowth, charismatic theology,² together with the impact of the renewal movements in various sectors of Christendom,³ it seems appropriate to attempt a specific examination of John Calvin's understanding of the "spiritual gifts" as Calvin translates *tōn pneumatikōn* in 1 Cor 12:1. This endeavor is justified not only by Calvin's stature and contemporary influence as one of the greatest exegetes and expositors in the history of the evangelical faith but also by the fact that this aspect of Calvin's teaching has received little or no attention. As far as I know, among those works touching on aspects of Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit nothing specifically focusing on his understanding of the spiritual gifts has appeared.⁴ An examination under the focus of the "pentecostal/neo-pentecostal" lens is needed, yet this is not at all to suggest a naive reading of current attitudes and assumptions about spiritual gifts into Calvin's thought.

Writers in the Reformed tradition have dealt adequately with the "principal work" of the Holy Spirit in Calvin's thought, such as witness, Word and sanctifi-

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¹This movement is reasonably surveyed by N. Bloch-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development and Distinctive Character* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget; London: Allen and Unwin; New York: Humanities, 1964); J. Nichol, *The Pentecostals* (Plainfield, N. J.: Logos, 1966); W. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Church* (tr. R. Wilson; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972); and specifically in the American sector by W. Menzies, *Anointed to Serve: The Story of the Assemblies of God* (Springfield, Mo.: Gospel Publishing, 1971); V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); D. Faupel, *The American Pentecostal Movement, A Bibliographical Essay* (Franklin Springs, Ga.: Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1972); and D. Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington/London: Indiana University, 1975).

²These endeavors are perhaps well represented at this time by T. Smail, "Theology of Renewal and the Renewal of Theology," *Theological Renewal* 1 (1975) 2-4; A. Bittlinger, *Die Bedeutung der Gnadengaben für die Gemeinde Jesu Christi* (Marburg: Oekumenischer, 1971); K. McDonnell, ed., *The Holy Spirit and Power* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975). Various viewpoints are found in R. Spittler, ed., *Perspectives on the New Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976); H. Mühlen, *A Charismatic Theology* (tr. E. Quinn and T. Linton; London: Burns and Oates, 1978).

³Cf. K. McDonnell, *Charismatic Renewal and the Churches* (New York: Seabury, 1976); J. Connelly, "Neo-Pentecostalism: The Charismatic Revival in the Mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in the United States, 1960-71" (unpublished Ph. D. thesis; University of Chicago, 1977); C. Gerest, "The Hour of Charisms: The Development of the Charismatic Movements in America," in C. Duquoc and C. Floristan, eds., *Charisms in the Church* (New York: Seabury, 1978) 13-37.

⁴J. Tylander, "Calvin Bibliography 1960-1970," *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 (1971) 156 ff., and subsequent bibliographies by DeKlerk, *Calvin Theological Journal* 7 (1972) 221 ff.; 9 (1974) 38 ff., 210 ff. Prior to 1960 I know of no work on this topic.

cation.⁵ His concern in these matters is union with Christ and a free flow of grace to the elect via the Holy Spirit as they progressively mature throughout salvation in faith and holiness. However, the equally principal workings of the *charismatōn*, *diakonion*, and *energēmatōn* (gifts, service ministries and energizing effects, 1 Cor 12:4-6) by that same Spirit in manifesting evident grace to profit the elect seem to have been neglected.

Parratt concludes his discussion of Calvin's rediscovery of the *testimonium Spiritus sancti* as follows: "If it be true that the effectiveness of the church is largely dependent upon her possession of the Spirit of God, then a fresh examination of this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is sorely needed at the present time."⁶ Williams, a Reformed theologian, expands this as he cites pentecostalism as representing a rediscovery of "a dimension of the Holy Spirit's activity that had been long overlooked."⁷ Quoting a wide variety of sources, Williams sees us as being "called upon to delay no longer in giving ourselves to fuller experience and theological understanding" of a movement that is viewed "as a revolution comparable in importance with the establishment of the original church and with the Protestant Reformation."⁸

Further, Baker, in his survey interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14 as an independent section, suggests that "the rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement, probably the fastest growing segment of the Church today, . . . necessitates a reconsideration of these chapters,"⁹ and I have recently considered some fresh aspects of the spiritual dynamics involved in the charismatic theology of Jesus,¹⁰ another rich and unharvested area of NT studies. It is the substantial perspectives, theological and empirical, mature and imperfect, that are afforded by our present point in time that may provide a proper focusing lens through which Calvin's contribution can be considered and analyzed.

Because of the close-knit system of Calvin's thought his work may conveniently be considered as one corpus for the purpose of this study. Within this unified corpus are ideas concerning activities and gifts of the Spirit that even yet

⁵In this reference and to some degree in all others I have not attempted to be exhaustive but rather to cite from data known to me what I consider to best represent clearly the point being made. Deference is given to currency and relevant content in an attempt to acknowledge prior contributions from the treasure of Calvin and other scholarship. E. g., on witness: J. Parratt, "The Witness of the Holy Spirit: Calvin, the Puritans, and St. Paul," *EvQ* 41 (1979) 161ff.; R. Ray, "Witness and Word," *CJT* 15 (1979) 14ff.; on Word: H. Forstman, *Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Stanford: University Press, 1962); on sanctification: I. H. Marshall, "Sanctification in the Teaching of John Wesley and John Calvin," *EvQ* 34 (1962) 75ff.

⁶Parratt, "Witness," 168.

⁷J. R. Williams, "The Upsurge of Pentecostalism," *The Reformed World* 31 (1971) 346.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 346, 342. Williams does not urge, however, the adoption of everything in pentecostal theology and practice but only of what pentecostalism represents, which he understands as "utterly essential for all of our churches: the renewed experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit" (his n. 21).

⁹D. Baker, "The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12-14," *EvQ* 46 (1974) 224.

¹⁰P. Elbert, "The Perfect Tense in Matthew 16:19 and Three Charismata," *JETS* 17 (1974) 149ff. While it is sometimes considered bad form to cite one's own work, I feel it is justified here in order to draw out the needed coupling between the understanding of these spiritual events as described with first-century vocabulary and the understanding of the spiritual dynamics of their use, both then and now.

may bring fresh insight to established Reformed and unreformed traditions as well as to Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is against current charismatic tradition that Calvin's understanding¹¹ becomes relevant to us today, not only for our historical appraisal of his understanding in the area of the Holy Spirit and his gifts but also for the good it evidently has to offer us.

Since the genuine fruits of the Spirit (*karpos tou pneumatos*)—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—are the operational basis in practice for the genuine exercise of the gifts of that Spirit, it is reasonable to start with Calvin's comments on Gal 5:22-26.¹² He sees as addressed to "us"—that is, contemporaneous with his day—"all virtues, all good and well-regulated affections." These fruits "proceed from the Spirit, that is, from the grace of God and the renewed nature which we have from Christ" and are to be desired and cultivated for the good of the Church.

Calvin necessarily and correctly stresses the harsh dichotomy between these, as genuine fruits, and works of the flesh (*erga tēs sarkos*) when he euphemizes on pseudo-fruits or flesh-faked fruits among contemporaries. Noting that there might be difficulty involved in detecting this camouflage he adds, "In the sight of God nothing is pure but what proceeds from the fountain of all purity." Although this distinction is primarily made polemically, it is important because it shows that Calvin recognizes the necessity of a spiritual source for a spiritual fruit. In a similar vein, "no one can produce good fruit but from a living root."¹³

This distinction is not as forcefully made in the realm of the gifts, which to Calvin are not always as well defined with regard to the supernatural element and sometimes appear to touch on the cultivation of natural abilities (hopefully with spiritual aid). Although the fruits are more sharply defined than the gifts, in the final analysis believers should acknowledge that the Spirit has given them (presumably not self-given or generated) whatever gifts they have.¹⁴

Here, then, Calvin sees no law (Gal 5:22) against the true fruits, those produced by the Spirit himself. He posits no dispensational rule to truncate God's grace in producing fruit for fellow church members to be nourished by and benefit from. He does not notice, however, the operational correlation between the fruits and the gifts in practical experience.

Overall it seems best to understand the concept of grace as being central to an understanding of the spiritual gifts, as it is to the fruits. Ban It wisely parallels the gifts and fruits of the Spirit to "the two wings of a bird. The wings must work

¹¹The historical appraisal of Calvin's contribution must be viewed from a perspective of his time frame (as well as ours) and of the need to reform; cf. M. E. Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 27-35.

