

## **—THE GIVER: THE GIFTS: THE GIVING—**

### ***1. Introduction***

The purpose of this study is to show the total nature of giving. It issues from the nature of God as Giver; the nature of man and the universe as given. It involves the nature of all things as being gifts of God, and the nature of man as receiver and giver. Without such understanding man is in unjustifiable pride and lacks thanksgiving. In understanding God as Giver, man is free from pride, and free to use God's good gifts and life in thanksgiving. He can then be the true reflection of God, as he also is used by God and uses the gifts of God in service to man and God.

### ***2. The Mode of The Study***

This bird's eye view of the study should be helpful for seeing the subject in general:

#### **(i) God is Giver**

His essential nature as the Giver. Father, Son and Spirit work together in giving. They give in:

- (a) Creation. The functional world: man. The unseen things of the created world: its powers and operations.
- (b) Redemption. Redemption relates to creation. Redemption intended as a gift. Bridge to resuming creational being.
- (c) Restitution of 'Final Redemption'. The fact and gifts of final redemption.

#### **(ii) Creation and the Gifts**

- (a) The gift of being.
- (b) The gifts – man and supernatural powers.
- (c) The gifts and God's operation in His creation.
- (d) Man, the world powers, man's fall, and loss of gift–understanding and functioning.

### **(iii) Redemption and the Gifts**

- (a) God's grace – intended, active, and effective. Charis and charisma.
- (b) The gift of grace, grace appearing and effective. The charisma of life: the free gifts of salvation repentance, faith, forgiveness, eternal life, the Holy Spirit, sonship.

### **(iv) The Outworking of Charis and Charisma: Love in Operation**

- (a) The nature of charisma.
- (b) The use of charisma (charismata).
- (c) The fullness of Christ and his Lordship.
- (d) Charismata and authority.
- (e) Conclusion on Charismata.

### **(v) The Triumph of God Over Evil: The Restored Universe**

- (a) The capture of creation.
- (b) The recapture of creation.
- (c) The place of thanksgiving.
- (d) The New Creation.

Whilst these general headings cover the thrust of God's giving, there are many details and notes which need to be made concerning them.

## ***3. The Study: God The Giver***

### **(i) God is Giver**

James 1:5 says, 'God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching,' and 1:17 states the general principle 'Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of light, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.' With these see II Corinthians 5:19, I Timothy 4:4, 6:17, Romans 6:23, John 4:10, I Peter 3:7 and conclude that all giving which is true comes from God. He is the archetypal Giver. His is the archetypal giving. Only in Him can we understand the true nature of giving.

- (1) The Father Gives. John 3:16, II Corinthians 5:19, Romans 8:32, I Timothy 4:4, 6:17, Luke 11:10–13, Matthew 5:43–48, 6:11, etc., show us that God gives creationally, providentially, redemptively, and eschatologically.
- (2) The Son Gives. II Corinthians 8:9, Mark 10:45, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:1–3, indicate with Scriptures relating to the Son's creational activities, that he likewise gives creationally, redemptively, and eschatologically.
- (3) The Spirit Gives. Genesis 1:2, with 2:7 (1:26ff), Psalm 104:29–30, II Corinthians 3:6, I Corinthians 12:4ff, show that in all the events of creation to the end the Spirit gives.

Let us look more particularly at the dynamic history of giving.

**(a) God Giving in Creation.**

Hebrews 11:3 makes it clear that creation of the visible was made ‘out of things which do not appear’, i.e. God gives all things their being out of Himself, and not other self-existent elements. This is the grace (charis) of creation. Nothing warrants giving its being to it. ‘Grace of life’ (cf. I Peter 3:7, Rom. 6:23) can therefore apply to the being of anything, and not only to its restoration by redemption (e.g. Rom. 6:23, 8:21–23). Creation has its essential being from Paternal (Father), Filial (Son), and Spiritual (Holy Spirit) initiation. See I Peter 4:19, Hebrews 1:23, Psalm 104:29–30. Its true being then is totally contingent upon God. This is continuing grace. Scriptures such as Genesis 1:31, I Timothy 4:4, Ecclesiastes 3:11 (cf. Psalm 104) indicate that God’s creational gifts are lavish, functional, purposive. Romans 1:19–23 (cf. Psalm 19:1f) indicates (a) That the visible things portray God’s total character, meaning that creation expresses the giving nature of God, and (b) That rejection of God is to reject His nature as Giver, and so to be unthankful. To be unthankful, as a man, is to be perverted. In other words, if we agree that creation is all grace, then everything in being is gift-wise from God, so that nothing has essential being apart from God. All is contingent upon Him. (See ‘(ii)’ below for extension of this.)

