

12:1–11 SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Now concerning^a spiritual gifts, ^b brothers, ^c I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says “Jesus is accursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

OVERVIEW: In the first part of [1 Corinthians 12](#), Paul describes how the one true God bestows various spiritual gifts on his people; hence, the Corinthian believers should live in harmony with one another, using their gifts to serve the common good rather than to promote themselves. Protestant commentators share Paul’s primary concern that spiritual gifts should be employed to glorify God and edify his church. At the same time, they find in these verses a strong warning against idolatry, a subtle affirmation of the

^a The expression *Now concerning* introduces a reply to a question in the Corinthians’ letter; see [7:1](#)

^b Or *spiritual persons*

^c Or *brothers and sisters*

doctrine of the Trinity, and a Pauline proof-text that counters Catholic confidence in the power of human free will in salvation. Reformation authors also give sustained attention to each of the nine spiritual gifts listed in this text. If some of these gifts, such as healing, miracles, and speaking in tongues, were particularly important for the advance of the gospel during the apostolic age, other gifts continue to be of crucial importance for the health of the present-day church¹. In this regard, Lutheran commentators extol the example of Martin Luther, who employed spiritual gifts such as wisdom, faith, prophecy, and the discernment of spirits to expose the error of Catholic doctrine and bring about the reformation of the church.

NOT EXALTING, BUT SERVING. MARTIN LUTHER: In chapters 12 and 13 [St. Paul] discusses the many different gifts of God, among which love is the best. He teaches the people not to exalt themselves but to serve one another in unity of spirit, since there is one God, one Lord, one Spirit, and everything is one, however great the diversity. PREFACE TO 1 CORINTHIANS.¹

ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT. HULDRYCH ZWINGLI: There were many abnormalities in the Corinthian church, as is clear enough from the preceding chapters, so that discord and jealousy arose among them even on account of the diversity of their gifts. Thus some were jealous of one another; others despised one another. And thereafter, everyone thoughtlessly and indiscriminately poured out abuse on whomever they could. Responding to this evil with a very powerful argument and exclamation, the apostle exhorts them to

¹LW 35:383.

love one another, teaching that they are one body and one spirit, though with many different gifts. Therefore these gifts ought to be used in such a way that they might be seen to reflect their author: because [the Lord] is one and of the same mind, so he leads his people to unity and harmony.

ANNOTATIONS ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12](#).²

ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS. TILEMANN HESSHUS: In this chapter, the apostle Paul teaches the Corinthian church what it should think about spiritual gifts, from where they originate, for what purpose they are given to the godly, what are the different kinds of gifts in the church, and how they ought to be used to shine forth the glory of God and to edify the church of Christ. Now, after the Corinthians had embraced the apostle's teaching and had been baptized in the name of [Jesus Christ](#) by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, they had received the visible outpouring of the [Holy Spirit](#) and been furnished with many excellent spiritual gifts so that they were speaking with various tongues, uttering prophecies, explaining sacred Scripture, and performing miracles. But some people among the Corinthians—and especially the false apostles—were exalting themselves with these gifts: They were attempting to display their knowledge of tongues in the assemblies. They were seeking popular favor with their eloquence. They were beginning to be haughty in their gifts and to look down on others in public. And they were aspiring to the highest place in the ministry so that they might be superior to others—as if the [Holy Spirit](#) had established a field for vainglory and had given his gifts for degrading and despising other people. Therefore, in this passage, the apostle Paul severely reproaches this

² Zwingli, *Annotatiunculae ... ex ore Zwinglij*, 98.

great error and foul abuse of the gifts of the Spirit. And since God has conferred on godly people a very different purpose than that, Paul teaches that they should preserve the glory of God, that they should edify and enhance the church, and that they should do good to every person in the church. For pride, rivalry, contempt for weaker people, and envy must be completely absent from godly people, who are citizens in Christ's kingdom.

Paul uses four very weighty reasons so as to encourage piety and modesty among those Corinthians in the use of their gifts. First, he reminds them what sort of people they were before their conversion and illumination, that they were destitute of all knowledge of God and had defiled themselves with horrible idolatry. Thus they must not now flaunt their plumes. Second, Paul shows them that the source of the gifts is certainly not our free will, nor the keenness of our intellect, nor the excellence of our nature; rather, their source is the eternal God, the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. It is only right, therefore, that we use gifts bestowed by God for the glory of God. Third, Paul teaches us that Christians are members of one body, whence he teaches that we should strive among ourselves with no rivalry and work with no jealousy, but instead should promote the common welfare of the whole body and encourage what is suitable and beautiful for everyone. Fourth, Paul explains the various levels and distinctions of offices and gifts that God has arranged in the church; for in the church he has assigned some to the position of apostles, others to the position of prophets, still others to the position of teachers. Therefore everyone ought to be content with their position and gift, and must apply themselves to adorning their station and demonstrating their faith to God

and the church. EXPLICATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12.³

TRUE FELLOWSHIP IN THE CHURCH. HEINRICH BULLINGER: In the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians [Paul] expounds more fully and plainly the conjunction of the heads and members, and that mainly by the same parable of the members of the human body, expressing it very eloquently, and witnessing that between the highest members of the church and the lowest there is a great and fitting agreement, and also a diligent care, and assistance that is both continual and most faithful. From all this it appears that the marks of the true and lively church of Christ are the communion of the Spirit of Christ, sincere faith, and Christian charity, without which no one is a partaker of this spiritual body. And by these things you may easily judge whether you are in the fellowship of the church or not.

DECADES.⁴

12:1–7 The One True God Gives Different Gifts

ALL WHO CONFESS JESUS CHRIST AS LORD POSSESS SPIRITUAL GIFTS. JACQUES LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES: The apostle has declared the great mystery of the Son of God, who is the hidden manna. Now he discusses the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which can only be possessed by those who believe in our Lord. Those who confess Jesus Christ to be Lord and God must necessarily possess these gifts. Those who blaspheme Christ Jesus and subject him to cursing do not possess these gifts. This is what those deceived people were doing who were following blind and mute idols. And this is what the Corinthians would now do if the grace of the Holy Spirit did

³ Hesshus, *Explicatio Prioris Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 263v–264v.