¹²J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians* (tr. T. Parker; eds. D. and T. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 105.

¹³J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (tr. T. Myers; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 2. 260.

¹⁴J. Calvin, *Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (tr. J. Fraser; eds. D. and T. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 262.

in harmony if the bird is to fly."¹⁵ Parks gives an excellent summary of the concept of a gift (*charisma*) issuing from grace:

Here is grace taking substance, grace becoming concrete and tangible. There are some who prefer grace without gifts. To insist that grace be without gifts is to frustrate the very grace of God. Gifts exist in order that grace may come out of the abstract into the concrete, that grace may have somewhat to offer. If faith without works is a dead thing, so likewise is grace without gifts.¹⁶

Calvin cites as "special grace" that which the elect receive through regeneration (viewed as a point and a process), and probably the fruits and gifts would be described by that language, or perhaps by "general grace." The citation of 1 Pet 4:10, "As each one has received a special gift (*charisma*), employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (*NASB*), serves well as an example of Calvin's broad contextual view of the loving use of gifts from the Lord.

Whatever benefits we obtain from the Lord have been entrusted to us on this condition: that they be applied to the common good of the church. And therefore the lawful use of all benefits consists in a liberal and kindly sharing of them with others. No surer rule and no more valid exhortation to keep it could be devised than when we are taught that all the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbor's benefit (cf. 1 Pet 4:10).¹⁷

This view abounds with spiritual beauty and the aforementioned distribution is to be done in love, which is the "bond of perfection."¹⁸ If it is understood that the gifts possessed by individual believers are in essence the translation of the vertical dimension of God's grace to the horizontal dimension of our neighbors, Calvin's theory is eminently correct. The distribution of which he speaks is then an interpersonal Spirit-motivated sharing process. Calvin amplifies Peter's words in v 10 as being "very important" and exhorts: "The Lord has so divided his manifold graces among men, that no one is content with one thing and with his own gifts, but everyone needs the help and aid of his brother. This, I say, is a bond which God has appointed for preserving fellowship."¹⁹

Certainly we are enabled to aid and help our brother by genuinely responding to the Spirit's prompting. Indeed, Calvin also rightly interprets Paul as teaching that "*the reason* for believers being enriched with spiritual gifts by God is for the upbuilding of their brothers."²⁰ In his task of revitalizing the Church by hopeful-

¹⁵C. Ban It, "The Spiritual Gifts," *Bishop's Move* (ed. M. Harper; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978) 160.

¹⁶H. Parks, "Charisma; What's in a Word?", *Renewal* 52 (August/September 1974) 21.

¹⁷J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 3.7.5. All quotes are from tr. F. Battles, ed. J. McNeil (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973). Note here the supporting context of 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 references in Calvin's text at this point and the Biblical context of 1 Pet 4:8: "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another."

¹⁸J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (tr. W. Johnston; eds. D. and T. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 303.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 305. This is a correct and timeless observation. The accurate transmission of gifts does indeed create bonds, which tend to perfect loving relationships.

²⁰Calvin, *Corinthians*, 258 (italics mine).

ly relating its members to Christ and to one another, Calvin appropriately places emphasis on such ideas from Peter and Paul. No less emphasis is needed in our day of participation without involvement and relationship without commitment.

The concept of interpersonal relations, enhanced by the operations of the Holy Spirit's fruits and gifts, is of course of great significance in organically constituting a body (1 Cor 12:20, 27 versus a group of believers). Significant to Calvin is the concept of the body of Christ, God's elect. Christ is seen as cleaving to us wholly in spirit and body as we make up collectively his Church (1 Cor 6:15a; Eph 5:30).²¹ This spiritual cleavage of Christ provides the organic linking and is illustrated here as "like a rich and inexhaustible fountain that pours into us the life springing forth." To Calvin, the Lord is intimately associated and in touch with his body the Church by the presence of the Spirit, as is the Church in intimate fellowship with him.²²

Commenting on Rom 12:4-8 he urges us to respond with unity, which is a responsibility of our calling into fellowship with the Lord: "We are called on condition that we unite together in one body. . . . The relation which exists in the human body ought also to exist in the fellowship of believers."²³ Further, this relation is to be motivated by God—and Calvin sees this, I think, as he continues by noting that God has "dispensed various gifts to us. . . . The difference of gifts arises not from the will of man, but because it has pleased the Lord to dispense His grace in this manner." In this particular context, as with the fruits, Calvin pinpoints the source of the gifts as with the Lord. Like the fruits they are to be shared for the edification of the body.

Ideally, then, the result is unity, exercise of Christian virtues, and spiritual growth within the body. Optimistically, all the elect are so

united in Christ (cf. Eph 1:22, 23) that as they are dependent on one Head, they also grow together into one body, being joined and knit together (cf. Eph 4:16) as are the limbs of a body (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 10:17; 12:12, 27). They are made truly one since they live together in one faith, hope, and love, and in the same Spirit of God.²⁴

Christ is the Spirit-giving head of the body, and Calvin urges his contemporaries to "climb higher and to examine the secret energy of the Spirit, by which we come to enjoy Christ and all his benefits."²⁵ In Calvin's view it is reasonable to understand that the enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits is due in part to the Spirit's energizing of believers to give gifts to each other,²⁶ especially since we are ex-

²¹Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.9.

²²Ibid. and 4.17.10. The mystery of this relationship of the divine Christ with an earthly body of mortal members (who are somehow *en Christō*) is duly recognized. The Lord's supper is seen as a visible sign of this spiritual relationship. We must note, however, that no comment on the Spirit's gifts and fruits as visible signs of the function of this spiritual relationship is explicitly made here (but see nn. 36 and 37 generally).

²³J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians* (tr. R. MacKenzie; eds. D. and T. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960) 267.

²⁴Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.2.

²⁵Ibid., 3.1.1.

²⁶Calvin sometimes saw God's grace as a process, so that it is customary for him to constantly enrich believers with gifts of the Spirit (J. Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles* [tr. W. McDonald and J. Fraser; eds. D. and T. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965] 1. 234).

horted to distribute such gifts for our brother's benefit (n. 17).

One of the goals of Calvin's Reformed thought was to unite a people with a sense of community and concern for each other—particularly, for example, in his overall pastoral concerns at Geneva. A fellowship of believers with the communal consistency of the human body (which Calvin endorses) would clearly effect a release of God's power among ordinary people. This Christian relationship, enhanced by Spirit-motivated interpersonal sharing (also endorsed), would produce the union of which Jesus spoke: "Love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). This is the goal for every generation.

Commenting on the imperative²⁷ in 1 Cor 14:12—"since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church"—Calvin exhorts: "The more anxious a person is to devote himself to upbuilding, the more highly Paul wishes him to be regarded."²⁸ In a possible effort to stimulate readers to contribute generously to the common interest, which he wanted them to do, he adds a paraphrase to the epistle here: "If spiritual gifts are a source of delight to you, see that they are directed to upbuilding. It is only when the Church obtains benefit from you that you will be really outstanding and deserving of praise."

Calvin comprehended these gifts of the Spirit, available by the dispensation of grace, as a part of and as a result of the gospel. When expounding OT passages such as Jer 31:33 and Joel 2:28 he writes, "We know that this grace of God was rare and little known under the Law; but that under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly poured forth, and that God has dealt more bountifully with his Church."²⁹ And on Joel's prophecy of the Spirit being poured forth upon all flesh he sees that the "prophet no doubt promises here something greater than what the fathers under the Law experienced. . . . God did not pour out his Holy Spirit so abundantly and so largely under the Law, as after the manifestation of Christ."³⁰

Then, following the historic pentecost of Acts, God would "enrich his faithful with all kinds of gifts, so that the Spirit would seem to be poured forth in full abundance."³¹ On the day of pentecost Joel is interpreted as "foretelling that the grace of the Spirit will be more abundant" and that when God is said to pour out

²⁷Elbert, "Perfect," 153-154, discusses motivation due to the imperative *zêteite*, coupled here with a zealous overview to the imperative *zéloute*, 12:31 (cf. A. Bittlinger, *Gifts and Grace* [tr. H. Klassen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967] 73-75). These imperative designations best fit the context, in which Paul strongly urges maintenance of a proper apostolic perspective. For general background see W. Bakker, *The Greek Imperative* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1966) 78ff. More to my point is R. Howard, "Some Modern Interpretations of the Pauline Indicative and Imperative," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 11 (1976) 38ff., who stresses that "the indicative speaks of *what God has done*—in the believer—and the imperative depicts *what the believer must do*—by the power of the Spirit—because of the indicative" (p. 44; italics his).