**(b) God Giving in Redemption.**

Technically we should deal with the grace of providence under the heading of ‘Creation’. However, the fact that God does not destroy His creation when it rebels against Him, is grace. This is seen in Genesis 8:21 where God will even withhold judgement by water, and allow the rhythm of the seasons to continue. Hence Matthew 5:43–48 tells us of God’s continuing grace and love.

Redemption is planned before creation – Ephesians 1:3–14, I Corinthians, II Timothy 1:9, etc. – and its action is giftwise. For this read Romans 5:15–17, 6:23, Ephesians 2:8–10, Romans 3:24f, and other passages. However, we do not understand redemption until we see that (a) The intention is to bring man and the universe to its essential created state, and (b) That every step in the work of redemption constitutes a gift of God. If we do not understand the essential nature of creation we will not understand the charis of redemption and the charisma of life. If we do not see that all that God does is a gift (or, gifts), then we will not recognise the true nature of God as Giver. When God gives His Son (cf. John 3:16, I John 3:16, 4:9–10) then He really gives Himself.

**(c) God Giving in Restitution or, Final Redemption.**

It is axiomatic in Scripture that since God planned redemption and its outcome that He is not simply restoring the creation as He brought it into being (in its essential state), but that He is completing its purpose in coming into being, i.e. the family of God, the full revelation of His glory (cf. Ephes. 1: 3–14, Isa. 43:6–7, Hab. 2:14). Romans 8:18–25 (cf. Phil. 3:21, I John 3:1–3) shows that the ultimate redemption will bring the creation and man into the fullness God had intended. This too will be grace, for the full gift of life is an inheritance (I Peter 3:7, Rev. 21:7, etc.). Acts 3:21 (cf. II Tim. 1:9, 10, Rev. 10:1–7, Ephes. 1:9–11) shows that there will be a final restitution of all things. This is pictured in chapters 19–22 of the Revelation.

We conclude, as an introductory principle, that creation, redemption and the final restitution (or, regeneration) of all things is of grace, i.e. is gift-wise from God. We may now proceed to see the actual nature and manner of the gifts.

## (ii) Creation and the Gifts

### (a) The Gift of Being.

A human being is a human, being. He cannot be a 'human-been' or a 'human to-be', as such, for he always has being. This 'being' or life is always contingent upon the grace of God. Man exists because of the gift of life. He exists gift-wise. His existence is in relation to the triune God. Genesis 1: 26ff, 2:7, Ecclesiastes 7:29, 3:11, I Corinthians 11:7, cf. Genesis 9:6 show him as having being, but only in relation to God. Man is dehumanised when he does not relate to God. Principle: When the gift is detached from the Giver it is no longer essentially the gift.

Man must also be understood in relation to the entire creation. Creation is a functional, harmonious, purposeful unit or structure ( Gen. 1:31, Prov. 16:4, I Tim. 4:4, I Cor. 10:26, Psa. 24:1–2), and man must operate in it according to its nature, function and purpose. Every gift relates to every other gift. Relating, operating, serving are forms of being, and constitute the grace of creational life. The principle is in I Corinthians 10:31 (cf. Luke 11: 41, Mark 7:19b, I Peter 4:11 – 'whoever renders service renders it by the strength which God supplies'), i.e. '...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.'

### (b) The Gifts – Man and Supernatural Powers.

Colossians 1:15–17 shows that the entire structure of creation was created in the Son (in John 1:1–3 it is the Word), and as such are contingent upon him. They are 'all things – things in heaven and things on earth, things visible and things invisible, principalities, powers and dominions'. These include man, the vegetable, animal and mineral kingdoms, and the supernatural powers – celestial creatures, most of whom we know as angels. Without doubt these worlds we call mundane and celestial are in fact one whole creation, and neither exists apart from the other.

