

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS 12

In this chapter the apostle discourses concerning spiritual gifts, showing the author, nature, use, and excellency of them; compares the church to an human body, and in a beautiful manner sets forth the symmetry and subserviency of the members of it to one another, being set in different places, and having different gifts; and enumerates the several offices and gifts in the church, and yet suggests there is something more excellent than them. He intimates, that spiritual gifts are valuable things, and should be taken notice of; nor would he have the saints ignorant of them, and therefore gives the following account, (~~4121~~1 Corinthians 12:1) and yet he would not have those that have them be proud of them, and lifted up with them; for which reason he puts them in mind of their former state in Heathenism, to make and keep them humble, (~~4122~~1 Corinthians 12:2) and points out such who have the Spirit of God, the author of all gifts and grace; not such who call Jesus accursed, but they that call him Lord, (~~4123~~1 Corinthians 12:3) which Holy Ghost, who is called Spirit, Lord, and God, is the author of the different gifts bestowed upon men, (~~4124~~1 Corinthians 12:4-6) the end of bestowing which gifts is the profit of others, (~~4125~~1 Corinthians 12:7) of which gifts there is an enumeration in nine particulars, (~~4126~~1 Corinthians 12:8-10) of each of which the Spirit of God is the worker and giver, according to his sovereign will and pleasure, (~~4127~~1 Corinthians 12:11) and which are all for the good of the whole community; which is illustrated by the simile of an human body, which as it consists of many members, and is but one, so Christ mystical, or the church, though it consists of divers persons, yet they are all one in Christ, and all their gifts are for the service of each other, (~~4128~~1 Corinthians 12:12) which unity is proved and confirmed by the saints being baptized by one Spirit into one body, the church, and by drinking of him, or partaking of the same grace, (~~4129~~1 Corinthians 12:13) and in order to show the usefulness and profit of every spiritual gift, even the meanest, to the churches of Christ, and that none might be despised, he enlarges upon the metaphor of the human body he had compared the church to, and by it illustrates the unity of the church, and the members of it, (~~4130~~1 Corinthians 12:14) and shows that the inferior

members should not envy the superior ones, or be dejected because they have not the same gifts: and conclude from hence, that they are not, or deserve not, to be of the same body, (^{<41215>}1 Corinthians 12:15,16) seeing it is convenient and absolutely necessary that there should be many members, and these set in different places, and have different gifts and usefulness; and particularly what should make them easy is, that God has placed them according to his will and pleasure, (^{<41217>}1 Corinthians 12:17-20). And, on the other hand, he shows, that the more noble, and excellent, and useful members, ought not to despise the lower, meaner, and more ignoble ones, partly because of the usefulness and necessity of them, they cannot do without them, (^{<41221>}1 Corinthians 12:21,20) and partly because of the honour put upon them, (^{<41223>}1 Corinthians 12:23,24), and all this is so ordered, that there be no schism, but that there should be a mutual care of one member for another, and that they should sympathize with each other, (^{<41225>}1 Corinthians 12:25,26). This simile the apostle more plainly and particularly accommodates and applies to the church, the body of Christ, and the members of it, and of one another, (^{<41227>}1 Corinthians 12:27) and gives an enumeration of the several officers and offices in the church, set there by God himself; and there are no less than eight of them, some greater than others, most of them proper and peculiar to the primitive church, though some perpetual, and which still continue, (^{<41228>}1 Corinthians 12:28) but in the times in which they were all of them in being and use, every member of the church was not possessed of them, only some, though all had more or less the advantage of them, (^{<41229>}1 Corinthians 12:29,30). Wherefore, he concludes with an exhortation to the saints to covet the best of those gifts; and yet observes that there was something more excellent than them, and preferable to them, which he was about to show them, (^{<41231>}1 Corinthians 12:31) and hereby he makes an easy transition to the next chapter, in which he recommends charity, and prefers it to gifts.