⁴ Bullinger, *Decades*, 4:25–26*.

not shine on them. COMMENTARY ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12:1](#).⁵

ONLY THE RIGHTEOUS POSSESS SPIRITUAL GIFTS. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: Besides faith, hope, and love, there are the gifts or *charismata*, namely, the twofold gifts, some natural such as eloquence, a retentive memory, civic prudence such as that found in Ahithophel. Other gifts are those of the work and efficacy of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers about which the apostle speaks here: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” Also in [Mark 16:17](#) we read, “And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons,” etc. Also [Matthew 21:21](#), “Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, … even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will be done.” These gifts, even if they are not righteousness, are still the works of the Spirit, as the apostle calls them, and generally works of faith.

Second: What, therefore? Do not such gifts always belong to the righteous? Does performing miracles belong only to the godly? Do not wicked people also have the gift of prophecy? I answer: It is certain that some miracles are tricks of demons, as was the case with Pharaoh’s magicians and what Paul calls in [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) “pretended wonders by the activity of Satan”—and also the miracles that now take place in those [Catholic] shrines to which the crowds and mob flock. But I do not recall in Scripture there being an example of some wicked person who truly performed miracles by divine power. Concerning prophecy, this is certain: that all true prophecy is the speech of the

⁵ Lefèvre d’Étaples, *Commentariorum in Epistolas Beati Pauli ... Liber Secundus*, 119r.

Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit sometimes speaks through the wicked, as through Balaam in **Numbers 24:15–19** and Saul in **1 Samuel 19:23ff**. I do not call prophecies such cases as that of Caiaphas (**John 11:49–51**), that is, those who prophesy without knowing it; rather, cases of prophesying occur when the person prophesying knows for certain that they are prophesying through the Holy Spirit, as Balaam and Saul. ANNOTATIONS ON **1 CORINTHIANS 12**.⁶

PAUL DID NOT ENDORSE SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The apostolic statement is clear: “I do not want you to be ignorant.” The zeal of anti-Christians is not at all apostolic when they wish to subvert the church with the darkness of ignorance. We owe to them all that confusion, superstition, impiety, and corruption that persist now in some of the churches of our age. Here are the statements of those sons of darkness: “Laypeople should not be taught the holy Scriptures nor should they read them.” “The biblical writings make heretics.” “Those who walk simply, walk well”—as if to walk simply means to walk in ignorance, with one’s eyes closed, rather than to live with sincerity, without deception and cunning. I beseech you, how will those people affirm with the apostle, “Concerning spiritual matters, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant”? If only the entire church might at last gain true knowledge of spiritual matters and spiritual people, and begin to discern between the true and false! COMMENTARY ON **1 CORINTHIANS 12:1**.⁷

THE SCOURGE OF IDOLATRY. MARTIN LUTHER: “Friends, think

⁶ Melanchthon, *Annotationes in Epistolam priorem ad Corinthios*, 136; citing **2 Sam 15:12, 31; 16:23**.

⁷ Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 450.

back each of you,” he’s saying. “What were you before you came to Christ? Nothing but blind heathens! You had no knowledge of God; instead you let yourselves be lead by the nose, wherever someone just said something about God. And your way of life was nothing other than completely fragmented worship—each person, wherever they turned, had to have their own idol, even the baby in the cradle, sucking his mother’s milk.” St. Augustine says that the city of Rome alone had more than four hundred gods. On top of that, Rome built a church, which still exists, formerly called the Pantheon, for all the gods in the world.

“You scampered with the masses wherever someone led you. You prayed, sacrificed, and fixed your hearts to absolutely speechless idols. They could neither teach nor advise nor comfort nor reward nor help you. And you got nothing out of this, beside that you were a blind, wretched, miserable, fragmented people. You could resist no error. You let yourselves be torn apart by everyone, like a poor flock of scattered sheep by wolves.” POSTIL ON THE **EPISTLE ON THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITYS.**⁸

THE CORINTHIANS MUST NEVER FORGET THEIR PAGAN PAST.
TILEMANN HESSHUS: Paul adduces the first argument by comparing the blindness, ignorance, and wretched condition that the Corinthians experienced under paganism before their conversion with that light, knowledge, and those gifts with which they were endowed after they had been converted to God.... No language can express the wretched state of pagans and all human beings who do not know God and are outside of Christ’s kingdom. For they live in horrible darkness; they defile themselves with terrible

⁸ WA 22:172–73 (cf. LW 78:331).

idolatry. Pagans worship as their gods Febris (the spirit of fever), Pallor (the god of fear), Bellona (the goddess of war), Priapus (the god of fertility), Boreas (the north wind), cats, and crocodiles. They perform the most disgustingly wicked deeds in their temples, by which they attempt to appease the deities—they even perform human sacrifices. They have experienced no great comfort in times of need; they have not understood the blessings of a mediator; and, in the end, they will be plunged screaming into eternal destruction. In a similar fashion, while in the papacy, we were ignorant of the true God and were led into error. Some people worshiped Anne, some worshiped Catherine, some worshiped Paul, some worshiped the three kings, still others worshiped the consecrated bread. Since God has rescued us from such darkness through the ministry of the Word and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, it is proper for us always to remember this enormous blessing and, in modesty and true humility, demonstrate our gratitude toward God. For those who are haughty about their gifts have forgotten their previous condition. EXPLICATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:2.⁹

THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY. THE ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS: Though the devil sometimes speaks in and through idols, yet the idols themselves “had mouths and speak not” (as the

⁹ Heshus, *Explicatio Prioris Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 265v–266r. Heshus is referring here to two different practices of Catholic piety that were popular in the Middle Ages: the veneration of saints such as St. Anne (the mother of the Virgin Mary), St. Catherine of Alexandria (a fourth-century Christian martyr), Paul, and the three wise men (traditionally identified as Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar); and the adoration of the Communion wafer consecrated in the Eucharist.