²⁸Calvin, *Corinthians*, 290.

²⁹J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (tr. and ed. J. Owen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 4. 131.

³⁰J. Calvin, *A Commentary on the Prophet Joel* (tr. and ed. J. Owen; London: Banner of Truth, 1958) 81.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 82. Further, in a sermon on Acts 2:18 he exhorts: "Let us not doubt but that we shall receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, since it is said that he hath not poured them out upon one kind, but generally upon all" (*Diverse Sermons of Master John Calvin* [tr. C. Fetherstone; London: G. Byshop, 1581] 185).

his Spirit "it must be so taken that from His Spirit He causes an infinite variety of gifts to flow out to men, as though from a single spring which can never run dry."³²

It is interesting that today the charismatic ministry of Christ is commonly viewed as spanning the entire spectrum of human experience and interaction. Implicit in such an enrichment as Calvin envisions is that the faithful would transmit these gifts of grace to one another, not just receive them. Maturity, I believe, is reached when one transmits all that he receives, thus developing a divine reservoir within the body to refresh the world with deeds of love.

In this great potential and multiplicity Calvin definitely understands the list in 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28, for example, to be only a partial list in this infinite variety of gifts: "He pours out His gifts, as the sun spreads its beams all over the land."³³ He broadly expands this grace (but certainly does not so confine it) into the cultivation of natural abilities through the grace and work of the Spirit³⁴ to the service of others and finally to the idea that our life itself is a gift. Although even in this mature limit, where a slight redefinition of the NT concept and function of *charisma* is necessary, the grace of Christ is still central and Christ is always the "author of grace and gifts."³⁵ Wendel has observed that Calvin never tires of repeating that the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.³⁶ Thus we detect a comprehension of Christ as the source of a free and full flow of the Spirit (in the sense of 2 Cor 3:17a, *ho de kyrios to pneuma estin*) to those who will be Scripturally motivated to be open and useful in the true spirit of the Reformation, in which Calvin tried to restore and unify the Church.

With this background we can now explore some of Calvin's specific views on certain gifts (but not all) within the postulated diversity that in effect promotes and strengthens harmony among believers. As we look at some specifics we should continue to keep before us the idea that Calvin always connected the words "grace" and "gifts," citing Christ as their common author. Willis characterizes this as a "Spirit-Christology," appropriately noting that "one of the strengths of Calvin's Christology and of his Pneumatology is his representation of the person and work of Christ in constant reference to the Spirit, and the reality and work of the Spirit in constant reference to Christ."³⁷

³²Calvin, *Acts*, 1. 57-58.

³³Calvin, *Corinthians*, 262.

³⁴Cf. W. Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1957) 102ff. Calvin properly notes in this context that we would be contemptuous and reproachful of the Spirit "by holding the gifts of the Spirit in slight esteem" (*Institutes* 2.2.15). He also apparently extrapolates some gifts in this regard to science and art in general because "men's minds are in God's hands and under his will" (2.2.17). Even though all men are under God's governance, however, Calvin distinguishes fortuitous circumstances in the lives of unbelievers from the providence of God in the lives of Christians. Cf., e. g., P. Reardon, "Calvin on Providence: The Development of an Insight," *SJT* 28 (1975) 531.

³⁵Calvin, *Galatians*, 174.

³⁶F. Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (tr. P. Mairet; New York: Harper, 1963) 239.

³⁷D. Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 1966) 82.

First, it is significant that Calvin did believe that the manifestation of the Spirit (*phanerōsis tou pneumatos*) was still, in his day, given “for giving benefit” to each one according to 1 Cor 12:4-7. Such an individual *phanerōsis* is beautifully interpreted as being wonderfully active “because, when the Spirit of God provides us with any gift, He unlocks His treasures, in order to reveal to us things, which would otherwise be hidden and beyond our reach.”³⁸

There were constraints on this activity, however, due to the assumed unavailability and assumed discontinuity of certain gifts with reference to the apostolic age. To the extent that God does not provide what man thinks he can or will not provide, these graces and enablements were beyond the reach of Calvin. As a result of these assumptions much of the Spirit’s dynamic supernatural activity and power was both overlooked and unappreciated. It was constrained so as not to be taken out of the general and conceptual into the specific dimensions of genuine use. I would cite this as one of the weaknesses of Calvin’s Christology and pneumatology,³⁹ along with the comprehensions and strengths I have detailed and interpreted above.

The word of knowledge (*logos gnōseōs*), which is usually understood today as supernatural revelation by the Holy Spirit of facts in the mind of God, a divinely given fragment of divine knowledge and not a God-sent amplification of human knowledge,⁴⁰ is interpreted as “the ordinary grasp of things”—that is, “holy things.”⁴¹

The word of wisdom (*logos sophias*) is interpreted as insight into things secret and lofty in nature and the supernatural. Again the usual understanding is that such wisdom is beyond insight and is not merely heightened human capacity but

³⁸Calvin, *Corinthians*, 261.

³⁹J. R. Williams, *The Pentecostal Reality* (Plainfield: Logos, 1972) 37-40. In this excerpt from “A New Era of the Spirit,” a paper given at the International Conference on the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, University of Surrey, England, July, 1971, Williams advances three insightful points (with only minimal proof) concerning the Reformers with which I agree (points which may become more apparent by the present analysis). First, “they did not see that beyond the actuality of salvation is the event of the Spirit’s bestowal; indeed, they tended to view the latter as simply the applying of the former. . . . The Reformers failed to grasp the important New Testament dimension of the Spirit’s activity wherein the people of faith are filled with God’s reality and presence, fresh powers of praise and proclamation are brought forth, and their common life is led into new and dynamic expressions.” Second, the “churches of the Reformers did not succeed in recapturing the vision of a church guided by the Holy Spirit diversifying gifts and ministries as He wills.” The fact that the Reformers inherited a Church that was bottled up in overstressed and rigid structure is seen as primarily responsible for this lack of capture. Third, Williams notes that the Reformers, with Calvin a case in point, “did not adequately grapple with the gifts (*charismata*) of the Holy Spirit” and that all of these considerations signify “a blind spot concerning the primordial dynamism of the Holy Spirit.”

⁴⁰S. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1976) 271-273. A vast array of contemporary experience confirms this conclusion. The interaction of God with men produces experience, whose truth of origin and ongoing application in the human continuum must be evaluated by proper analysis of Scriptural words and phrases and their meaning. The usual understanding is then certainly quite allowable linguistically; cf. R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 1. 703, 707ff. In the arena of experience and application cf. Elbert, “Perfect,” 152, and R. Weed, *The Word of Knowledge* (Ellendale, Ill.: Trinity Institute, 1973).

⁴¹Calvin, *Corinthians*, 262.

revelation.⁴² Calvin's interpretation, however, is not too far from Gee's classic popular discussion: "In a manifestation of the word of wisdom something flashes. There is a sense of the divine, a consciousness of an utterance transcending all the garnered stores of merely human experience."⁴³

Perhaps Calvin cannot compete with the thrust of this, as he apparently lacks this sort of supernatural element in practical understanding.⁴⁴ Scholarship, no matter how dedicated, is bound to lack some necessary quality if it is denied familiarity with the phenomena it endeavors to describe, because truth divorced from experience must always remain in the realm of speculation.⁴⁵ Thus if one says that certain supernatural, miraculous, extra-rational or nonrational acts of God are not contemporaneous with his point in time (or if he says they are and makes no effort at personal familiarization⁴⁶), his characterization of them will lack that necessary quality.