Ver. 1. *Now concerning spiritual gifts*, etc.] Though the word “gifts” is not in the original text, it is rightly supplied by our translators, as it is in the Arabic version: for the apostle does not mean spiritual graces, nor spiritual words, or doctrines, nor spiritual meats and drinks, nor spiritual men, each of which are mentioned before in this epistle; though the latter is thought by some to be here intended, and that the apostle’s view is to show the difference between those that are spiritual, and those that are not; but as spiritual gifts are the subject of the apostle’s discourse throughout this chapter, and the two following, they seem very manifestly to be designed

here. The apostle having gone through various heads of discourse, which he either of himself, or at the request of others, wrote upon, proceeds to a new subject, that of spiritual gifts, which he seems to have been desired to give his thoughts upon, and advice about; since there were some in this church who were discouraged, because they had not the gifts which some had; and others that had them were elated and puffed up with them, and treated those below them with neglect and contempt; and with a view to both these the apostle writes as follows,

brethren, I would not have you ignorant; neither of the author of these gifts, who is the Spirit of God, who dispenses them according to his sovereign will and pleasure, and not according to the deserts of men, and are not acquired by the industry, or through the merit of any, but are his free grace gifts; nor of the nature of them, for there are differences and diversities of them, some have one, and some another, but no man all; nor of the design and use of them, which is the edification of the whole body; and every gift, though ever so mean, is of service; and therefore as, on the one hand, none ought to be discouraged, so, on the other hand, none should be lifted up with pride, or give way to a boasting spirit.

Ver. 2. *Ye know that ye were Gentiles*, etc.] That is, by religion; hence the Syriac version renders it **apnj**, “profane” persons, given up to wickedness, bigotry, and superstition; for by nation they were Gentiles still; and which must be understood of one part of this church only; for some of them were Jews, as is clear from many passages in the epistle to this church, and practices referred to. This the apostle observes to humble them, by putting them in mind of what they had been formerly; they were born and brought up in the Heathen religion, when they knew not the true God, much less had any knowledge of Christ, and still less of the Spirit of God; and therefore if they were favoured with any of his gifts, these must be owing to his grace, and not to their deserts, and therefore they ought not to glory: he adds, with the same view,

carried away unto these dumb idols; to idols that were nothing in the world, had no divinity in them, as he had before asserted; to dumb ones, that had mouths, but could not speak, the oracles that were delivered from them, being spoken not by them, but were either satanical delusions, or the jugglings of a priest; to these they were carried by the power of Satan, the influence of their priests, and the orders of their magistrates, to consult them as oracles, to pay their devotions to them, and do them service:

even as ye were led; that is, to these dumb idols; the Syriac adds, $\hat{\text{c}}\text{rwp}$ **al d**, “without any difference”, not being able to distinguish between these and the true God; and to whom they were led as brute beasts were, that were sacrificed unto them, or as blind men are led by the blind, as they were by their blind and ignorant priests; and therefore, if they had now received the Spirit, and his gifts, they ought to ascribe the whole to the free grace of God, and be humble under a sense of their unworthiness.

Ver. 3. *Wherefore I give you to understand*, etc.] Or “I make known unto you”; what I am about to say are certain truths, and to be depended on,

that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; or “anathema”, as did the unconverted Gentiles, who knew nothing of Jesus but by report; which report they had from the Jews, his enemies; and by that report he appeared to them to be a very wicked and detestable person, who was put to death by the means of his own countrymen, was hanged upon a tree, and so to be counted and called accursed: the apostle seems to have reference to the sense these Corinthians had of Jesus, and what they called him before their conversion; whence it appeared that they spoke not by, nor were they possessed of the Spirit of God then, and therefore their having of him now was an instance of pure grace; or else respect is had to the Jews, who not only, whilst Jesus was living, blasphemed him, but continued to call him accursed after his death, whilst they were in their own land; and after the destruction of their city and temple, they continued, as Justin Martyr observes ^{f239} to Trypho the Jew, to “curse” Christ, and them that believed in him; and to this day privately call him by such names as will hardly bear to be mentioned, were it not for the explanation of such a passage: thus they ^{f240} call him **tw[wçy**, “Jesus the perverse”, or he that perverteth the law of God; and “Jesu”, the name they commonly give him, they say is the abbreviation of **wrkzw wmc j my**, “let his name and memory be blotted out”; and which they sometimes explain by **hb[wtw rqcç** “Jesu is a lie, and an abomination: they call him a strange God, and vanity” ^{f241}, and often by the name of **ywl t** ^{f242}, “one that was hanged”, and so with them accursed; and which seems to be the name the Jews, in the apostle’s time, gave him, and to which he here refers. Now, as in the former verse he may have regard to the Gentiles, so in this to the Jews in this church, who, before conversion, had so called Christ, when it was plain they had not the Spirit of God then, or they could not have so called him; and therefore if they were partakers of him now, they ought to admire divine grace, and