Supernatural Powers. The four celestial creatures of Revelation 4 seem to indicate the highest order of celestial beings. Archangels constitute the peak of angelic creatures. There are hosts or divisions or orders of these. On the one hand they minister to God, and on the other to 'those who are inheritors of salvation' (Heb. 1:7, 14). Other creatures – cherubim and seraphim – are in the celestial orders. When speaking of 'thrones, dominions, principalities and authorities', Paul is referring to such orders. That they are connected with the entire creation is evident. Not only do they appear to men on specific occasions, but they relate to children, announce the intentions of God, and control the universe for good. They possess special powers for this purpose. It is axiomatic that these powers were intended for good. These angels, called 'sons of God', were there at the creation of this universe (Job 38:7, cf. Heb. 1:7, with Psa. 104:4). We are not told what are the principedoms and kingdoms of these powers, but studies in Daniel 10 and 11 relate them to the kingdoms of this world (e.g. Greece and Persia), and Ephesians 6:12 speaks of them as the 'rulers of this age', although in that context the connotation is not good. However, we can see that both celestial and terrestrial spheres are structured under authorities. We will see that these are gifts of God, and that they are engifted by God.

Human Powers. Man does not exist as an individual, but as a person. He has social being. He derives from and relates to God. He relates to the body of humanity as a member amongst members, and can be called 'in Adam'. He has personal being in the context of other persons. Within the framework of humanity there are authorities and powers, said to be ordained by God (Rom. 13: 1f).

Being made in the image of God so that he might reflect Him, man has great powers. In Genesis 11:6 it is said of man that nothing is impossible for him to do. We conclude that he has great gifts of being – whether these be used for good or evil. In creation God commanded man to use these for being fruitful in procreation and family raising, for gaining control of the universe, and ordering it well and usefully. In Psalms 8:3f, it is said that all things were placed under his authority, meaning at least the world in which man lives (cf. Heb. 2:5f). It would be difficult for us to realise the greatness of man's inherent abilities, or, as we say, his gifts.

### **(c) Man, the Powers, the Fall, and the Results.**

The fall of man described in Genesis 3, the principle of which is in Romans 1:18–32, shows that man rejected the nature of God as such, consequent upon which he rejected the nature of the universe, and of himself, and had to restructure his theology, cosmology and anthropology. It is significant that he 'was not thankful', i.e. that he did not recognise (a) gifts as gifts, and (b) these gifts as coming from God, and so (c) failed to see his own contingency, life-wise and gift-wise. His principle of gratitude was swallowed up in human egotism.

The basic questions are, 'Were his gifts withdrawn? Was the image effaced? On what power does man now operate?' Romans 11:29 states that 'the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.' This is said in the context of the elect people of God. It is also said in the context of Israel's rebellion. See Malachi 3:6, and Numbers 23:19. Nowhere are we told that the image – which is dynamically holy and loving, when man relates to God – is effaced, obliterated, or withdrawn. It has been said, 'The image of God in man is irreducible, but reversible.' The gifts remain but their use is perverse. An example of this in the Christian sphere is seen in I Corinthians 13:1–3, where the gifts of Christ are exercised apart from love, as they can be. An example of the perverse use of gifts can be seen in the building of the tower of Babel. The gift of life, and the gifts of personality and sexuality can all be put to perverse uses. We will see that these natural powers of man and celestial beings are immense, and wrongly used can do great harm. This will help us to see the purpose of the gifts. However, if we read Romans 1:20–32 we can see the result of perversely using the gifts. If we look at the actions of Satan and his cohorts of fallen angels we can see what damage they can do in demonic evil.

## **(iii) Redemption and the Gifts**

### **(a) God's Intention in Grace.**

Ephesians 1:6 speaks of His grace which He intended, before the foundation of the world, to display. Hence in II Timothy 1:9 we are told, 'God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our own works, but in virtue of His own purpose, and the grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago (from eternity).' The same principle can be seen in I Corinthians 2:6f, Ephesians 2:8–10, I Peter 1:19–20, Revelation 13:8, etc. Whatever God does in redeeming His thankless world, it is nothing which is coming to man because he merits it, or to the creation because it demands it, but from God Who plans to give it. This delineates the nature of man's evil, and self-concern, as it does the giving nature of God. Hence the prophets bring through the intention of grace ('the prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and enquired about this salvation' – I Pet. 1:10, Gen. 49:10, Dan. 2: 44, Haggai 2:7, Zech. 6:12, etc.), whilst the New Testament speaks of the 'grace which has appeared (Titus 2:11, cf. John 1:14, 16, 17, Acts 11:23, 13:43, etc.), and even of 'the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus

Christ' (I Peter 1:13). God's intention in grace stretches from the sin of man (Gen. 3:15) to the end, in time, but precedes time. Hence we can call all God's action Charis. Nor ought we to dissociate the charis of creation from that of redemption (cf. Ephes. 3:9).