Rightly essential to Calvin, however, is that man should be possessed by his creator, living for him: "We are God's: let His wisdom and will therefore rule our actions. We are God's: let all parts of our life accordingly strive toward Him as our only lawful goal."⁴⁷ While there is definitely truth in this approach to God's

⁴²A. Van Roon, "Christ and the Wisdom of God According to Paul," *NovT* 16 (1974) 215ff.; G. Clark, "Wisdom in First Corinthians," *JETS* 15 (1972) 192ff. These manifestations are not claimed to be *solà Scriptura* but rather must be judged and evaluated by Scripture, where appropriate, when they are given verbal expression. In the related manifestation of NT prophecy, which must be judged (1 Cor 14:29), there has been a widespread stress in the pentecostal movement on proper evaluation of the utterance. Cf., e. g., A. Palma, "The Gift of Prophecy—Its Regulation and Purpose," *Paraclete* 4 (Fall 1970) 7ff.; C. Robeck, Jr., "How Do You Judge Prophetic Utterance?," *Paraclete* 11 (Spring 1977) 12ff. It is the employment of collective and individual judgment of prophecy—man's responsibility to reason correctly—that is the foremost safeguard against its abuse, not that God must distribute the gift of discernings of spirits in order for hearers to be able to evaluate prophecy as asserted by J. Dunn, "According to the Spirit of Jesus," *Theological Renewal* 5 (February/March 1977) 16ff. Internal dynamics of the Spirit, however, which may occur in conjunction with hearing should always be considered as input to the reasoning process. I believe Calvin would have approved of these safeguards had he had occasion to use them, as he expressed his general belief that "we defile holy things when we thus mingle our own deformities with gifts of God's Spirit" (J. Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles to the Ephesians* [tr. A. Golding; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1973; reprint of 1577] 319).

⁴³D. Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, n.d.) 20. I personally question the concept of a "flash" and the implication that "utterance" must necessarily result. These concepts, while possible in individual cases, read too much into Paul's phrase and are not required in the underlying revelatory experience his words imply.

⁴⁴Barrett's remark: "No doubt all these spiritual gifts were familiar to Corinthian Christians in the first century. Some are imperfectly clear to the modern reader" (C. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper, 1968] 285) is really an echo of Calvin's problem: "It is difficult to make up one's mind about gifts and offices, of which the Church has been deprived for so long, except for mere traces or shades of them which still are to be found" (*Corinthians*, 271).

⁴⁵It remains in the realm of speculation (n. 44) unless it undergoes that inappropriate, and sometimes observed, historical process of dogmatic hardening.

⁴⁶A current example of this may be the absence of "pentecostal heart knowledge" as pinpointed in Turner's critique in conjunction with exegetical factors: G. Turner, "An Evaluation of John R. W. Stott's and Frederick Brunner's Interpretation of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (Spring 1973) 45ff.

⁴⁷Calvin, *Institutes* 3.7.1.

wisdom, the explanation of the simply natural gifts of wisdom and knowledge that have been sanctified by the Spirit and consecrated to God's service, while giving God the glory for our natural gifts, has often been rejected as inadequate to describe these two revelatory gifts or charisms in general.⁴⁸

Similarly, the discerning of spirits is viewed by Calvin as an ability to make piercing judgments between true and false ministers, for example. Calvin's understanding does not have the ring of Carter's claim that "the discerning of spirits is a supernatural revelation of the unseen world."⁴⁹ To quote Carter further: "A lot of people who think they have the gift of discerning of spirits are only hypocrite hunters." As has been repeatedly urged, mote-hunting or any discerning of people is not the discerning of spirits. People and spirits are different.⁵⁰ Of course this gift could provide input into any of the human senses on the human spirit (of true and false ministers) as well as on demons, angels, Jesus, the Father, or any other spirit, but only on the level of supernatural input.⁵¹ Other natural levels do not adequately fit Paul's description of *diakriseis pneumatōn* in the Corinthian-Ephesian context, which would appear to be a straightforward phrase against the widespread spiritual background of sorcery, magic and demonology.

A probable example of what Calvin would call a manifestation of this gift, which he felt was limited, is to be found in his analysis of free will. There he senses as urgent the ability to discern good by right reason, recalling that since the fall we are easily deluded and need the Holy Spirit for guidance.⁵² In particular, against blind obedience to Romanist councils leading into error he advises "to test all spirits of all men by the standard of God's word in order to determine whether or not they are from God."⁵³ Of course God's Word is the criterion of evaluation to him, gift or no gift of discerning of spirits, which is really how we should interpret him here. No sounder advice or charge, however, could be given (my view) than that of exercising our God-given sense of responsibility and reason under Biblical guidelines (1 Cor 5:11-13; Gal 1:8; 1 John 2:18-20; 4:1).

With regard to the gift of prophecy, which he considers forthtelling and not foretelling, Calvin is insightful in his definition of this gift as being "that unique and outstanding gift of revealing what is the secret will of God, so that the proph-

⁴⁸J. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 205, 253-256. In fact, a Biblical theology based on man's interaction with God and his supernatural grace leads to a dimension within Christianity that makes room for the full spectrum of religious experience; cf. J. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 174ff. and M. Kelsey, "Courage, Unity and Theology," in Spittler, ed., *Perspectives*, 233ff.

⁴⁹H. Carter, *Spiritual Gifts and Their Operation* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1968) 76; cf. Horton, *What*, 276-277, and for more general usage Mühlen, *Charismatic*, 167ff.

⁵⁰Calvin is not looking for moles but for spiritual help in evaluating Romanist fakery and the claims of practitioners thereof, since in Calvin's time the doctrine of miracles was grossly degenerate. He was open for results of general discernment.

⁵¹Elbert, "Perfect," 153; cf. H. Ervin, *These Are Not Drunken As Ye Suppose* (Plainfield: Logos, 1968) 110-115, 122, 123, 227ff.

⁵²Calvin, *Institutes* 2.2.18-21.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 4.9.12.

et is, so to speak, God's messenger to men." ⁵⁴ Calvin does appear willing, however, to reduce or correlate this gift to outstanding inspired preaching, as many have since traditionally done, and to "understand the word (prophecy) in a wider sense to mean the peculiar gift of revelation by which a man performs the office of interpreter with skill and dexterity in expounding the will of God." ⁵⁵ Calvin's very high doctrine of preaching, which itself he viewed as one of God's excellent gifts and in which pastors became "the very mouth of God," probably accounts for his correlation. ⁵⁶ The gift of NT prophecy ⁵⁷ as it is understood and practiced today ⁵⁸ is quite close to what Calvin is describing here as revealing God's secret will in messages to man. The wide sense of the prophetic gift, however, is not ⁵⁹ the same as the ability to preach the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent from heaven (1 Pet 1:12b), a fact which can be determined by the function of prophecy (1 Cor 14:3, 24, 31) among body members versus that of gospel proclamation.

Calvin distinguished the office of prophet from prophecy as a gift. All eloquent interpreters were not prophets, and this class, whose members excelled in "a particular revelation," was either nonexistent or was "less commonly seen." ⁶⁰ This acknowledged absence of the phenomena being discussed no doubt contributed to the lack of a clear understanding of the dual sense of prophesying: first as a charismatic manifestation, and second as a ministry gift to the Church. ⁶¹ Charismatic scholars today would opt for the more supernatural utterance concept, going somewhat beyond preaching (which could of course contain prophecy at length).

The gift of Spirit-motivated preaching, being one of the sunbeams in the pneumatic array, was one that Calvin surely sought himself. The great preacher of Geneva found the secret of renewal in sermons that faithfully applied the deep and rich truths of the Biblical text to the hearer's heart and life. Some of the Genevise faithful so appreciated his preaching that a scribe was retained to record them verbatim for posterity. Indeed, "few preachers have been so handsomely complimented." ⁶² Since God is well pleased to save those who believe

⁵⁴Calvin, *Corinthians*, 263, 271.

⁵⁵Calvin, *Romans*, 269 (parentheses mine).

⁵⁶Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.5, and McNeil's footnote there. In a sermon on Acts 2:1-4 Calvin claims, "We know in the first place, that the most able man that is to be found can not utter one word, without that the spirit of God governeth him," in Fetherstone, tr., *Diverse*, 173.

⁵⁷Cf. C. Robeck, Jr., "The Gift of Prophecy in Acts and Paul: Part 1," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 5 (March 1975) 15ff.; "The Gift of Prophecy in Acts and Paul: Part 2," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 5 (October 1975) 37ff.

⁵⁸A. Palma, "The Gift of Prophecy—Its Nature and Scope," *Paraclete* 4 (Summer 1970) 8ff.

⁵⁹J. Rea et al., *The Layman's Commentary on the Holy Spirit* (Plainfield: Logos, 1972) 64.

⁶⁰Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.4; "concluded" in *Romans*, 269.

⁶¹Ervin, *These*, 142-148; Horton, *What*, 223ff., 276.