not glory in themselves, and over others. Dr. Lightfoot thinks, that Jewish exorcists who strolled about, and pretended to do miracles by the Holy Ghost, and yet called Jesus “anathema”, are meant, of whom the Corinthians might assure themselves that they did not speak, nor act, nor were acted by the Spirit of God. The words may be applied to all such as detest and deny the doctrines of Christ, respecting his person and office; as that he is come in the flesh, is the true Messiah, the Son of God, truly and properly God; that his death is a proper sacrifice, and full satisfaction for sin; and that justification is by his imputed righteousness: without any breach of charity it may be said, such persons do in effect call Jesus accursed, nullifying his person, sufferings, and death, as to the dignity and efficacy of them; and cannot be thought to have, and speak by, the Spirit of God, who if they had him, would teach them otherwise. Moreover, as the word “anathema” here used answers to $\mu\rho\eta$, “Cherem”, a form of excommunication among the Jews; it may be truly said that such call Jesus accursed, or “anathema”, who, if I may be allowed the expression, excommunicate him out of their sermons and faith; these crucify him afresh, trample him under foot, count his blood as a common thing, and do malice to his Spirit; and therefore cannot be thought to have him, and speak by him.

And that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost; or Jehovah; which, with the Jews, was a name ineffable, to which the apostle might have respect. Christ is Lord of all, of angels, good and bad; of men, righteous and wicked; of the chief among men, the kings, princes, and lords of the earth; as he is God by right of nature, and as Creator of them by virtue of that; and because of his providential power and influence in the government of the universe; he is Lord of his church and people, by the Father’s gift of them to him; by his espousal of them to himself; by the purchase of his blood; and by the conquests of his grace; and as appears by the various relations he stands in to them, as father, husband, head, King, and master. Now, though a man may historically say all this, as the devils may, and hypocritically, as formal professors and foolish virgins do now, and will at the last day; and as all men then will by force, whether they will or not, confess that Jesus is Lord, who have not the Spirit of God; yet no man can call him his Lord, can appropriate him to himself truly and really, as his Lord, Saviour, and Redeemer, as David, Thomas, the Apostle Paul, and others have done; but by the Spirit; since such an appropriation includes spiritual knowledge of Christ, strong affection to him; faith of

interest in him, an hearty profession of him, and sincere subjection to him; all which cannot be without the Spirit of God: for he is the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; and true love to Christ is a genuine fruit of his; faith in Christ, is entirely of his operation; and a subjection to the righteousness of Christ, and to his ordinances, is through the influence of his grace; and it is owing to his witnessings that any can truly, and in faith, claim their interest in him. Upon the whole, the apostle's sense is, let a man pretend to what he will, if he does not love Jesus Christ, and believe in him, he is destitute of his Spirit; and whoever loves Christ, and believes in him, and can call him his Lord in faith and fear, however mean otherwise his gifts may be, he is a partaker of the Spirit of God.

Ver. 4. *Now there are diversities of gifts*, etc.] Of spiritual ones, as in (1 Corinthians 12:1) which spring from the free grace, and good will and pleasure of God, and are not owing to the merits of men; and therefore such who have the largest share of them should not boast of them as acquired by themselves, or be puffed up on account of them; and those who have the smallest measure should be content and thankful; for though the gifts are different, some have greater, and others lesser, none have all, but all have some, yet not alike:

but the same Spirit; is the author and giver of all as he pleases; the lesser gifts, and the smallest degree of them, come from the Spirit of God, as well as the greater. Gifts here seem to be the general name for all that follow; and

administrations and

operations are the two species of them; and of these a particular account is afterwards given.

Ver. 5. *And there are differences of administrations*, etc.] Or ministries; offices in the church, ministered in by different persons, as apostles, prophets, pastors, or teachers and deacons; who were employed in planting and forming of churches, ordaining elders, preaching the word, administering ordinances, and taking care of the poor; for which different gifts were bestowed on them, they not all having the same office.

But the same Lord; meaning either Jesus Christ, whom the believer, by the Holy Ghost, says is Lord; who, as the ascended King of saints, and Lord and head of the church, appoints different offices and officers in it; and having received, gives gifts unto them, qualifying them for the same; all

which comes through the same hand, and not another's; or rather the Lord, the Spirit, who calls men to these several ministrations, separates and fits them for them, and constitutes and installs them into them, and assists them in the discharge of them; since he only, and all along, is spoken of in the context as the efficient of these several things.

Ver. 6. *And there are diversities of operations,* There are some that are ordinary, as the good work of grace, and the several parts of it, the work of faith, the labour of love, and patience of hope, which the Spirit of God begins, carries on, and finishes in all the elect of God, and members of Christ; and there are others which are extraordinary, and are here meant, and hereafter specified.