prophet David truly affirms of them in Ps 115:5). The craftsmen who made the mouths of the idol could not give them speech. Paul therefore speaks here in aggravation, to show what an absurd thing idolatry is. As Lactantius once observed, humans are so foolish “that reasonable people worship unreasonable creatures, sensible people adore senseless animals, and those who can speak call on dumb images and pictures.” ANNOTATIONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:2.¹⁰

THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. MARTIN LUTHER: Christ himself explains the Holy Spirit’s office and preaching—what he should teach and say in the church. “The Spirit,” he says, “will witness to me.” Likewise: “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine.” He will have such a simple manner of speech that he knows how to preach nothing other than Christ alone. If he should witness to Christ and glorify him, then he must not elevate anything else that might obscure Christ and rob him of his glory. And whoever does this surely is not speaking from the Holy Spirit, even if he has great gifts and is called a teacher, bishop, pope, council, or even an apostle and angel from heaven. Among the Corinthians some neglected to preach Christ alone and instead pointed to the apostles themselves, choosing between them: one Cephas, another Apollos, the third Paul, etc. POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.¹¹

THE WORK AND PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. MENNO SIMONS:

¹⁰ Downname, *The English Annotations*, EE2v*. Contrary to this text, there is no evidence that Psalm 115 was written by David. Lactantius addresses the themes of human wisdom and idolatry in his *Treatise on the Anger of God*, in ANF 7:259–80.

¹¹ LW 78:336* (WA 22:178); citing Jn 15:26; 16:14; Gal 1:8; 1 Cor 1:12.

We believe the Holy Spirit to be the true, essential Holy Spirit of God, who adorns us with his heavenly and divine gifts, and through his influence, according to the good pleasure of the Father, frees us from sin, gives us boldness, and makes us cheerful, peaceful, pious, and holy. And so we believe and confess before God, before his angels, before all our brethren, and before all the world, that these three names, activities, and powers, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (which the fathers called three persons, by which they meant the three, true, divine beings) are one incomprehensible, indescribable, almighty, holy, only eternal, and sovereign God. **CONFESSTION OF THE TRIUNE GOD.**¹²

THE PROOF OF THE SPIRIT IS WITHIN THE BELIEVER. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Paul begins to instruct them concerning spiritual matters. And first, he mentions that work of the Spirit which is universal among all believers. Then he adds those particular gifts that are not conferred to all people equally, but are distributed variously to different people. The universal work of the Spirit is that faith by which we call the crucified Jesus, “Lord.” “Do you want evidence,” Paul says, “that you are speaking in the Spirit of God? The fact that you call Jesus ‘Lord’ comes from the Spirit of God. If the Spirit were not in you, you would not be able to call Jesus ‘Lord.’ If he is in you, you will not call him accursed [*anathema*].” For it is the Spirit of God whom believers receive, the Spirit of truth, who bears witness that Jesus is Lord. That is why no one speaking through the Spirit calls Jesus accursed, and no one is able to call Jesus “Lord” except by him....

We are warned by this passage that we should pay care-

¹² Simons, *Complete Writings*, 496*.

ful attention how we perceive Christ Jesus in ourselves, and what we say about other people. The Spirit proves, John says, whether we are from God. The Spirit's proof is necessary for us so that we are not deceived by others or deceive ourselves. Nothing can provide greater certainty than this: if we pay attention both to our own view and others' views concerning Christ. Thus words are not necessary for me to know that I have been filled with the Spirit. For, if I pay close attention, I can test from this how I feel about Christ in my heart. If I believe and feel strongly that Christ has been designated as Lord by God the Father, then I have this evidence of the Spirit of God, who performed this faith in me. However, to prove the work of the Spirit in other people, it is necessary for me to listen and identify how they speak and feel about Christ. If they confess that Christ is Lord, I know that the Spirit of God is in them. For no one is able to call Jesus "Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the confession of this faith constitutes a sure proof of the Holy Spirit. *COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3.*¹³

PROFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST IS THE PRINCIPAL GIFT OF THE SPIRIT. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: There is one chief and principal gift of the Holy Spirit that necessarily shines forth in all saints without fail: namely, the true recognition and profession of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; or, true faith that Jesus is the Lord, or truly in nature God, and that he is Christ our only Redeemer and Savior; and, at the same time, a rejection and avoidance of the worship of idols. Paul is speaking in this passage about this chief and principal gift that is common to all the saints: "No one speaking in the Spirit of God says 'Jesus is cursed.'" That is to say, all those

¹³ Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 452–53; citing 1 Jn 4:13.

who curse the Son of God as accursed or call him a plague condemned by God and as one who must be removed from the world (as the Jews, Turks, and heathen do in our day), or all those who blasphemously slander and corrupt the true doctrine concerning the person and work of Christ (as the Arians and papists do) are not members of the true church or governed by the Holy Spirit. “And no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” That is to say, no one can rightly recognize and with firm faith embrace and constantly confess to the last gasp of life Jesus Christ as the only and true redeemer and giver of eternal life, unless they are governed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Paul is not speaking here of a mere profession of the name of Jesus, but of the whole teaching and confession of faith of Jesus Christ that perseveres, which John expounded in John 20: “These things are written so that you might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that, by believing, you might have life in his name.” This faith is the chief and principal gift of the Holy Spirit, which must shine forth and appear in all godly people. POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.¹⁴

THE TONGUE IS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. JOHN DONNE: The tongue is the fittest instrument for the Holy Ghost to work on and to work by.... The Son of God is the Word, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from him. And because that faith which unites us to God is expressed in the tongue, to the extent that the heart is the center in which the Holy Ghost rests, the tongue is the sphere in which he moves. And therefore St. Cyril says that as God set the cherubim with a fiery sword to keep us out of Paradise, so God has set

¹⁴ Chytraeus, *Dispositio epistolarum*, 380–81; citing Jn 20:31.

the Holy Ghost in fiery tongues to let us in again. SERMON
PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY.¹⁵

TRUE CHRISTIANS DO NOT CURSE CHRIST. JOHN TRAPP: As the ... Jews do today in their daily prayers and breviaries, and as the Gentiles used to do, including the Corinthians among them. But now they would rather die than curse Christ. Pliny wrote to Emperor Trajan that he could never force any that were truly Christians to invoke the gods or perform a sacrifice before the emperor's image or curse Christ. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3.¹⁶

JESUS IS LORD. JOHN DONNE: When we say *Iesus est*, that “Jesus is,” we thereby confess his eternity, and therein his Godhead. When we say *Iesus Dominus*, that “Jesus is a Lord,” we thereby confess a dominion that he has purchased. And when we say *Iesum Dominum*, so that we profess him to be *the* Lord, then we confess a vigilance, a superintendence, a residence, and a permanence of Christ in his dominion, in his church, to the world’s end. If he is the Lord in his church, there is no other who rules with him, there is no other that rules for him.... To say that “Jesus is the Lord” is to confess him as God from everlasting, who has been made man in the fullness of time and governs still that church which he has purchased with his blood. He therefore intends that we direct all our particular actions to his glory.