⁶²T. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) 91. For the subject domain under analysis here it is interesting that of his 189 sermons on Acts only eight have been translated at this date into English (as far as I know); cf. Fetherstone, tr., *Diverse* (n. 31). These are also the only Acts sermons in the *Corpus Reformatorum* 48, 575-664.

through the foolishness of this human-divine enterprise it behooves all gospel spokesmen to rise to the level of their profession, infusing it with prophetic content and working together with the Spirit so that angels might desire to look into it as well (1 Pet 1:12b). The renewal of the Church in the spirit of the Reformation is an ongoing process. Those who engage in the disproportionate abundance of frivolity, illustration and catchy phraseology that has crept into some Biblical preaching today could do well to seek illumination from this Calvinistic sunbeam and thus return to proper balance.

With regard to the gifts of healings (*charismata iamatōn*) Calvin succinctly expounds: "Everyone knows what is meant by the gift of healings."⁶³ This is clearly in the polemical context of extreme unction and misuse of anointing oil and contemporary ritualistic farce. Calvin interprets fairly: "By the oil the Holy Spirit and his gifts are signified (Ps. 45:7)," but he is firm that the oil per se is not an "instrument of healing, but only a symbol."⁶⁴ Calvin believed in divine healing as a possibility (see n. 44), but not through flesh-faked gifts. He condemned as foolish, false, and "sheer delusions of Satan" the alleged Romanist "miracles," while noting positively that his movement was "not entirely lacking in miracles, and these very certain and not subject to mockery."⁶⁵ He himself relates how he had been "accused of rash and impious innovation for having ventured to propose any change at all in the former state of the Church."⁶⁶ Some of these accusations focused on a lack of miracles to confirm the new evangelical faith,⁶⁷ yet it would be difficult to argue that his miracle testimony is untruthful or polemic imagery, as his overall style is one of expressing truth as something real⁶⁸ even when persuading readers of the rightness of his cause.

In the event that anyone did receive a healing he could affirm that "the Lord is indeed present with his people in every age; and he heals their weaknesses as often as necessary, no less than of old."⁶⁹ It is important to note that Calvin does not presuppose here that any such miraculous mighty acts, which serve to establish the full and genuine authority of the gospel,⁷⁰ must necessarily attest new Biblical revelation, such as the Calvinist doctrine of Warfield requires.⁷¹

⁶³Calvin, *Corinthians*, 262.

⁶⁴Calvin, *Institutes* 4.19.18; cf. 4.19.31.

⁶⁵Ibid., "Prefatory Address to King Francis," 1.17. Attitudes within Protestantism today, as developed from posited attitudes on the miraculous in the Reformation period, are discussed by J. Ruthven, "The Cessation of the Charismata—Part One: A Survey of a Prevailing Viewpoint," *Paraclete* 3 (Spring 1969) 23ff.

⁶⁶J. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954) 185.

⁶⁷Parker, *Calvin*, 35.

⁶⁸Cf. F. Higman, *The Style of John Calvin in His French Polemical Treatises* (London: Oxford University, 1967) 131.

⁶⁹Calvin, *Institutes* 4.19.19.

⁷⁰Calvin, *Acts*, 2.3.

⁷¹B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (London: Banner of Truth, 1972; reprint of 1918) 25. Warfield doctrinally hardens (see n. 45) Calvin's somewhat flexible position as he demands "the inseparable con-

Finally, the gift of tongues is interpreted as foreign languages that "were of some use at that time" (implying not in Calvin's time). As such, this gift was "a great help in proclaiming the Gospel among all nations"—that is, "the difference in languages did not prevent the apostles from spreading the Gospel to the whole world."⁷² This idea of xenolalia was just a part of the varied tradition⁷³ of tongue-speaking in the Roman Church at that time, which was then applied to the apostles.

The Reformers simply used Acts 2:4 to interpret 1 Corinthians 14, entirely neglecting the praise aspect (e. g., *ta megaleia tou theou* and *megalynontōn ton theon*, Acts 2:11; 10:46)⁷⁴ and the need to interpret. Clearly, though, no one could argue convincingly that this gift was at all confined to or equated with apostolic persons, nor was it used by them, as far as we know, in gospel communication.⁷⁵

Calvin was not able to come to grips with the entire spiritual dimension here, as he had relegated this gift of visible grace to a past time. (However, there may be a documented account of tongues occurring in a foreign language.⁷⁶) Praise, edification, exhortation, comfort, conviction and learning, not gospel proclamation per se, is the thrust of such utterance⁷⁷ and/or its interpretation (so as to then

nection of miracles with revelation, as its mark and credential. . . . Miracles do not appear . . . vagrantly, here, there, and elsewhere indifferently without assignable reason. They belong to revelation periods, and appear only when God is speaking to his people through accredited messengers." F. F. Bruce is correct when he notes that "Calvin the exegete sat quite loose to certain ideas which have come traditionally to be regarded as characteristically 'Calvinistic,'" in "The History of New Testament Study," *New Testament Interpretation* (ed. I. H. Marshall; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 33. Warfield's idea is one of these.

⁷²Calvin, *Corinthians*, 287; *Acts*, 1. 318. I note that Calvin, inevitably, saw the "stammering lips" of Isa 28:11 as referring not to men but to God, making no correlation with 1 Cor 14:21; cf. J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (tr. W. Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2. 280.

⁷³S. Burgess, "Medieval Examples of Charismatic Piety in the Roman Catholic Church," in Spittler, ed., *Perspectives*, 15ff.; G. Williams and E. Waldvogel, "A History of Speaking in Tongues and Related Gifts," in *The Charismatic Movement* (ed. M. Hamilton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 70-74.

⁷⁴Those who have experienced glossolalia, however, are not prone to ignore this aspect of praise and communion. Cf., e. g., L. Christenson, *The Charismatic Renewal Among Lutherans* (Minneapolis: Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services/Bethany Fellowship, 1976) 79-84.

⁷⁵Cf. the "strong evidence" cited by A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1971; reprint of 1914) 314; C. Brumback, *What Meaneth This? A Pentecostal Answer to a Pentecostal Question* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, 1947) 33ff.; E. Best, "The Interpretation of Tongues," *SJT* 28 (1975) 47, 55.

⁷⁶R. Santala, *Armolahjoista Armon Tasolta* (Helsinki: Karas-Sana Oy, 1978). However, Santala's analysis has yet to be confirmed by independent investigators subsequent to publication. From tape-recorded glossolalia Santala identified a chant and a song in a poetic Biblical Hebrew under Aramaic influence. Santala's written text was studied prior to publication, with the aid of the recording, by two scholars (H. Ronning and R. Lindsey) who lent tentative support to his discovery. I am indebted to L. Christenson for this private communication. At a lesser but probably acceptable level of documentation cf. H. Ervin, *And Forbid Not to Speak in Tongues* (Plainfield, N. J.: Logos, 1969) 43, and R. Harris, *Spoken by the Spirit* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing, n. d.).

⁷⁷Kinds of tongues (*genē glōssōn*, 1 Cor 12:10) is usually understood as a multiplicity of unintelligible inspired speech or language, human and/or angelic—similar phenomenologically, e. g., to Mark 16:17; Acts

combine in function similar to NT prophecy and praise.)⁷⁸

We must now look at the situation as faced by Calvin, in that he opted to pronounce that the "visible gifts of the Spirit have ceased."⁷⁹ By "visible" I interpret him as meaning those gifts in which the work of the Spirit is clearly observable as the supernatural source of the gift process, both by the giver and receiver of the gift. In contrast to his relatively fine theological grasp of the internal up-building of the body and of the ideas and purposes of grace, gift and Spirit, he faced overall the apparent unavailability of a goodly number of the gifts.

The effect of such a generalization is detected in his doctrine of Christ's baptism in the Holy Spirit where he wished his hearers "*to understand this one point . . . that since Jesus Christ hath this office of baptizing with the Holy Ghost, we must . . . be partakers of such a benefit: for otherwise it would be but an uncertain title with no truth in it.*"⁸⁰ Yet he is indecisive in applying this point. On the one hand, he felt it "absurd"⁸¹ that regeneration (i. e., entrance into salvation) should be confined to the sending of the Spirit visibly because, I believe, he had already presumed the equation of regeneration with the giving of the Spirit in this benefit of Christ's baptism in the Holy Spirit. So he posited, questionably, that "He baptizes all the elect daily."⁸² Clearly a more straightforward solution would have been to identify regeneration and Christ's baptism with the Holy Spirit as possibly different events. On the other hand he felt that receiving this spiritual baptism and the forgiveness of sins were "within the compass of (water) baptism,"⁸³ but this identification collapsed in general even further to the event of pedobaptism, the continued practice of which helped maintain a link with the establishment.⁸⁴

Calvin is forceful that water baptism (and/or pedobaptism) and ministers of it are not efficacious to produce anything, but only Christ himself. He stresses that

2:4; 10:46; 1 Cor 14:14; cf. W. McDonald, "Glossolalia in the New Testament," *BETS* 7 (Spring 1964) 59ff.; Horton, *What*, 277-278; V. Poythress, "The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options," *WTJ* 40 (1977) 130ff. Dunn, *Jesus*, 244, reasonably concludes that Paul thought of glossolalia as speaking the language(s) of heaven. A summary of contemporary study is given by McDonnell, *Charismatic*, 145ff.