But it is the same God which worketh all in all. Interpreters in general understand by God here, God the Father; as by the Lord in the preceding verse, the Lord Jesus Christ, as distinct from the Spirit in (1 Corinthians 12:4) and apprehend that this furnishes out a considerable proof of a trinity of persons in the Godhead, which I will not deny; but I rather think that the Holy Ghost is designed in each verse, by Spirit, Lord, and God; since the various gifts, administrations, and operations, are particularly and peculiarly ascribed to him in the following verses; and the distribution of them is said to be the effect of his sovereign will; and so we have a most illustrious testimony of his proper deity and personality; who is the only true "Jehovah" with the Father and Son, to which the word "Lord" in the New Testament generally answers, and who is the omnipotent God, "which worketh all in all"; all the works of nature throughout the universe, and all the, works of grace in the hearts of all his people, and all the extraordinary operations effected by any of them.

Ver. 7. *But the manifestation of the Spirit,* etc.] Not that which the Spirit manifests, as the grace and love of God, an interest in Christ, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the things of another world; for he is a spirit of revelation, more or less, in the knowledge of these things; but that which manifests that a man has the Spirit of God; or rather the gifts of the Spirit, as the fruits and graces of the Spirit, the least measure of which, as being able to say that Jesus is Lord, shows that a man has the Spirit of God; or rather the gifts of the Spirit, ordinary or extraordinary, which are such as manifestly declare their author:

is given to every man; not that the special grace of the Spirit is given to every individual man in the world, nor to every member of a visible church,

for some are sensual, not having the Spirit; but as the same graces of the Spirit are given to every regenerate man, for all receive the same spirit of faith, so the gifts of the Spirit, more or less, either ordinary or extraordinary, are given to all such persons;

to profit withal; not to make gain of, as Simon Magus intended, could he have been possessed of them; nor to encourage pride or envy, or to form and foment divisions and parties; but for profit and advantage, and that not merely private, or a man's own, but public, the good of the whole community or church, to which the least grace or gift, rightly used, may contribute.

Ver. 8. *For to one is given by the Spirit*, etc.] Now follows a distinct and particular enumeration of the operations of the Spirit, though not all of them, yet as many as the apostle thought necessary; and which are called the manifestation of him, and which most clearly show him to be the author of them to different persons;

the word of wisdom: by which is meant “the manifold wisdom of God”; the wonderful scheme of salvation through the incarnation, sufferings, and death of Christ, in which God has “abounded in all wisdom and prudence”; together with all other deep, mysterious, and sublime doctrines of the Gospel, the knowledge of which were peculiarly given to the apostles in the first place, who have the first office or ministry in the church, by “the spirit of wisdom”; and which they had a faculty, a gift of declaring, opening, and explaining unto others.

To another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; meaning either knowledge of future events; or an universal knowledge of the Scriptures of truth, and the doctrines contained in them, of the whole mind and will of God therein, which is a distinct thing from saving grace: (see ^{<43D>}1 Corinthians 13:2,8,9) and is what was given to the prophets, the second office in the church, by him who is the spirit of prophecy, and by whom the prophetic writings were dictated; and therefore he is the best interpreter of them, and who only can lead into the true knowledge thereof.

Ver. 9. *To another faith by the same Spirit*, etc.] Not the grace of faith, which is common to all believers, though given by the same Spirit: but rather the doctrine of faith, and ability to preach it, and boldness and intrepidity of spirit to assert and defend it in the face of all opposition; all which are from the Spirit of God, and are more or less given to pastors and

teachers, the third office in the church. Though generally this is understood of a faith of working miracles, as in (~~463D~~1 Corinthians 13:2) but the working of miracles is mentioned afterwards as distinct, unless it can be thought that this is the general name for miracles, and the rest that follow the particulars of them.

To another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; of healing all manner of sicknesses and diseases: this power Christ gave his disciples, when he first sent them out to preach the Gospel, and which he repeated when he renewed and enlarged their commission after his resurrection; and which was exercised with effect, sometimes only by overshadowing the sick with their shadows, as by Peter, (~~445E~~Acts 5:15,16) sometimes by, laying hands on them, as the father of Publius, and others, were healed by Paul, (~~448B~~Acts 28:8,9) and sometimes by anointing with oil, (~~505A~~James 5:14). Now these gifts were bestowed in common, by the Spirit, on apostles, prophets, and pastors, or elders of the church, in those early times: the Alexandrian copy, and the Vulgate Latin version, read, “by one Spirit”.