SERMON PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY.¹⁷

¹⁵ Donne, *Sermons of John Donne*, 6:122*. See Cyril, *Catechetical Lectures* (lecture xvi.15), in NPNF 7:128.

¹⁶ Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition*, 689*. Pliny the Younger’s letter to Emperor Trajan was written c. 112. See Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3–4.

¹⁷ Donne, *Sermons of John Donne*, 6:125*.

THE TRIUNE GOD ENDOWS GIFTS, OFFICES, AND ACTIVITIES.

DAVID DICKSON: Paul ascribes gifts to the Holy Spirit, who distributes gifts both ordinary and extraordinary according to the needs of the church (verse 4). Paul ascribes the functions and offices to Christ, who being Lord in his house appoints what services he pleases, calls to offices whom he will, and employs those who are called in their functions as he will (verse 5). But various operations, or the exercise of various kinds of gifts, Paul ascribes in verse 6 to God the Father, who even as he is the beginning of all things, so he works efficaciously in all things. Now the apostle does not distinguish between these three categories of things (namely, gifts, offices, and operations) as if they come from one person of the Trinity rather than all persons of the Godhead. Rather, Paul makes this distinction ... so that we might more easily be led by the hand to apprehend the distinction between the divine persons and their unity of essence; and so that we might observe the equality of the persons of the holy Trinity, and their unity in gifts, offices, and operation of gifts, and by observing this equality, might all together strive for the good of the church and the glory of God. EXPOSITION OF **1 CORINTHIANS 12:4–6.**¹⁸

THE SAME SPIRIT WORKS IN DIFFERENT WAYS. JOHN COLET: Human beings of themselves are powerless, and stupid, and wicked, and, finally, childish. But when they are called by grace to the all-powerful, all-wise, all-good Jesus Christ (who is the Word and the Eloquence of God), one and the same Spirit works all these things in these human beings, imparting as he desires to some the power to perform miracles through Christ. To others he imparts the ability to

¹⁸ Dickson, *Exposition of St. Paul's Epistles*, 61*.

speak sparkling wisdom; to others the ability to perform acts of kindness; to others the ability to speak with diverse tongues; to others the ability to interpret sublime words from God as prophecy; to others the ability to speak forth the lofty truth of God’s power. In power, wisdom, goodness, action, eloquence; in efficacy, multitude, variety, order, beauty; in goodness and kindness, in speech and truth; in erudition and instruction; in the purification, enlightenment, and perfection of humans in Christ; in the building and completion of Christ in God (which is the church)—truly, in all these ways, the Spirit of God is engaged and active and working in human beings. EXPOSITION OF [1 CORINTHIANS 12](#).¹⁹

THERE ARE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.
PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: Paul has three categories in mind: gifts, ministries, and activities or powers. He calls “gifts” those things through which we work, such as utterance of wisdom and the utterance of knowledge. The apostle calls “ministries” those prophets and teachers, as he himself explains at greater length. He calls “activities” the power and ability to perform miracles such as healing, casting out demons, Peter’s killing of Ananias ([Acts 5:3ff.](#)), etc. Moreover, these are part of the argument he began above: It is the same Spirit who pours himself on the church in many different ways; thus all of us who have been filled with the same Spirit should be in agreement. ANNOTATIONS ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12:4](#).²⁰

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY TAUGHT HERE. MARTIN

¹⁹ Colet, *Enarratio*, 232, 236*.

²⁰ Melanchthon, *Annotationes in Epistolam priorem ad Corinthios*, 142.

LUTHER: Now here too he distinguishes the three—one God, Lord, and Spirit—and gives to each his own work, through which he reveals himself. One person is God the Father, from whom as the source and first person all powers derive. The second is the Lord, that is, Christ, the Son of God, from whom as the head of the church all offices flow. The third is the Spirit, who produces and distributes all gifts in the church. Nevertheless, these three are all one divine, almighty, eternal essence. Accordingly all three are called and truly are one, since God must be one indivisible essence.... Nevertheless, these three—God, Lord, and Spirit—are not several gods, but the same divine essence. The Lord is no other God than God the Father; the Spirit is also none other than God and the Lord. POSTIL ON THE EPIS-TLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.²¹

THE SAME LORD. JOHN CALVIN: The ancient fathers used these verses against the Arians to defend the Trinity of persons. For the Spirit is named here, then the Lord, and last God; and Paul ascribes one and the same activity to the three. Thus, by the name “Lord,” they understood “Christ.” But for my part, although I have no objection to understanding these verses this way, nevertheless I recognize that it is a weak argument if someone wants to close the mouth of the Arians.... “The ministries are different,” Paul says, “but the Lord is the same, whom we must serve, whatever ministry we perform.” This antithesis, then, demonstrates [Paul’s] simple meaning, so that to restrict the title “Lord” to Christ is too forced. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:5.²²

²¹ LW 78:339, 340* (WA 22:181). Luther acknowledges that the external works of the Trinity are undivided. See Mickey L. Mattox, “From Faith to the Text and Back Again: Martin Luther on the Trinity in the Old Testament,” *Pro Ecclesia* 15, no 3 (2006): 281–303.