⁷⁸H. Ervin, "Tongues and Prophecy as Signs," in *This Which Ye See and Hear* (Plainfield: Logos, 1972) 89-94.

⁷⁹Calvin, *Acts*, 1.59.

⁸⁰Fetherstone, tr., *Diverse*, 155, from second sermon on the ascension, Acts 1:4, 5 (italics mine).

⁸¹Calvin, *Acts*, 1.27.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Fetherstone, tr., *Diverse*, 157 (parentheses mine).

⁸⁴Williams' insightful conclusion is worth quoting in full: "Pedobaptism, equated with circumcision and with imperfectly defined sacramental effectiveness, remained the ultimate symbol for the Magisterial Reformers of the continuity of their churches with the Old Church and through it with old Israel. Conversely, for the largest of the three components of the Radical Reformation, believer's baptism was the symbol and the constitutive principle of the church reconceived, not as a *corpus christianum*, but as a people in covenant, a scattered remnant ever anew being assembled by God's Spirit and his Word" (G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 846).

“it has from the Holy Spirit whatever efficacy it does possess,”⁸⁵ yet the sovereignty of the Spirit seems overlooked when in the Genevan Catechism persons are told to “exhibit the power” of their pedobaptism.⁸⁶ Further, he exhorts that “one should not seek for this Holy Ghost (i. e., Christ’s baptism with the Holy Ghost) in the water or from men, but look up into heaven.”⁸⁷ Quite so. Yet in this regard heaven was routinely confined not just to the compass of baptism but to the water itself, and the NT data that did not fit the hypothesis of tying this work of the Spirit to water baptism (or pedobaptism) or to regeneration was not critically accounted for. The title of Christ as baptizer in the Spirit was indeed made uncertain thereby.

Further, the visible gifts are declared gone in the context of Calvin’s pertinent remark on the problem of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38c, *dōrea tou hagiou pneumatos*) being unaccompanied by other tongues. We need to examine his resolution of this problem in order to understand one of the reasons why he declared such a cessation. At Acts 2:38c (“and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”) he reasons that

this does not strictly apply to us. For since it was the inauguration of His Kingdom that Christ meant to set forth by these miracles, they lasted only for a time; but because the visible graces that the Lord distributed to His own mirrored forth that Christ was the Giver of the Spirit, the words of Peter—“Ye shall receive the gift of the Spirit”—apply in a measure to the whole Church. For although we do not receive the Spirit to the end that we may speak with tongues . . . yet He (the Holy Spirit) is given unto us for a better use, that we may believe with the heart unto righteousness.⁸⁸

The use of the past tense with the verbs “distribute” and “mirror,” which are used to describe the Lord’s activity here, is apparently negated by the Lord’s continual activity in this regard as guaranteed in the next verse of text (2:39). What better use Calvin and his hearers could make of a measured gift, as compared to that of Peter’s company and his hearers, who believed unto righteousness as well with an unmeasured gift, is not clear.

As is well known, commentators since Calvin have traditionally failed to extend the promise (*epangelia*) of the Spirit from Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33 to 2:39 or to find significance in the contextual possibilities raised by such an explicit extension.⁸⁹ It is clear, however, that Calvin realized that Peter might be promising in Acts 2:39 to hearers who would repent and be baptized a visible gift of the Holy Spirit that could be seen and heard (2:33) like that which Peter had just received himself: “And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God

⁸⁵Calvin, *Acts*, 1.235.

⁸⁶Reid, ed., *Calvin*, 134.

⁸⁷Fetherstone, tr., *Diverse*, 158 (parentheses mine). Ministers who perform water and/or pedobaptism are warned: “By adorning men we rob Christ” (Calvin, *Acts*, 1. 28).

⁸⁸Calvin, *Acts*, 1.81.

⁸⁹E. g., the two recent distinguished commentators I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978) 906, 907, and W. Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Oliphants, 1973) 79, are typical of this tradition.

shall call to himself." That is, the great Reformer apparently understood that this Scripture on its own, plainly interpreted in its original setting and meaning, yielded the result of the gift of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by miraculous tongues. However, he supplies various arbitrary explanations for not coming to grips with his own straightforward interpretation—namely, the possibility of Spirit baptism in pentecostal fashion.⁹⁰ He opts for unsatisfying arguments from experience-motivated concerns rather than from simple textual guidance. In his time frame, however, had he opted for this possible interpretation he would have had two Reformations, not one.

Perhaps Calvin resolved to minimize and truncate the probable spiritual dimension associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit in full measure after essentially ruling such a measure out of bounds. What could have been considered as a reasonably necessary ingredient in NT practice was circumvented here at the entrance of the literature describing the onset of the NT period. The accompanying spiritual constraints, which logically might be expected as implicit in such a dramatic move, likely were not comprehended by Calvin. The development of the forthcoming interpersonal *charismata*, scheduled for use within the emerging NT churches and yet to be described in epistles to them, would have to be deeply perturbed by this initiatory deviation from possible apostolic understanding. It was then only a short yet necessary step, based primarily on the inevitable ensuing observations, for Calvin to posit that all visible *charismata* had ceased.⁹¹ The citizens of the Reformation churches, perhaps deprived at the outset of the full measure of God's Spirit by questionable (yet historically conforming) assurances of its supposed unavailability, missed the usefulness and comprehension of many of Christ's charismatic sunbeams.

Another strong overarching reason why diverse postulates were supplied to explain why this possible straightforward interpretation of Acts 2:33, 38, 39 did not apply, and in general why similar miracles were rare, was the circumstantial context of tragic and abortive use of Biblical healing practices and attendant farcical claims. In evaluating Calvin's statements of charismatic discontinuity like the "temporary-permanent" and "ordinary-extraordinary" dichotomies⁹² we must take into account the strong pressures being brought on Calvin to produce signs and wonders and confirm his "new gospel."⁹³ The polemical setting against Calvin should be considered as another significant factor in motivating his in-

⁹⁰Parker, *Calvin*, 76, 77, rightly observes again that Calvin's greatest quality as a commentator was his self-disciplined subordination to the text, his ability to locate the plain, genuine, literal or native sense. His own moving deathbed testimony was that in interpretation he always aimed at the simple, not the subtle (*Corpus Reformatorum* 9, 893b).

⁹¹P. Hocken, "The Significance and Potential of Pentecostalism," in *New Heaven? New Earth?*, S. Tugwell et al. (Springfield, Ill.: Templegate, 1977) 20-24, argues that pentecostalism served to rediscover the *charismata pneumatika*.

⁹²"Ordinary gifts remain perpetually in the church" as opposed to "those wonderful graces by which Christ adorned His gospel at the beginning" (Calvin, *Romans*, 269). "Temporary" were gifts of healing and interpretation of tongues, so it was "not worthwhile to tarry over them," while other gifts were "permanent" (Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.8). All gifts not observed were "temporary and perishable" (Calvin, *Corinthians*, 278).

⁹³Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.16.

terpretation of Scripture away from what he might otherwise have come to. I feel this is possible also in the light of his numerous insightful and perceptive statements, which I am attempting to cite, regarding the spiritual gifts in general and their purpose.