Ver. 10. *To another the working of miracles*, etc.] Or “powers”: mighty deeds, wonderful works, such as are apparently above, and out of the reach of nature, and beyond the compass of human power and skill; such as raising the dead, causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and the like; of which, see some instances in (~~448B~~Acts 3:6 9:41 14:8-10 20:9,10). Though others understand by these the extraordinary powers the apostles had of punishing offenders; of which the striking Ananias and Sapphira dead, by Peter, the smiting Elymas the sorcerer with blindness, by Paul, and the delivering the incestuous person, and Hymenaeus, and Alexander, to Satan, by the same apostle, are instances.

To another prophecy: either foretelling of future events, as was given to Agabus, and the four daughters of Philip, and others, (~~441Z~~Acts 11:27,28 21:9,10) or a gift of understanding the prophecies of the Old Testament, and of preaching the Gospel, which is in this epistle frequently called “prophesying”, particularly in the two following chapters; and those endowed with it are called prophets, (~~443C~~Acts 13:1 ~~404B~~Ephesians 4:11 ~~464D~~1 Corinthians 14:29,32,37).

To another discerning of spirits; by which gift such that were possessed of it could, in some measure, discern the hearts of men, their thoughts, purposes, and designs, their secret dissimulation and hypocrisy; as Peter,

by this gift, discerned the dissimulation and lying of Ananias and Sapphira; and by it they could also tell whether a man that made a profession of religion had the truth of grace in him, or not; so Peter knew hereby that Simon Magus was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, notwithstanding his specious pretences to faith and holiness, whereby he imposed upon Philip the evangelist, who might not have this gift of discerning spirits; by which also they could distinguish the Spirit of God from the lying spirits in men; of which there is an instance, (<4157>Acts 15:17,18).

To another divers kinds of tongues; whereby such could speak all manner of languages, which they had never learned, understood, and been used to: this Christ promised his disciples, when he sent them into all the world to preach the Gospel, (<4166>Mark 16:16,17) and so anticipates an objection they otherwise might have made, how they should be able to preach it to all, so as to be understood, when they were not acquainted with the languages of all nations; an instance of which we have in the apostles on the day of Pentecost, (<4104>Acts 2:4) and which continued many years after with them, and other persons in the churches; (see <4112>1 Corinthians 13:2 14:5,22).

To another the interpretation of tongues; one that had this gift, when a discourse was delivered in an unknown tongue, used to stand up and interpret it to the people, without which it could be of no use to them; and sometimes a person was gifted to speak in an unknown tongue, and yet was not capable of interpreting his discourse truly and distinctly in that the people understood: (see <4143>1 Corinthians 14:13). The rules to be observed in such cases, and by such persons, see in (<4127>1 Corinthians 14:27,28).

Ver. 11. *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit*, etc.] Though these gifts, ministrations, and operations, are so different in themselves, and are bestowed upon different persons, yet they are all wrought by one and the same Spirit of God, who is the true Jehovah, and properly God, as these his works declare; for who, but the most high God, could ever communicate such gifts to men?

Dividing to every man severally as he will; giving one man this gift, and another that; imparting such a measure to one, and such a portion to another, just as seems good in his sight. For as his special grace in regeneration is dispensed when and where, and to whom he pleases, signified by the blowing of the wind where it listeth, (<4108>John 3:8) so his

gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, are severally distributed, according to his sovereign will and pleasure. This is a clear and full proof of the personality of the Spirit, who is not only distinguished from his gifts, and the distribution of them, which is a personal act described to him; but this is said to be done according to his will, which supposes him an intelligent agent, capable of choosing and willing; and whose will agrees with the Father's, and with the Son's.

Ver. 12. *For as the body is one*, etc.] That is, an human body; for of this the apostle speaks, and takes a simile, and forms a comparison from, showing the union among saints, and their mutual participation of the various gifts of the Spirit; for an human body is but one body, and not more.

And hath many members; as eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc.].

And all the members of that one body being many are one body; as numerous as they may be, they all belong to, and make up but one body; performing different offices, for which they are naturally fitted for the good of the whole:

so also to Christ; not personal, but mystical; not the head alone, or the members by themselves, but head and members as constituting one body, the church. The church, in union with Christ, the head, is but one general assembly, and church of the firstborn written in heaven, though consisting of the various persons of God's elect, who are closely united one to another, and their head Christ; and therefore are denominated from him, and called by his name; (see ^{489B}Romans 9:3 ^{489C}Jeremiah 33:16).