### **(b) The Gift of Grace, Appearing and Effective.**

When grace comes it is the action of the triune God. Hence 'the grace of God', 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ', 'the Spirit of grace' (Titus 2:11, II Cor. 13:14, Heb. 10:29). Charis cannot be abstracted from the persons of the Godhead, for it is their action. It is the charis (grace) which so works via the operations of the Father, Son, and Spirit that men receive the charisma (gift) of life (cf. Rom. 6:23). Men receive life by knowing 'the true God and Jesus Christ' (John 17:2-3), and that can only be when the Son appears, showing the Father (John 1:14), 'full of grace and truth'. That grace is effective in forgiveness, justification through propitiation, and so, reconciliation with God (Rom. 4:1-4, Rom. 3:24f, Ephes. 2:9-10, cf. I John 4:7-10, II Cor. 5:19-21).

This means that 'in Christ Jesus' men receive the charisma of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). This 'free gift' (Rom. 5:15-17): note it is charisma and dorea, both) and 'the grace of God' (charis is the action through which the charisma comes) totally subdue and defeat the sin of man and its consequent death. Whilst these two are dreadful and immense where grace is absent, they nevertheless become puerile and insignificant where charis appears. 'Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.' We mean that the objective action of God in Christ, through the Cross and the Resurrection, completely destroys the work of sin and evil, and sets man free. Grace frees him by the work of grace, to receive the gift of grace, i.e. the charisma of life. He cannot receive such charisma apart from the action of grace, which itself is never apart from God the Giver.

Grace is grace all the time. That is the receiving of salvation comprises repentance, faith, forgiveness, which add up to the complex of events we know as conversion, or, justification. Justification is by grace (cf. Rom. 3:24, 5: 1-2). Repentance is a gift (Acts 5:31, 11:18), as also is forgiveness (Acts 5: 31, cf. 26:18, 2:38, 3:19, etc.). Faith is a gift (Phil. 1:29, cf. Ephes. 2:89), although we have to think of it as a state of belief evoked by the Word of Christ and the Spirit (Rom. 10:17, I Thess. 1:5f). Of course Life is a gift, as is also the sonship ('that we might receive the sonship', Gal. 4:4-6, cf. Rom. 8:15). The Holy Spirit is also a gift (always spoken of as dorea, a rich word for gift) and is equally received. We recognise that there is no charis, no charisma of life without the charismata, that is there is no charisma of eternal life which does not bring a charisma to each person receiving life. Incredibly all is of charis, and there is nothing that is not charis. Hence we stand in a state of charis (Rom. 5:2), are taught and trained by it (Titus 2: 11f), find it sufficient in weakness (II Cor. 12:9-10), and are built up in it (Acts 13:43). As we have seen grace is yet to 'give us more' at Christ's appearing (I Peter 1:13), namely the fullness of sonship, the body of glorification, and the inheritance of all things.

## **(iv) The Outworking of Charis and Charisma: Love in Operation**

### **(a) The Nature of Charisma.**

As we saw, charisma is the gift of grace, but must not be understood as though it were detached from the person of God. We mean that the grace is evident, both in the giving of the gift, and in the gift itself. In Romans 6: 23 it is the gift of Life, but also it is in Christ Jesus. The gift should not

understood apart from the working of God. I Corinthians 12:4 speaks of ‘varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; varieties of service, but the same Lord; varieties of workings (operations) but the same God who inspires them all in everyone.’ They are called ‘manifestations of the Spirit for the common good’, meaning that gifts, services, and workings have this in common that they are not static, but dynamic, and that they relate directly to the Giver, and so are manifestations of the (active) Spirit. We might observe that gifts, workings and operations, if they do not constitute the one thing (and they may!) are inseparable when the Spirit moves and works.

We see then that the charisma is the life of Christ. This point is grasped from I John 5:12. In fact where life is, it is not an abstraction, nor a reservoir of ‘no death’, but a positive working, an actional power and principle. If the life of Christ is really accepted as the charisma, then all the elements of his life, as we know them, will be manifested in the gifts. We may say that the aggregate of the gifts (i.e. their workings and service) is the total life of Christ, although such a statement is but mechanistic, since the total life of Christ is the full operation of actional, holy love, and not an aggregate of segments.

The purpose of charisma is simply the outworking of what is truly life, hence the charismata (plural of charisma) will be geared to such purpose. In fact, rightly understood they will be that life, although not apart from workings and service/s. Whatever the purpose of that life is, then the charismata will relate to it. Not to be related will be an independent and so perverted use of gifts. This we will see directly.