SALVATION COMES FROM GOD'S GRACE AND HUMAN EFFORT.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS: Paul says to the Philippians, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” and the same, earlier to the Corinthians: “But it is the same God who works all things in everyone.” There are hundreds more passages of this kind in Holy Scripture. If humans do nothing, why say, “Work out”? If humans do something, why say, “God works all things in everyone”? If you wish to twist the one passage to support a special interpretation, humans do nothing. On the other hand, if you wish to turn the other to your cause, humans do it all. If humans do nothing, there is no room for merits; where there is no room for merits, there is no room for punishments or rewards. If humans do it all, there is no room for grace, which Paul urges so many times. The Holy Spirit does not fight against himself, whose inspiration produced the canonical Scriptures. Both sides embrace and acknowledge the inviolable majesty of Scripture, but an interpretation must be found that will unravel the knot.... And so these passages, which seem to be in conflict with one another, are easily brought into harmony if we join the striving of our will with the assistance of divine grace. ON THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL.²³

SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE, NOT BY HUMAN WORKS.

MARTIN LUTHER: The protagonists of “free will” create difficulties where none exist, and dream contradictions for themselves. For instance: there is no conflict between: “If humans purify themselves,” and: “God works all in all” (1 Cor 12:6); nor is it necessary to cut the knot by saying that God does something and humans do something. The for-

²² CO 49:498 (cf. CTS 39:399).

²³ LCC 17:73–74; citing Phil 2:12.

mer statement is hypothetical, and neither affirms nor denies any work or power in humans, but simply lays down what work and power there should be in humans.... The latter text, “God works all in all,” is an indicative statement, declaring that all works and all power are in God. How then do these two passages conflict, when the one does not deal at all with the power of humans, and the other attributes all things to God? Do they not rather harmonize perfectly? But [Erasmus’s] *Diatribē* is so ruinously sunk in, choked with, and stifled by this notion of its own carnal fancy—claiming that it is pointless to command impossibilities—that it cannot control itself; but whenever it hears an imperative or hypothetical statement it straightaway tacks on its own indicative inferences: “something is commanded, therefore we can do it, else the command is stupid.” **THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL.**²⁴

THE TRIUNE GOD BESTOWS DIFFERENT GIFTS. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The diversity of gifts, Paul says, is not due to various spirits, but comes from exactly the same Spirit. And he does not consider the Lord’s message different for different people because there are a variety of ministries in the church. For the Lord is the same, who is served by various kinds of ministries. In the same way, God should not be judged as changeable because there are different activities; rather, God should be recognized as one and the same in all of them. Among pagans, various activities were attributed to different gods, whether Jove, Neptune, Saturn, Apollo, or Mercury, etc., just as in the papacy different virtues are assigned to various saints. One saint is in charge of sailing in the sea, another for fighting wars, another for planting

²⁴ Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 236–37.

crops, etc. Another saint looks after various sicknesses. But the apostle ascribes the gifts, sent from heaven to the church, not to saints, nor to angelic spirits, but to God the Father, the Lord Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Thus it seems proper to recognize in this passage (following Chrysostom and Ambrose) the holy Trinity of divine persons—since I see nothing to prevent this interpretation. And when Paul speaks about those gifts in [Ephesians 4](#), he says a similar thing: “One Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all.” Now it should not be thought that Paul assigns gifts specifically to the Spirit, ministries to the Lord Christ, and activities to God the Father. All of God’s gifts are from God the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. God performs his gifts in us by his Spirit, through Christ. [COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:6](#).²⁵

THE PURPOSE OF THE SPIRIT’S GIFTS. [JOHN CALVIN](#): Paul now shows the purpose for which God has given his gifts, for he does not confer them on us in vain, nor does he intend them to be used for show. Therefore we must ask, what is their proper use? Paul answers *pros to sympheron*, that is, so that the church may gain benefit from them. “The manifestation of the Spirit” may be taken in a passive sense as well as an active sense: in a passive sense because wherever there is prophecy, or knowledge, or any other any gift, the Spirit of God manifests himself; in an active sense, because the Spirit of God, when he enriches us with any gift, unlocks his treasures, for the purpose of manifesting to us those things that would otherwise have been concealed and shut up. COM-

²⁵ Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 456–57. For Chrysostom’s treatment of this passage, see his [Homilies on 1 Corinthians \(homily 29\)](#), in [NPNF 12:170–71](#). For Ambrose (Ambrosiaster), see his *Comment. in Epist. I ad Cor.*, in [PL 17:259](#).

MENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7.²⁶

FOR THE COMMON GOOD. JOHN TRAPP: We are neither born nor born again for ourselves. If we are not fit to serve the body, then neither are we fit to be of the body. They are not saints who do not seek the communion of the saints.... The Greek word [*to sympheron*] means to confer a benefit that redounds to the community. It appears to be a metaphor drawn from bees that bring all the honey they can find into the common hive. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7.²⁷

12:8–11 Varieties of Gifts

NINE GIFTS THAT BENEFIT THE CHURCH. DAVID DICKSON: [Paul lists] nine kinds of gifts, which all tend to the good of the church. The first gift, the word of wisdom, is the seasonable application of sound doctrine to the hearers, which is the gift of a pastor. The second, the word of knowledge, is the gift of a teacher, who can give the general doctrine and meaning of the Scripture, although he does not have the gift to apply it.... The third gift is faith, which is the faith to perform many famous miracles; in chapter 13 it is called “all faith.” The fourth gift is that of healing diseases, one among the miraculous gifts that make up the list that follows. The fifth gift is that of working miracles and powerfully casting out devils and the enemies of the church, of which we have an example in [Acts 13:11](#). The sixth gift is foretelling things to come, and revealing secrets. The seventh gift is distinguishing counterfeits from the gifts of the Spirit. The eighth gift is speaking with diverse kinds of tongues. The ninth gift is the interpretation of tongues, without the gift of speaking

²⁶ CO 49:499 (cf. CTS 39:400).