Ver. 13. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized*, etc.] This is to be understood not of water baptism; for the apostle says not in one, and the same water, but "by", or "in" one Spirit, are we all baptized; the baptism of water, and of the Spirit, are two different things; (see ^{489D}Matthew 3:11). Besides, all that are baptized in water, are not baptized in or by the Spirit, as the case of Simon Magus, and that of others, show; nor does water baptism incorporate persons into the church of Christ; neither into the invisible church, which is the body of Christ, and here meant; nor into a visible Gospel church state; they being indeed true believers, and baptized, are proper persons to be received into a church; but baptism itself does not put them into it, or make them members of it: persons may be baptized in water, and yet may never be joined to a church. There is indeed an allusion

made to water baptism, but it is the grace of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification which is here intended; which grace, both in the Old and in the New Testament, is frequently signified by water, and called a baptism, or a being baptized, because of the plenty, abundance, and superabundance of it, then bestowed; and is expressed by floods and rivers, and a well of living water; and is what qualifies and fits persons for the ordinance of water baptism. Now this is wrought by the Spirit of God, and is owing to his divine power and energy; not to water baptism, which has no regenerating virtue in it; nor to carnal regeneration, or a being born of blood, or of the best of men; nor to the will of any man; nor to the will of the flesh, or the power of man's freewill; but to God, to the Spirit, who is Lord and God, and the only sanctifier of the sons of men; by which spiritual baptism, or by whose grace in regeneration and conversion they are brought into one body: the mystical body of Christ, the universal and invisible church; that is, openly and manifestatively; for otherwise it is the grace of God in election, and in the everlasting covenant, choosing them in Christ, as members in their head, and constituting them such, that puts them among that number; but spiritual baptism, or the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, makes them appear to belong to that body, and makes them meet for, and gives them a right unto, a particular Gospel church, and the privileges of it, which the Spirit of God directs and brings them to. Whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; it matters not of what nation, or of what state and condition of life persons be; if they are regenerated and sanctified, they appear equally to belong to Christ, to be of his body, and have an equal propriety in all immunities and blessings belonging to his people; (see ^{<S0R1>}Colossians 3:11 ^{<R0B>}Galatians 3:28)

and have been all made to drink into one Spirit; are all partakers of the same graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, etc. and daily receive under his guidance, direction, and influence, out of the same fulness of grace in Christ, from whence they draw and drink this water with joy; and all drink the same spiritual drink, the blood of Christ, whose blood is drink indeed: and there may be in this clause an allusion to the ordinance of the supper, as in the former to the ordinance of baptism. Moreover, all new born babes, as they desire the sincere milk of the word, so they drink of it, and are refreshed with it, and are nourished by the words of faith, and sound doctrine, under the application, of the Spirit; and being trees of righteousness, and the planting of the Lord, the Spirit, they are watered by his grace, under the ministrations of the Gospel; and as they become one

body under Christ, the head, so they are made to drink into one Spirit, or to become of one heart and soul with one another, being knit together in love, the bond of perfectness.

Ver. 14. *For the body is not one member*, etc.] Not only one; nor is anyone member the body, though ever so eminent, as the head or eye: thus the church of Christ is not one person only, or does not consist of one sort of persons; as only of Jews, or only of Gentiles, or only of rich and freemen, or only of men of extraordinary gifts and abilities, or greatly eminent for grace and spiritual knowledge:

but many; members, as the Arabic version adds; as eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc. so in the mystical body of Christ, the church, there are many members, some in a higher station, others in a lower; some of greater gifts, grace, and usefulness, others of lesser; some Jews, other Gentiles; some bond, others free; yet all one in Christ the head, and all related to each other.

Ver. 15. *If the foot shall say*, etc.] The lowest member of the body, which is nearest the earth, treads upon it, sustains the whole weight of the body, and performs the more drudging and fatiguing exercises of standing and walking; and may represent one that is in the lowest station in the church, a doorkeeper in the house of God; one that is really the least of saints, as well as thinks himself so; and has the smallest degree of heavenly affection, and knowledge of spiritual light and understanding;

because I am not the hand; the instrument of communication and of action; and may signify such an one, that liberally imparts to the necessities of others, who has it both in his hand and heart, and is ready to communicate; one that is full of good works, of charity towards men, and piety towards God; who does all things, Christ strengthening him, natural, civil, moral, and evangelical; yea, even miracles and mighty deeds are done by his hand:

I am not of the body; have no part in it, am no member of it, do not belong to it:

is it therefore not of the body? or “it is not therefore not of the body”, as the Syriac version renders it; that is, it is not “for this word”, as the Arabic, or so saying, as the Ethiopic, not of the body; it nevertheless belongs to it, and is a member of it, nor can it be otherwise: thus the meanest person in the mystical body, the church, though he should say, that because he is not so handy and useful as another, cannot give so largely, nor do so much as another, therefore he is no proper member of the church; it does not follow

that so it is, for Christ, the head of the church, regards such as members; he admires the “beauty” of his church’s “feet”, and has provided for the covering, ornament, and security of them, being himself clothed with “a garment down to the feet”, which equally covers and adorns that part of the body as the rest; he does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, or despise the day of small things; he regards their prayers, and takes notice and accepts of their meanest services; and they are, and should be considered as members of the body, by the rest and by themselves, the mystical body, the church, though he should say, that because he is not so handy and useful as another, cannot give so largely, nor do so much as another, therefore he is no proper member of the church; it does not follow that so it is, for Christ, the head of the church, regards such as members; he admires the “beauty” of his church’s “feet”, and has provided for the covering, ornament, and security of them, being himself clothed with “a garment down to the feet”, which equally covers and adorns that part of the body as the rest; he does not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, or despise the day of small things; he regards their prayers, and takes notice and accepts of their meanest services; and they are, and should be considered as members of the body, by the rest and by themselves.

Ver. 16. *And if the ear shall say*, etc.] The organ that receives sounds, and can distinguish them, and in which member is placed the sense of hearing; and may design such as are hearers of the word of God, not merely externally, but internally; who hear so as to love, savour, and relish it; so as to understand and believe it, and to act in compliance with it; and distinguish it for themselves, though they may not be able to give a distinct account of it to others, or instruct others in it:

because I am not the eye: the organ of seeing, in which is seated the visive faculty, and which receives light, and uses it for the good of the body, whose superintendent it is; and may be expressive of the ministers of the Gospel, who are that to the church, as eyes are to the body; they are the light of the world, have a clear insight into the doctrines of the Gospel, and communicate their light to others; they are set in the highest place in the church, and as watchmen and overseers there, to instruct; guide, and direct the members of it:

I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? it certainly is; and so such as are only hearers of the Gospel, being affectionate, believing,

understanding and fruitful hearers; though they have not such large knowledge and clear light, so as to be capable of overseeing and instructing others, yet are true and useful members of the church, are highly respected by Christ the head, and to be had in esteem by their fellow members, who may be superior to them.

Ver. 17. *If the whole body were an eye*, etc.] And nothing else,

where were the hearing? there would be no ear, and so no sense of hearing: and if the whole were hearing: or only consisted of a member capable of the sense of hearing,

where were the smelling? there would be no nose, the organ of smelling, and that sense would be wanting: thus if the church only consisted of ministers of the Gospel, of men of eminent light and knowledge, qualified for the preaching of the word to others, there would be no hearers; and on the other hand, if it only consisted of hearers, of such who only could hear the word to their own advantage, there would be none of a quick understanding, or of a quick smell to discern perverse things, to distinguish truth from error, to discern spirits, and direct the rest of the members to wholesome and savoury food, and preserve them from what would be hurtful and pernicious to them.

Ver. 18. *But now hath God set the members*, etc.] The members of a natural body, as they are all made and fashioned by God in the form they be, so they are each of them set by him in the place they are:

everyone of them in the body as it hath pleased him; according to his sovereign will, without consulting any; and each stands in the best situation and position they could be put, and for the greatest service and usefulness to the whole: so God, and not man, hath set every member in the mystical body, the church, in such a place and part of it, as he himself thought fit; some in a higher, others in a lower station, but all for the good of the body; and therefore each member ought to be content with his place, gift, and usefulness, be they what they will; since it is the wise counsel and sovereign pleasure of God, who works all things after the counsel of his own will, that so it should be.

Ver. 19. *And if they were all one member*, etc.] As all eye, or all ear, or all hand, or all foot:

where were the body? where would be the body? it would not be a body consisting of such proper and suitable members, as now it is: so if the community of the saints were either all ministers, or all hearers, etc. there would be no body, consisting of different persons, to receive any benefit or usefulness from either; the church of Christ would not be that uniform, useful, and consistent community it is.