In the wider realm the charisma of the life of the Son will in fact be what creation is all about. The Creator–Son, the Cosmocrator (Col. 1:15–17, cf. Heb. 1:2) is the One ‘by whom, and for whom’ all things are created. He has given them this life (cf. Gen. 1:26ff, with 2:7, and I Cor. 8:6), and in its corporate outworking it will manifest him (as Son) and so the Father, which is precisely what Romans 1:20 claims. We would then expect to find the creation with gifts, workings and services. This we must find in the structures of authorities and in the gifts and graces given to all creatures and things, both celestial and terrestrial.

If this is so then all the gifts (each charisma) will come under the Lordship of the Cosmocrator and be directed by him, presumably in the hierarchy of authority structures. These authority structures will have to be in the same metier, they will have to be gifts, and this we find in regard to certain gifts of ministry, and authority, within the church, as we will see and discuss.

Concluding the nature of the gifts we can say that they are to be harnessed and used in those workings and services which are to promote love, or better still, to give love its full completion. That the life does this is evident from I John 4:12 where God’s abiding in us brings His love (in us) to its full goal. (See LFS. 1, The Nature & Meaning of Love.) It is also evident from I Corinthians 13:4–7 that its statements add up both to full love, and the actual life of Christ. Verses 8–12 show the temporary nature of the gifts, but the permanent nature of love. The gifts are subservient to love and its goal.

### **(b) The Use of the Charisma (Charismata).**

In Ephesians 4:7–11 we read that the gifts of ministry – those of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, are actually the gifts of Christ, i.e. the gifts which Christ gives. It is clear that he gives gifts out of himself. In this passage they are not referred to as charismata, but as domata. However, in I Corinthians 12:28–31 apostles and prophets and teachers are all included with the other charismata. In Ephesians 4:11–16 the gifts of ministry,

given to the church, are for equipping the saints for the work of ministry (service), to bring maturity and completion to the body, as it upbuilds itself in Love. In I Corinthians 12:4–14:40 the gifts are for the purpose of love, unity, and edification of the Body. I Peter 4:8–11 virtually speaks of the same thing, whilst Romans 12:3ff is very explicit on the nature of the gifts and workings to build up, this even spilling over beyond the perimeters of the church. All of these passages should be incorporated with the general teaching of love for the brethren, and such statements as ‘Let us do good unto all men, especially those who are of the household of God.’

If, however, we see that the gifts are used for the mutual benefit and upbuilding of the church, and neglect to see the function of the church, then we miss the real point of their operations. The church is there to proclaim the Lordship of Christ, the forgiveness of God, and the pouring out of the Spirit by God ‘upon all flesh’. Lordship, forgiveness and the Spirit are all operating to defeat the powers of darkness and to subdue the kingdoms of this world until they become those of our Lord and His Messiah (Rev. 11:15, cf. I Cor. 15:24–28). The family of God (Ephes. 1:3–14, cf. 2:18–21, etc.) has to be completed, coincidental with Messiah conquering ‘the uttermost parts’ (Acts 1:8, Psalm 2:6–9).

This, of course involves spiritual conflict, and the winning of that battle against Satan and his powers which, virtually won at the Cross, is now being worked out in the processes of history. Hence passages such as Ephesians 6:10–18, II Corinthians 10:1f, as also these conflict passages of the Revelation, tell us what the Church is all about. The gifts, the workings, and the service/s are all in the interest of the whole plan of God. They are to make practical and whole the redemptive Lordship of Christ, which is, in reality, the saving aspect of his creational Lordship. By this we mean that the ‘all things’ which he created and which have their true being in him, will be redeemed and unified, when they come back, through the Cross, to their real contingency.

### **(c) The Fullness of Christ and His Lordship.**

In Ephesians 1:19–23 Christ is shown to be head over all things, to and for the church. She is his body, and she has been given his fullness. Such fullness must be called ‘the fullness of Christ the Lord’. Yet this fullness is dynamic and actional, and not even a reserve of dynamic. It is a fullness which is only known and experienced in actu. Christ is ‘filling all in all’, and will ‘fill all things’ (1:23, 4:10), and calls his Body, the church, to be the dynamic agent or means whereby he does this. It is his fullness which constitutes the gifts of Christ as also the operations and the ministries.