²⁷ Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition*, 689–690*.

with those tongues; for it appears that some spoke with tongues who could not interpret them, and vice versa. In this way it seemed good to God to distribute his gifts. EXPOSITION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8–10.²⁸

LUTHER POSSESSED THE GIFT OF WISDOM. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: Paul in this passage lists nine kinds of gifts of the Holy Spirit, the first of which is *logos sophias*, or a word of wisdom, namely, a complete knowledge of all the articles of Christian doctrine, joined with a true and earnest godliness, or with a true fear of God and faith, where every decision and action coincides with the will of God.... Wisdom in this passage also includes ... an exceptional and more perfect light, which not only understands true doctrine aright but also recognizes and ably discerns errors and false opinions. And such a kind of spiritual wisdom shone forth in Paul, Augustine, and Luther, as it was aroused by God through the experience of temptations and struggles, and confirmed through terrors and comforts. POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.²⁹

WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: Wisdom is the experience of spiritual things; an example of this is found in the sermons of [Johannes] Tauler where he passes judgment on spiritual conditions. This wisdom understands what faith, hope, and sin are, while hypocrites understand absolutely nothing about these things. This is the way the apostle uses the word for wisdom elsewhere, as in Ephesians 1:17. Second, any other kind of comprehension is called knowledge, which pertains to knowing what should be done, what is lawful, what is unlawful. Of this sort is

²⁸ Dickson, *Exposition of St. Paul's Epistles*, 61*; citing 1 Cor 13:2.

²⁹ Chytraeus, *Dispositio epistolarum*, 382–83.

discussion about the power of the pope, the jurisdiction of magistrates, the sacraments, and other similar topics, which can be treated without any spiritual experience.

ANNOTATIONS ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8.³⁰

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. JOHN CALVIN: As to the difference between these gifts, knowledge (or comprehension) and wisdom are taken in various ways in Scripture. But here I take them as expressing a degree of difference, as is found in [Colossians 2:3](#), where they are joined together when Paul says that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Thus, in my opinion, knowledge indicates an understanding of holy things, whereas wisdom means a complete grasp of them. Sometimes prudence is placed in between them, as it were, in which case it indicates the skill of applying knowledge to some useful purpose. These two words are, indeed, very closely related; but still, you see a difference when they are compared to one another. Let knowledge therefore be understood as the ordinary comprehension of things, while the word wisdom includes revelations that are of a more secret and lofty nature. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:8.³¹

THE GIFT OF FAITH. TILEMANN HESSHUS: Paul is speaking here about a special kind of faith, whereby miracles are performed, or terrible and huge temptations are overcome, or special blessings are obtained from God. Now there is a

³⁰ Melanchthon, *Annotationes in Epistolam priorem ad Corinthios*, 144. Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361) was a German Dominican preacher, writer, and mystic whose published sermons shaped Martin Luther’s early theology.

³¹ CO 49:499 (cf. [CTS 39:401](#)).

general kind of faith that is given by the Holy Spirit, by which we take hold of the promise of the gospel concerning the free remission of sins, granted to each and every person through the Mediator, Jesus Christ. And so Benjamin was living before God by his faith, as was Abraham, or Elijah, or David. But that special kind of faith—evidenced when either miracles are performed or some great deed undertaken—is not possessed by everyone. Special faith was seen when David entrusted himself to the Lord to win the victory over Goliath, and attacked this Philistine in full view of the entire army of the Israelites which was trembling with fear. Special faith was seen when Elisha raised the boy from the dead, whom Gehazi was not able to resuscitate. Special faith was seen when Isaiah obtained from the Lord that the sun's shadow would recede ten steps; and Joshua ordered the sun and moon to remain motionless in the middle of the sky for an entire day. EXPLICATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 12:9.³²

LUTHER POSSESSED THE GIFT OF FAITH. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: Faith [is] an assured trust fixed on God; the performance of great and wonderful things with a mighty and invincible courage; the gaining of freedom from grave dangers, which seem to defy human reason in situations no less difficult than the moving of mountains. Paul speaks about such faith in the following chapter: “If I have so great a faith as to remove mountains....” Such faith was evident among the apostles, and in our days with Luther, who with a stout and unabashed courage of heart, spread abroad the doctrine of the gospel when all the world was against him. POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.³³

³² Heshus, *Explicatio Prioris Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 271v; citing 1 Sam 17:1–58; 2 Kings 4:1–37; Is 38:8; Josh 10:12–13.

THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF FAITH AND HEALING. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Paul is not speaking here about the faith that justifies, which is common to all believers, without which God has ordained that we cannot be saved. Rather, he is speaking about faith in signs and miracles, as Chrysostom and Jerome recognized.... In the church of the elect, the Spirit of God does not give faith in Christ to some, hope to others, and love to still others. Rather, he enables all the elect to believe in Christ, hope in and anticipate the life to come, and love their brothers and sisters. Although he gives these things in different measures, to some more than others, nevertheless he gives as much as is necessary to everyone. Now the faith that Paul here classifies among the spiritual gifts, God does not give to everyone, but only to some....

[Next], Paul speaks about the miraculous healing of diseases, which Christ promised in the last chapter of Mark to those who believed in him, saying: “These signs will accompany those who believe in me, etc., they will lay hands on the sick and they will be healed” ([Mark 16:17–18](#)). The apostles employed healing to great benefit in propagating faith in the name of Christ, as is seen in the story of the crippled man sitting at the gate of the temple, whom Peter restored to health and raised to his feet ([Acts 3](#)). Now, since there are many different kinds of diseases, Paul uses the plural, saying “to others, *gifts* of healing.” He includes here not only people with fevers and bed-ridden paralytics but also those who are blind, deaf, mute, lame, etc. Gifts of healing were especially applied to people who had not yet come to faith in Christ, who, by this display of the miraculous power of God, and recognizing God’s kindness in healing

³³ Chytraeus, *Dispositio epistolarum*, 383–84; citing [1 Cor 13:2](#).

them, were encouraged to believe in the gospel. Miraculous signs like these were added to confirm God's grace. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:9.³⁴