The obviously unsatisfactory nature of the arbitrary rationalizations proposed, for example, for the possible pentecostal truncation at Acts 2:39 and the temporary-perishable, ordinary-extraordinary dichotomies erected along the charismatic way⁹⁴ did not pass completely unnoticed and unchallenged. An exception to the tenor of such Reformation thought was Müntzer, who urged more strongly than Calvin that "if Christendom is not to become apostolic (Acts 2:16 and following) in the way anticipated by Joel, why should one preach at all?"⁹⁵ Müntzer spoke of gifts of the Spirit as a goal of redemption, naming visions, dreams and ecstatic utterance.⁹⁶

In fact it is possible that Calvin's general pronouncements on charismatic unavailability, which were surely regarded as unscriptural, caused a rise in sectarian movements outside the Church.⁹⁷ Calvin also felt that the act of laying on of hands was "empty form"⁹⁸ and restricted possible accompanying charismatic manifestations to apostolic times. Schutzeichel takes Calvin to task on this for not realizing that what the apostles did in the primitive Church must also be done in the later Church since the charismatic *pneuma* is essential to the building up of the Church.⁹⁹

Calvin's insubstantial contentions for the supposed vanishing away of visible graces, such as "in order to make the preaching of the gospel marvelous forever"¹⁰⁰ or that certain miraculous events "also quickly perished on account of men's ungratefulness,"¹⁰¹ were motivated in part by the fact that Calvin believed that the true gospel, as he understood it, had "lain long unknown and bur-

⁹⁴It may be appropriate to note that Calvin is not the author of this equation: Canon of Scripture equals "that which is perfect" (1 Cor 13:10). In fact he is quite reserved in his exposition in that area: "I would like to advise my readers . . . not to torture themselves by probing into these matters too much" (Calvin, *Corinthians*, 279). I hope my readers will not be tortured by a probe of issues raised by this equation; cf. P. Elbert, "Face to Face: Then or Now? An Exegesis of First Corinthians 13:8-13, Part I and II: *Pneuma*," in *Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (forthcoming).

⁹⁵T. Müntzer, "Sermon Before the Princes," in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (G. Williams and A. Mergal, eds.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957) 62.

⁹⁶Williams, *Radical*, 49. Williams and Waldvogel, "History," 74, find evidence that speaking in tongues was generally known in the period as accompanying receipt of the Spirit.

⁹⁷M. Thurian, *La Confirmation* (Neuchatel/Paris: Delachaux, 1957) 14.

⁹⁸Calvin, *Acts*, 1.237. See n. 101.

⁹⁹H. Schutzeichel, "Calvins Kritik an der Firmung," in *Zeichen des Glaubens* (H. auf der Maur and B. Kleinheyser, eds.; Zürich/Einsiedeln/Cologne: Hansjorg, 1972) 131.

¹⁰⁰Calvin, *Institutes* 4.19.18.

¹⁰¹Ibid. Cf. also 4.19.6, where the laying on of hands in vain practice is opposed as a ritual because it implies deceptively that apostolic powers, miracles and workings are ongoing, but these "have ceased, and they have rightly lasted only for a time."

ied, as a fault of man's impiety." ¹⁰² This is another factor, aside from polemical settings, that forged Calvin's views on charismatic discontinuity, which were not always dogmatic (nn. 44, 60, 69, and 92 suggest some flexibility).

That gifts commonly called extraordinary were rashly conceived of as having a temporary end, and that the complete variety of gifts (e.g., Calvin's infinite number) was evidence of the power and glory of God as an indivisible part of his plan, was the hallmark of the first Reformed pentecostal theologian, Edward Irving.¹⁰³ Irving cogently, and I think with valid reasons, assessed the Calvinistic approach (with the truncation and dichotomies I have outlined) as one unworthy of the office and person of the Holy Spirit. While Calvin made substantial gains and offers us much good¹⁰⁴ his vision does not expand to that of Irving, who understood God as wanting to "bring down into the Church a complete Christ, *and keep him there*, ever filling her bosom, and working in her members."¹⁰⁵

The shortcoming of comprehension regarding the visible concretizing of grace, including interpretive barriers to the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit with the outward gift of power evidenced by other tongues, was created perhaps by several factors other than those I have mentioned, according to Irving. Speaking three centuries later he saw this shortcoming in his day as due to

our having ceased to lament their absence, and to pray for their return; our want of fasting, and humiliation [paralleling some of Calvin's concerns here], and crying unto the Lord; our contentment to be without them; our base and false theories to account for their absence, without taking guilt to ourselves. Any one of these causes was sufficient, all of them are far more than sufficient, to account for their long absence from the bosom of the Church. These are the true reasons; and the commonly given reason, that they were designed only for a short time, is utterly false and most pernicious.¹⁰⁶

Also, in accounting for factors bearing on Calvin's fanciful charismatic gap hypotheses, we should note that as a familiar and devoted admirer of Augustine¹⁰⁷ our Reformer could have been influenced by that Father's "scaffold theory"—namely, that some of the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians and Romans were a temporary scaffold from which God established the early Church. This teaching maintained that as the Church grew up it no longer needed the dispensations of

¹⁰²Ibid., 1.16.

¹⁰³G. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973) 101, 103. For brief overviews cf. L. Christianson, "Pentecostalism's Forgotten Forerunner," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (ed. V. Synan; Plainfield, N. J.: Logos, 1975) 17-37, and G. Strachan, "Theological and Cultural Origins of the Nineteenth Century Pentecostal Movement," *Theological Renewal* 1 (October/November 1975) 17-25.

¹⁰⁴Possibly deserving, I feel, in his own grand and restrictive way, "the great name of the theologian of the Holy Spirit" (B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956] 487).

¹⁰⁵Strachan, *Pentecostal*, 105 (italics mine).

¹⁰⁶Ibid. (brackets mine).

¹⁰⁷Wendel, *Calvin*, cites the numerous parallels arising out of Calvin's self-confessed debt to Augustine. I cite another parallel in Calvin's interpretation of the word of knowledge in that, with Augustine, all knowledge—even natural knowledge—rests ultimately on revelation.

certain gifts that were supposedly no longer being observed. Augustine, however, later apologized for such statements and emphasized that he never meant them to be taken to mean that miracles ceased with apostolic times:

But what I said is not to be so interpreted that no miracles are believed to be performed in the name of Christ in the present time. For when I wrote that book, I myself had recently learned that a blind man had been restored to sight . . . and I knew about some others, so numerous even in these times, that we cannot know about all of them nor enumerate those we know.¹⁰⁸

Further, in *City of God* 22.8 Augustine narrates numerous accounts of prophecies, healing miracles, visions, and resurrections from the dead, which he either witnessed personally or knew from reliable sources. In addition he wrote a short book on how to deal with visions for his friend Paulinus of Nola. Assuming he was aware of this aspect of Augustine, Calvin does not seem to bring this data to bear upon his speculations on charismatic discontinuity.

Calvin naturally presses as "permanent" the 1 Cor 12:28 charisms of helps (*antilēmpseis*) and governments (*kybernēseis*).¹⁰⁹ These were crucial for his Reformation theology—namely, that aspect that put responsibility of church administration and services back into the hands of laity and restored the pastoral office.¹¹⁰ These are worthy of brief comment here, as we also need to convince ourselves today that the edifying gifts of organization are vital to interpersonal work. They are just as needed in spiritually balanced churches as the flashy and impressive gifts. The varietal gifts of helps and governments are often quenched today as in Calvin's day, perhaps due to a combination of lack of recognition of these gifts in operation and lack of appreciation of Christ in them.

Helps could be defined as the motivation of the Holy Spirit in responsible ministry toward others,¹¹¹ and I have urged at the outset of this discussion the operational helping correlation between fruits and gifts. Calvin's pastoral heart would see this gift, which he equates with "caring for the poor,"¹¹² like the gift of ministering (*diakonia*, Rom 12:7), as very broad and significant in proper application (as it should be): "On no one has God bestowed all things, but each has received a certain measure, so that we need one another, and by bringing together what is given to them individually, they help one another."¹¹³

I believe that since it is more our nature to seek to edify via a flash or a word rather than via a sustained help, which would involve us as a committed Christian, it is vital to bring the greater honor to those who serve in helps as to the unseemly members of the body (1 Cor 12:22-24). These important service gifts are

¹⁰⁸Augustine, *Retractions* 1.13.7; cf. P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1967) 413ff.

¹⁰⁹Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.8.

¹¹⁰Reid, *Theological*, 206.

¹¹¹Tapp's little popular note on helps is helpful (N. C. Tapp, "Helps," *Paraclete* 9 [Winter 1975] 13ff.); cf. E. Corsie, "The Ministry Gifts," in *Pentecostal Doctrine* (ed. P. Brewster; Cheltenham, Gloucestershire: Elim, 1976) 95-101.

¹¹²Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.8—but he would stress that *everyone* needed the help and aid of his brother.