Ephesians 4:7–11 makes it clear that the gifts are from Christ. I Corinthians 12:4f makes it clear that such gifts are not innately those of the Spirit but are distributed by the Spirit, who himself is given to the church, gift-wise. (For this see John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 17:7f, Luke 24:47–49, Acts 1:8, Galatians 3: 13–14, etc.). We conclude that if it be seen that he is archetypal apostle (Heb. 3: 1), prophet (Deut. 18:15f, cf. Acts 3:20ff), evangelist (Isa. 61:1f, Luke 4:17f), pastor (I Peter 2:25, 5:4, John 10:11f), teacher (Matt. 28:20, 7:26–28, etc.), then it is seen that out of his archetypal fullness he gives these gifts. The other gifts – the charismata – are equally expressions of his fullness. Being the manifestations of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:7), they are really the manifestations of Christ and his Lordship. He is the archetypal miracle-worker, healer, helper, and so on. Thus when we say we have the charisma of eternal life we are saying we have the gift of Christ himself, or, better, we participate in that life which is his, which is his fullness, which is the gifts, especially as they are concerned with his operations and ministry. We repeat; these are for the building up and strengthening of the Body, internally, and for its exercise in proclamation, as also in participation in Christ’s victory of the Cross as it is outworked in history.



**(d) The Charismata and the Authority.**

A false reading of the structure of the church is that the gifts are exercised generally by members, and that the so-called offices are not, as such, gifts. Every member of the body has been given a gift or gifts (I Cor. 12:4f), and so no bishop (elder) or deacon could be without such. In that sense all members of the body are 'charismatic'. Yet a close inquiry into the nature of bishops/ elders shows them to be pastors and teachers (cf. Acts 20:28, I Peter 5: 1–5, I Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:9), and they can be called upon to heal (James 5:14f). This—approximates to the 'pastor and teacher' of Ephesians 4:11. The deacons are primarily concerned with ministry to the widows, the poor and needy and must 'hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience'. They are involved in 'the varieties of service' of I Corinthians 12:5, and approximate to 'helpers, administrators' of I Corinthians 12:28 (cf. Rom. 12:7). It is true to say that Christ is the archetypal deacon (Mark 10:45, Isa. 53:10–12).

The apostle had great authority in the church; prophets and teachers related to such apostolic leadership, and themselves exercised authority (cf. Acts 15:22–35, cf. 13:1–4). Again all members are to be subject to one another, but in the authority of Christ. This works out in the submission of a wife to the husband, a child to the parents, a servant to his master, masters to the Head, Christ (cf. Ephes. 5:21 – 6:9). Since pastor-leaders care for men's souls (Heb. 13:7, 17, cf. I Thess. 5:12–13) they must be obeyed. Thus the members are subject to the charisma of leadership which derives from Christ himself, as head of the church.

**(e) Conclusion on Charismata.**

We conclude that the charismata are not gifts given to persons to be used individualistically, willy-nilly, but are the powers of Christ given to his people under the sovereign choice of the Spirit. They are part of his life, and as such are used to do his will. All are in the interest and purpose of the ministry (diakonia: service) which itself is directed (a) To the love which builds the Body, strengthens and matures each member, and (b) To the fulfilling of God's plan for creation, through the Lordship of Christ. This plan is fulfilled through the proclamation of the Gospel, through overcoming the powers of evil, and through the final reclamation of all things which have been possessed by evil. To put it succinctly, 'The original charisma of all creation, partly captured by Satan and his forces, is through the victory of the Cross and Resurrection (God's holy triumphant love) totally reclaimed, thus establishing the Lordship of Christ and the Fatherhood of God in irrevocable triumph (Phil. 2:9–11, I Cor. 15:24–28, Rev. 11:15, 10:1–7, 21:1–7, etc.)'. Thus any use of the gifts which is not in this service is wrong, inept, and not glorifying to God, and helpful to man (cf. I Peter 4:10–11).

Our conclusions should include these observations:

- (i) Gifts should be seen as elements of the varied grace of God, i.e. none stands alone nor is complete in itself (I Peter 4:10, I Cor. 12:4). Together they constitute a working whole.
- (ii) The use of gifts should manifest the action of the Spirit, and not, merely, man. In fact they are the workings of Christ.
- (iii) Without love they are pointless since they are only in the service of love (I Cor. 13:1–4).
- (iv) There is no gift which is not a gift, i.e. being given they can be no cause for pride (I Cor. 4:7), and in any case their use is not authentic apart from God's grace strengthening (I Peter 4:11), nor true apart from the correct use of faith (Rom. 12:6–7)–. Only when we are weak are we strong (II Cor. 12:9f).