THE GIFT OF HEALING. PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI: The gift of healing, by which various kinds of diseases were cured, was very common in the church at the beginning. This kind of blessing both attracted unbelievers to the gospel and was necessary for believers, because they often did not have access to doctors. For pagans generally did not hasten to their aid when believers were suffering maladies; rather, when persecution raged, the pagans wanted to kill them. Later on, believers were not always furnished with the leisure, healthy food, or money needed to regain their health. But now the situation is different, and thus miracles of this sort have been done away with. I know that it is mentioned by some people that Emperor Vespasian had in his finger the power to heal, and it is written that a very similar power belonged to Pyrrhus, king of the Epirus. But since those healings were performed by a certain power of nature, they achieved the healing of only one particular disease. But this gift of the Holy Spirit brought help to people with all kinds of diseases; indeed, God bestowed his power all the way to bringing the dead back to life. Irenaeus reported that this gift of the Holy Spirit continued in the church all the way to his time. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:9.³⁵

³⁴ Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 462–63; citing *Acts 3:1–10*. For Chrysostom's treatment of this passage, see his *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* (homily 29), in NPNF 12:172. For Jerome, see *Expositio in Primam Epistolam ad Corinthios*, in PL 30 (1865, ed.): 786.

³⁵ Vermigli, *In Selectissimam Priorem ad Corinthios Epistolam ... Commentarii*, 329r–v. Vespasian was Roman emperor from AD 70

GIFTS OF HEALING AND MIRACLES. JOHN CALVIN: Everyone knows what is meant by the gift of healing. There is more uncertainty about the power to effect miracles, or (as some would translate it) the “workings of powers.” I am inclined, however, to think that what is meant here is the power that is employed against demons as well as against hypocrites. Therefore, when Christ and his apostles exercised authority to subdue demons or put them to flight, that was the gift of workings of powers [*energēma*]—and also when Paul inflicted the sorcerer with blindness and when Peter struck Ananias and Sapphira dead by his words alone. Therefore the gifts of healing and miracles are both expressions of God’s goodness; but this latter gift expresses his severity for the destruction of Satan. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10.³⁶

THE GREAT WORKS OF GOD. THE ENGLISH ANNOTATIONS: The gift of healing spoken of in the previous verse was miraculous, but here by the phrase *energēmata dynameōn* the apostle means the greater workings of God’s mighty power, which surpassed and excelled among his miracles. Such miracles included the delivery of the people of Israel by the hand of Moses, and what God did by Elijah against the priests of Baal, in sending down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and licking up all the water [around the altar], and that which he did by Peter in the matter of Ananias and Sapphira, and similar such things. ANNOTATIONS ON

to 79. Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, (c. 307–272 BC), is remembered for his invasion of Italy in 280 BC and his subsequent defeat at the hands of the Romans in 279 BC. In his book *Against Heresies* (2.32.4), Irenaeus (died c. 202) reports that gifts of healing were still being practiced in his day. See ANF 1:409.

³⁶ CO 49:500 (cf. CTS 39:402); citing Acts 13:11; 5:1–11.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10.³⁷

MIRACLES DON'T AUTHENTICATE TRUE HOLINESS. GUILLAUME FAREL: Look at Judas, an apostle, preaching that which he learned from Jesus, doing all sorts of miracles, but being in the end nothing. For this reason those who have prophesied and done miracles but are not part of the elect will be rejected. By this the world is greatly abused, not having knowledge of the ordinance of God. These things are not possible to judge, for it is impossible to judge any being holy because of miracles or other things before the coming of our Lord. For by miracles or similar things we are not made holy. I do not even need to speak of miracles that are simply invented. For miracles are performed also by the reprobate. But those whom God loved greatly, like many prophets and John the Baptist, never performed any. **SUMMARY AND BRIEF EXPOSITION.**³⁸

LUTHER POSSESSED THE GIFT OF PROPHECY. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: Prophesying [is] the gift of foretelling things to come, as was evinced in Agabus ([Acts 11](#) and [21](#)) and in the daughters of Philip the evangelist ([Acts 21](#)), or it is a singular ability and fitness in expounding the prophecies of Scripture—that Luther possessed such a singular ability was witnessed even by Erasmus. **POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.**³⁹

THE GIFTS OF PROPHECY AND DISTINGUISHING SPIRITS. TILE-MANN HESSHUS: For the apostles, the word *prophecy* not only signified the preaching of future events, but more generally

³⁷ Downname, *English Annotations*, EE2v*.

³⁸ In Zuidema and Van Raalte, *Early French Reform*, 177.

³⁹ Chytraeus, *Dispositio epistolarum*, 384; citing [1 Cor 14:6](#); [Acts 11:27–28](#).

it was the function of teaching the gospel and explaining the holy Scripture, as Paul states in [1 Corinthians 14](#). Those who prophesy speak to men and women for their edification, encouragement, and consolation. Therefore a word of prophecy is employed in a twofold manner in holy Scripture. Sometimes it is employed for prediction, as Agabus predicted a famine, or when Athanasius predicted the death of Emperor Julian. Sometimes it indicates the skill of preaching to the people about God and eternal life.

Other people [have the gift] of distinguishing spirits. This gift is notable and is very necessary in the church, yet it is not given to everyone. For not all godly people—even if they understand the truth, are zealous to avoid error, and are governed by the Holy Spirit—are able to detect fanatical spirits and recognize their tricks and plots. For Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Alexander and Athanasius were judging more accurately than many other bishops what a great blasphemy Arius was attempting to inflict on the church. Cyril judged the fanatical spirit of Nestorius far more correctly than John of Antioch or Theodoret.... Luther, of sacred memory, who was endowed with an extraordinary gift for discerning spirits, hereafter perceived the error of Karlstadt, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Müntzer, Schwenckfeld, the Münsterites, and the Anabaptists. The fact that Luther detected and revealed to the world the Roman Antichrist was the gift of discerning spirits.... Since the church of Christ especially needs this notable gift so that the machinations of Satan can be disclosed and restrained from Christ's little ones, we must passionately pray to God that he will always provide some people in the church with this splendid gift of the Holy Spirit. EXPLANATION OF [1 CORINTHIANS 12:10](#).⁴⁰

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF TONGUES. WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The gift of tongues was first poured out on the apostles by the Spirit of God shortly after the ascension of Christ, as they were undertaking their apostolic office of instructing people of all nations throughout the world. Afterward, the gift of tongues also began to be poured out on believers, as Christ had predicted in the last chapter of Mark: “These signs will accompany those who believe in me: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues, etc.” The Corinthians became very proud of this type of gift, as will soon become clear. I understand the interpretation of tongues to have been not only the gift by which some people understood those speaking various languages but also the gift of explaining and proclaiming that which was said in a foreign tongue for the benefit of the church. This gift of interpretation is so necessary that the apostle does not wish any tongue to be spoken in church without it.