¹¹³Calvin, *Galatians*, 174.

supernatural *charismata*—i. e., energized by the Spirit and beyond our reach—with which to fulfill the law of Christ (Gal 6:2). And here, as in all gift processes, the transmitter must cooperate and allow the gift to go through to the recipient. Here also the “more the love of the cross is received, the more the gifts and the Spirit will be expressed.”¹¹⁴ As such, helps are an enhancement, a working enablement, a divine amplification or creation in which a helpful talent, service, or aid is extended in Christ’s name *pros to sympheron* (1 Cor 12:7).

Finally, governments consist of a special set of gifts that qualify and equip a Christian to be “a helmsman to his congregation, a true director of its order and therefore of its life.”¹¹⁵ Arguing from experience—“now experience itself makes clear that this sort of order was not confined to one age”¹¹⁶—Calvin recaptures the “four orders of office instituted by our Lord for the government of his Church.”¹¹⁷ Indeed, he viewed order and Christ’s government as themes of the book of Acts. Pastors and teachers were invested with authority by God, and each local church was viewed as having had a group of godly, grave, holy and sober men who presided over discipline with gentleness and mercy.¹¹⁸ Such governmental *charismata*, which might be exercised in matters of discipline, were not felt to be figurative: A penalty of bread and water for three days was administered to midwives who performed pedobaptism and those caught in fornication received six days on bread and water.¹¹⁹

The faithful were rightly enjoined to behave so that “with a gentle and teachable spirit they may allow themselves to be governed by teachers appointed.”¹²⁰ Note the plural here as Calvin definitely urged that the administration of justice in the ancient Church was not the function of an individual “to do whatever he pleased” but rather it was “in the hands of the assembly of the elders.”¹²¹ No spiritual Lone Rangers are endorsed here, running deviously unchecked, manipulating the unwary in Jesus’ name, and hearing only from the Father. The monarchical are both presumptuous and unscriptural.

Calvin correlates the spiritual function of “ruling” (*proistēmi*, Rom 12:8), which is “among God’s gifts . . . variously distributed according to the diversity

¹¹⁴T. Smail, “Authentic Authority,” *Theological Renewal* 1 (February/March 1976) 4.

¹¹⁵H. Beyer, *TDNT*, 3. 1036; cf. Horton, *What*, 279-283.

¹¹⁶Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.8; Krusche, *Wirken*, 110ff. Krusche concludes his discussion of *Amtscharisma* by noting that Calvin expected this type of gifts to be distributed by God’s Spirit so as to insure a working spiritual fraternity within the Church (p. 119). Calvin, however, becomes too humanistic when he unnecessarily parallels (cf. n. 34) secular administrative talent with spiritual governments, as Krusche correctly argues (pp. 116, 117).

¹¹⁷Reid, *Theological*, 58; Parker, *Calvin*, 82-84.

¹¹⁸Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.8; 4.9.6; 4.20.4; cf. R. Davis, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers* (London: Epworth, 1946) 121-123.

¹¹⁹Reid, *Theological*, 79, 82.

¹²⁰Calvin, *Institutes* 4.1.5.

¹²¹*Ibid.* 4.9.6.

of grace,"¹²² with the practical application of spiritual governments. Both of these graces should then be employed by those who are "joined with the pastors in the spiritual rule of the church."¹²³ Indeed, Calvin found an affinity for the order of the Spirit, and he was a product of an orderly world. He considered it "no ordinary honour to rule the Church of God."¹²⁴ Further, those who by the inner call of the Spirit are placed in church offices are exhorted to personal holiness, singular (not secularly competitive) devotion and faithful duty in reverence of this call. Those called, who are hopefully being made useful with the gifts of governments and ruling, are also wisely counseled to "excel" in the gifts mentioned in the 1 Cor 12:7-11 list.¹²⁵

Calvin's main concern was to help renew the ancient form of the Church and restore its apostolic character to the original primitive splendor. One prime goal therein was to unite a people with body-like consistency and Christ-like affection for one another. Therefore he properly placed some emphasis, as a small¹²⁶ but rightly significant part of his Reformation theology, on excelling in the gifts or interpersonal love relationships of the Holy Spirit. In these the Spirit, which freely flows from Christ, is cited as unlocking hidden treasures otherwise beyond our reach. Our Reformer's understanding of the broad purposes and use (especially of helps, governments and rulings) of the *charismata* is mature—for example, as our being spiritually enriched to upbuild our brothers and as having no surer rule but to distribute all gifts in aiding and benefiting others. The advice to climb higher and examine the secret energies and the infinite variety of the Spirit and his gifts will always be timely (especially when acted upon).

But the diversity of graces set forth in this infinite variety of gifts as from a spring that never runs dry was limited in scope by the arbitrary deletion (from that infinite number) of a substantial portion of the Spirit's dynamic supernatural activity. As a result, a dimension of the practical energizing and working of the Spirit was left nonfunctional and unappreciated. While all the visible fruits were for his time frame, Calvin declared a cessation of the visible gifts. This declaration was based on observation and was made within a highly polemical setting of antagonism regarding the miraculous. I think that Calvin did not understand why there was not a total apostolic recapture. Yet he was modest enough to realize that it was difficult to make up his mind about gifts and offices with which he had no personal familiarity.

¹²²Ibid. 4.20.4.

¹²³Ibid. 4.11.1.

¹²⁴Calvin, *Acts*, 2.182.

¹²⁵Calvin, *Institutes* 4.3.11. Charismatic discontinuities in that list, however, are invoked later in Book 4. An increasing level of operation of spiritual government, ruling and ministry in the Church was highly appreciated in light of its contemporary need; cf. Osterhaven, *Spirit*, 13ff., 59ff. The need for "charismatic" leaders today is ably set forth by M. Harper, "Bishops and Charisma," in Ban It, ed., *Bishop's*, 23-25.

¹²⁶This emphasis was only small at that time compared with that of the doctrines of the authority of Scripture, justification by faith, and the priesthood of all believers. But congregational singing, for example, and spiritual gifts were by no means the least of Calvin's many important concerns.

The charismatic spring and flow was undoubtedly perturbed by Calvin's truncation of the possibility of a personal pentecost at Acts 2:38, 39, which influenced his attempts at theological confinement elsewhere in Acts. Countermanding there his own simple and straightforward interpretation he opted not for the "pouring forth in full abundance" of Joel but for a "measured" gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead of what might have been, in God's will, an apostolic transmission of the promise in pentecostal fashion, he continued what I have characterized as the possible historical charismatic truncation. In offering explanations for the forthcoming charismatic discontinuities observed, he posited the ungratefulness and impiety of man. Overlooking the fact that man's nature had not changed from the first century, he did not initiate a seeking for those things not seen but erected what I have characterized as the "perishable-permanent" dichotomies along with other fanciful speculations. Not until three centuries later did Irving, who could be labeled the father of the pentecostal Reformation and/or the Scottish John the Baptist of the charismatic movement, sweep away the unscriptural hypothetical basis for the truncation and ensuing dichotomies. Building on Calvin's substantial groundwork doctrines of Scripture and Spirit, Irving produced a coherent theological understanding of the person and power of the Holy Spirit and the operation of his gifts, resulting in a more complete recapture of apostolic patterns.

In a letter to the respected cardinal Sadoletto, Calvin enjoined in prayer for the Lord to grant "the only true bond of ecclesiastical unity . . . through His one Word and Spirit, that we might join together with one heart and one soul."¹²⁷ The Church today is still moving toward that vital goal, with ample weight being given to the "unity of the Spirit" and the potential "unity of the faith" (Eph 4:3, 13). These words on oneness from the great Geneva divine, as well as those on the mature purposes of the spiritual gifts, may still touch our hearts in a useful way during this time of renewal. I will let him have the last word:

When God has made his Church to prosper so that the numbers are multiplied, and it is also increased in Spiritual gifts, not only they that have received those benefits must strive to praise God, but also all the rest of the Body, since it is fitting for us to be joined together with the holy bond.¹²⁸

¹²⁷J. Olin, *John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto: A Reformation Debate* (New York: Harper, 1966) 94. Recently Cardinal Suenens closed his book with similar words: "We are living in a moment of grace: God respects our liberty and will not force the door; but he is knocking! As the disciples at Emmaus, let us learn to recognize the Lord as he walks at our side. Let us pray to him: 'Stay with us, for evening draws on and the day is almost over' (Lk 24:49)," in *A New Pentecost?* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 208.

¹²⁸Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 304. I am grateful for several heuristic discussions with Jane Douglas during the course of this work.