## **(v) The Triumph of God Over Evil: The Restored Universe**

### **(a) The Capture of Creation.**

In Luke 11:21 Jesus infers that Satan is the Strong Man, he is fully armed. He has goods which he retains with power. He says that he himself is the Stronger-than-the Strong Man. He will assail the Strong Man, take away his armour and divide his spoil. Whilst the details must not be unduly pressed the principle is clear: Satan has spoils. He has taken the whole world captive (I John 5:19). The gifts given to men and angels, are, for a great part, under his control. Having rebelled against God he has led a third of the heavenly principalities and powers against God and His plan for creation. See Revelation chapter 12, Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 2:14–15, Galatians 1:4, etc. Likewise he has man in his grip (Heb. 2:14–15, Jude 9, etc.).

Whilst rationalistic positivism has no place for the para-sensory, or the occult, or the use of original creational gifts which relate to the ‘things invisible’, yet an objective survey of man’s powers, both natural and of the occult (the unseen), convinces that God’s statement, ‘There is nothing that man will not be able to do’, is true. He possesses great gifts of creation in the realm of the mind, of the body, powers which are psychical, and occultic. Likewise, as true followers of God relate to God and His gifts, so rebellious man is often allied with evil powers and seeks to exercise his own powers apart from God. This is something like our saying that ‘the image of God is irreducible, but reversible.’

In the whole functional creational structure the gifts of life, as given to man, are to constitute the harmonious working of all things. The rejection of God as Giver, the gifts as gifts, and man’s place in creational grace (contingency) is replaced by evil powers operating as authorities, Satan as a ‘father’, men as his ‘children’ (John 8:44, Ephes. 2:1–3, I John 3:10). Thus the spoils which Satan has are used against God. Man becomes deluded into thinking his powers are his own, as Satan obviously considers his powers to be of himself. Likewise the fallen angels who ‘kept not their own place’ (Jude 6) but use their authorities in the cause of evil, do not ascribe their created gifts and powers to God. All these forces work against God, using the original gifts in a perverse way against the Giver. We need not here go into the fact that Satan is self-deluded, believing that he is the archetype of all things created and functional.

### **(b) The Recapture of Creation.**

We must not, in fact, think that Satan has captured creation. He has only set up a counterpart kingdom. God is King over all the earth. The perverse use of the gifts and wisdom which God has given to men and angels are ‘self-destructing’. Nothing of God is minimised by evil. Only an attempt is made to do so. Romans 5:12–21 shows that grace abounds beyond all evil, and captures the creation. God as Giver cannot be defeated, but it is His giving which ‘recaptures’ His universe.

He gives His Son, He gives salvation, He gives repentance, faith and forgiveness. He gives His Gifts. He justifies all men by faith – men who will exercise the gifts of faith and repentance and receive forgiveness and justification. He then gives His gift of the Spirit, which is the guarantee of ultimate resurrection, as of present justification (Gal. 5:6, Rom. 8:9–11, Gal. 3: 13–14, etc.). Through this Spirit He gives the gifts of Christ, from Christ’s fullness, and to each is given a gift, so that elitism of any form is discounted (cf. Rom. 12:3, I Cor. 3:5, 11:18, 12:7, 4:7, I Cor. 7:7). All those recaptured participate in the Lordship of Christ as they receive a gift from him, sharing in ‘workings’ and ‘service’.

However, we come back to the fact that all life is a gift (I Cor. 4:7, cf. 7:7). Marriage is a 'charisma', and so is the gift of continence. To be single is a gift. Fatherhood is a gift deriving from the archetypal Fatherhood of God (cf. Ephes. 3:14, 4:6). Sonship is a gift deriving from the archetypal Sonship of the Son. Brotherhood likewise derives from the archetypal Brotherhood (cf. Heb. 2:11f), and so does the true Husband give the gift of being a husband to faithful men. As the community of God – the people of God – come into true possession, operation of, and service by, the gifts, the Lordship of Christ is expressed in dynamic ways and effects its goals – the glory of the Father.

The battle is constant. Hence the need for the gift of wisdom (James 1:5) and discernment (I Cor. 2:12, cf. John 4:1) which flow from the wisdom of Christ (I Cor. 1:21–31) because Satan and his hosts attack on all grounds. They too exercise the authority of (false) apostleship (II Cor. 11:12–15) and evil powers utilise the spoils of captured gifts. Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22, II Thessalonians 2:9, and Revelation 16:13–14, with other similar passages should be studied to see how evil works by 'gifts'.