COMMENTARY ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12:10](#).⁴⁰

THE GIFT OF TONGUES NOT AS IMPORTANT TODAY. PETER MARTYR VERMIGLI: This gift was especially necessary in the ancient world when only a few men were responsible for proclaiming the gospel throughout the whole world, which

⁴⁰ Heshus, *Explicatio Prioris Epistolae ad Corinthios*, 272r–273r. For Athanasius’s prediction of Emperor Julian’s death, see the appendix at [NPNF 4:487](#). The “Münsterites” refers to the theocratic kingdom established in the German city of Münster by Jan Matthijs (d. 1534), Jan Beukels (d. 1536), and other Anabaptist radicals in 1534–1535. This radical experiment in theocratic communalism (including the practice of polygamy) and apocalyptic fervor ended when the city was conquered by Catholic and Protestant forces.

⁴¹ Musculus, *Comm. 1 Cor.*, 464–65; citing [Mk 16:17](#).

was hardly possible unless they had the capacity to speak different languages. This gift is not as necessary today, since the church, which has now extended throughout the world, speaks in all languages and has its pastors and teachers everywhere. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew tongues must by all means be preserved, because through them we have the Old and New Testament writings. The Corinthians were very pleased with themselves concerning this gift. In order to correct them, Paul does not list this gift among the first, but among the last—which you see not only here but also will see more clearly in the next chapter. **COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10.**⁴²

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF INTERPRETING TONGUES. JOHN CALVIN: The interpretation of tongues was different from the knowledge of tongues, for those who were endowed with the latter were often not acquainted with the language of the people with whom they were dealing. Interpreters translated foreign tongues into the native language. At that time they did not acquire these gifts by hard work or study, but they possessed them by a miraculous revelation of the Spirit.

COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:10.⁴³

LUTHER POSSESSED THE GIFT OF INTERPRETING TONGUES. DAVID CHYTRAEUS: The interpretation of tongues [is] the ability to translate foreign languages clearly into our own tongue, as Luther, with singular clarity, translated the Psalms and the Prophets into the German language; or, more generally, it is an eloquence or gift of speaking, or of skillfully explaining entangled theological controversies,

⁴² Vermigli, *In Selectissimam Priorem ad Corinthios Epistolam ... Commentarii*, 329r-v.

⁴³ CO 49:500 (cf. CTS 39:403).

many of which arise only because of the ignorance of someone's choice of words and phrases. POSTIL ON THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.⁴⁴

GIFTS ARE IMPARTED BY ONE SPIRIT, NOT MANY. JACQUES LEFÈVRE D'ÉTAPLES: Christians do not perform these gifts from different spirits, but it is one and the same Spirit who descends invisibly and works all things in all God's people: many gifts in some people, few gifts in others; greater gifts in certain people, more humble gifts in others; all for the sake of his goodness and wisdom and for supporting the head. But there are many different spirits—not one and the same Spirit—who falsely distribute gifts. For this reason the pagans were deceived in error. They thought that Minerva distributes words of wisdom; that Mercury gives knowledge; that Apollo grants the power to heal; that Hecate bestows the power to predict the future; that Phoebe gives the power of divination; or again, that Mercury distributes the gifts of tongues and their interpretation. The spirits of error were diverse, dwelling prominently in their visible abode in heaven whence they had been invisibly driven. Therefore what Minerva inspired was not wisdom, but demonic messages (as I would call them), inimical to true wisdom. The books of Orpheus and Zoroaster, and certain ones of Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, and some other Platonists contain such messages. The strength of Apollo was not real, but pretended. And what Hecates bestowed was not true power or wonders or miracles, but magical portents and tricks that were of no use—the kinds of things employed by the Docetists and Simon Magus. And the prophecies of Phoebe were not genuine, but ambiguous

⁴⁴ Chytraeus, *Dispositio Epistolarum*, 385.

predictions whose meaning could be taken in different ways; generally, they were nothing but imposture, sophistry, and tricks intended to deceive people. As for the raging of the guardian Mercury: they were not true tongues nor true interpretations, but the deception of cunning eloquence for ruining the body and soul at the same time.

COMMENTARY ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12:11.45](#)

UNITY IN THE SPIRIT PRECLUDES SELF-SUFFICIENCY. JOHN CALVIN: “One and the same Spirit who apportions....” From this it follows that those people act wrongly who, without any concern for sharing, destroy that sacred unity where all the parts agree with one another and all act in harmony under the leading of the same Spirit. Paul again calls the Corinthians back to unity, when he reminds them that, whatever gifts they possess, they have obtained them from the same source. At the same time, he instructs them that no one possesses so much that they are sufficient in themselves and do not need the help of other people. For this is what he means by the phrase, “apportions to each one individually as he wills.” The Spirit of God, therefore, distributes these gifts among us, in order that we all might contribute to the common good. He does not impart everything to a single individual, lest anyone become so satisfied with their portion that they cut themselves off from others, and live solely for themselves. COMMENTARY ON [1 CORINTHIANS 12:11.46](#)

DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT GIFTS. JOHN TRAPP: It is

⁴⁵ Lefèvre d’Étaples, *Commentariorum in Epistolas Beati Pauli ... Liber Secundus*, 119r–v. Docetism was the early Christian heresy that taught that Jesus Christ only appeared to have a human body.

⁴⁶ CO 49:500 (cf. CTS 39:404).

reported that in Luther's house was found written: "Substance and eloquence, Philip Melanchthon. Substance without eloquence, Martin Luther. Eloquence without substance, Desiderius Erasmus." Every person has their own share, and all are not gifted alike. COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 12:11.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition*, 690*.