Ephesians 4:7–11 with its quoted Psalm 68 should be studied to see that Christ 'led captivity captive' and 'gave gifts to men'. II Corinthians 2:14–16 relates to the spoil of battle, and Christ the Conqueror, meaning that receiving gifts from men are the spoils of battle. What are his by right of creation become doubly his by right of redemption. Undoubtedly these gifts, to some degree, are still retained by the powers of darkness, but one day they shall be judged by men, and will have to give an account of their deficient stewardship. Meanwhile forgiven men and women are given gifts by the victorious Cosmocrator. Isaiah 53:12 says, '...he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul unto death.'

Referring back to our conclusion (above) we can say that gifts must only be used under the sovereignty of Christ, and in the mode of love and for its purposes. They must be exercised against evil, and for the fulfilment of God's plan. These are the tests by which right, wrong, and deficient uses of the gifts are made. Nor should the gifts be regarded lightly. Until that which is perfect is come, then they will be indispensable.

### **(c) The Place of Thanksgiving.**

The people of God are thankful for all things. They are given all gifts – of life, of operations and ministry, of suffering. In all these things God is working for good, and primarily to conform them to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:17,30). Hence they are to give thanks 'always and for everything' (Ephes. 5:20) and 'in all circumstances' (I Thess. 5:18). When men do not acknowledge God as the Giver, 'they are not thankful' (Rom. 1:21), the immediate outcome of which is a 'futile mind' and the ultimate outcome 'a reprobate mind' (Rom. 1:21, 28). Men are to be thankful to God, for by such their prayers are effective and their minds garrisoned about (Phil. 4:6).

However, there is much more to it than this. They must learn to become those who give. God loves an hilarious giver (II Cor. 9:7) because he is like the archetypal Giver. In fact he enters into the same process of life. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' for that is how God is. Christ gives teaching as to the mode of giving, for giving is really thanksgiving. Luke 6:32,38 teaches that one should give expecting nothing in return and one will be a son of the Most High. Such giving will evoke response, but the giving is in forgiving, in loving the enemy, being kind. In Romans 12:3ff, it is in sharing the use of the gifts for the needs of the brethren. In Galatians 6:10 it is 'doing good

to all men, especially those who are of the household of God.’

Praise and thanksgiving are linked. It is the ‘fruit of the lips’ (Heb. 13:15), the ‘overspill’ of the full and engifted heart. Hence the gifts which are the ‘deeds which meet the needs’, the translators of ‘love in the abstract to love in the concrete’, are the means whereby love has its full harmonious flow and power. Such giving by means of them is in fact the practical concretion of God’s actions amongst men. These alone give the lie to the Satanic operation of ‘gifts’ and show the falsity of their use.

Thanksgiving is the constant acknowledgement of the Giver, His Giving, His Gifts, and of the entire creaturely and filial contingency of man.

We return then, to our original quote:– ‘Every good endowment, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to turning.’ We see the injunction is true that where we lack we should ‘ask of God who gives to all men generously, and without reproaching, and it will be given to him’ (James 1:17 and 5). We should ask and receive, and believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). We will know that every asking is related to every giving, and every giving, is the pure nature of God. It is by this He is Creator, and Lord, and Father, and it is by this that He wins the hearts of men and fulfils His eternal plan.

#### **(d) The New Creation.**

The pictures in Scripture of the new heavens and the new earth, and of the ‘age to come’ show them to be at once dynamic, and harmonious. I Corinthians 13 tells us clearly that the gifts are like scaffolding – useful in erecting the building of love, by means of these ‘love-aids – but that such are not needed when it has done its perfect work. Hebrews 6:5 seems to indicate that ‘the powers of the age to come’ are great evidences of the nature of that age. Do the gifts, in fact, continue in that age? Is God still Giver? These are questions we cannot answer. What we do know is that they will not be necessary aids to love, if in fact they are present.

In Christ we have been ‘blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephes. 1:3), and we will ‘inherit all things’ (Rev. 21:7). We will become ‘joint-heirs with Christ’ and ‘reign upon the earth’ as a ‘kingdom of priests’. We need more to be concerned with sharing in the process which will culminate in this rich future, rather than speculating as to the transient nature of the gifts. Sexuality is a transient gift, which, when it has done its work, will have no more to do. If other gifts are like this, then they are very real to us in the present, and continually communicate the generous and loving nature of God. In thanksgiving let us use them, and where we need then let us ask – doing all to the glory of God!