Ver. 20. *But now are they many members,* etc.] Of different make and shape, in different parts and places, and of different use and service:

yet but one body; all are united together, and make up one complete body, and which without each of them would not be perfect: so there are many members in the body of Christ, the church; some are teachers, others are hearers; some give, and others receive; but all make up but one church, of which Christ is the head; nor can anyone of them be spared; was anyone wanting, even the meanest, there would be a deficiency, and the church would not be the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ver. 21. *And the eye cannot say unto the hand,* etc.] Every member of the natural body is useful and necessary. The eye, the seat of the sense of seeing, cannot say to the communicating and working hand,

I have no need of thee: I can do without thee: so the seers and overseers of the church, the ministers of the Gospel, cannot say to the liberal and munificent hands, we have no need of you; for as the one stand in need of the light, instruction, comfort, advice, and direction of the other, so the other stand in need of communication from them; and as God has made it a duty, that he that is taught in the word should communicate to him that teacheth in all good things; and as it is his ordinance that they which preach the Gospel should live of it; so he has generally ordered it in his providence, that they that teach should need such assistance:

nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. The head, which is the seat of the senses, and is superior to, and has the command and government of all the members of the body, cannot say to the lowest and most distant parts of it, the feet, you are needless and useless; so those that are set in the first place in the church, are over others in the Lord, and have the rule over them, cannot say to those that are under them, and submit unto them, even the lowest and meanest of them, that they are of no use and service to them; they can no more be without them, than the head can

be without the feet, or than princes can do without subjects, or magistrates without citizens, or generals without soldiers.

Ver. 22. *Nay, much more those members of the body*, etc.] The apostle, in a beautiful gradation, proceeds to take notice of such parts of the body as are more weak, dishonourable, and uncomely, showing the necessity and usefulness of them:

which seem to be more feeble; than others, do not consist of a strong bony substance, and are not fenced with sinews, as the belly and its intestines: yet these

are necessary; nor could the body be sustained, nourished, and refreshed, without them; so the more weak and feeble saints, whose hearts and hands are to be strengthened, whose infirmities are to be bore, have their usefulness; and the effectual working in the measure of every part, even of the feeble and tender, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love: and these God has seen fit, as necessary to call by his grace, and place in the body, that his strength may be made perfect in their weakness, and to confound the mighty; and out of the mouths even of babes and sucklings to ordain strength and praise.

Ver. 23. *And those members of the body*, etc.] As the back parts of it:

which we think to be less honourable; though greatly useful,

upon these we bestow more abundant honour; by clothing them, for a man's garments are his honour and glory; (see Gill on "⁴¹⁶⁹Matthew 6:29"), so the poor members of Christ's church, who are thought to be, though they really are not, the less honourable, have the more abundant honour conferred on them by God and Christ: God has chosen the poor of this world; Christ has sent his Gospel to them; these the Spirit calls and sanctifies, and makes them all glorious within; these Christ has given his churches a particular charge to take care of now, and will own them as his brethren at the great day, before angels and men; as he now greatly honours them with his presence, a large experience of his grace, and the supply of his Spirit:

and our uncomely parts; which distinguish sexes, and are appointed for generation;

have more abundant comeliness; by an external covering and ornament, to preserve decency and modesty. I do not know who should be designed by these, unless backsliding believers, who have been suffered to fall into great sins; these are the uncomely parts of the church, who, when made sensible of their evils, are restored again, and received into the church; and a mantle of love is cast over all their failings; and all possible care taken that their faults may not be exposed to the world, that so the name of God, and ways of Christ, may not be blasphemed and evil spoken of.

Ver. 24. *For our comely parts have no need*, etc.] As the face, eyes, nose, lips, cheeks, etc. which stand in no need of an external covering, of any outward ornament: so such as are blessed with the bounties of nature and providence, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and are eminent for grace and holiness, and are enabled to walk worthy of their calling, and to have their conversations as become the Gospel of Christ, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, these have no need of such a covering, as the former have, to hide and conceal them from the world:

but God hath tempered the body together; he hath composed it in such a forth, constituted it in such an order, mixed and united all its parts in such a manner, as that they are all beneficial to each other; and such is the harmonious contexture of the whole, that it is a most beautiful structure:

having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; or, as the Syriac version renders it, “which is the least”; and such is the temperament and constitution of the church, having mixed rich and poor persons, of greater and lesser gifts, together, for mutual good.

Ver. 25. *That there should be no schism in the body*. etc.] No complaint of one member against another, as useless and unnecessary; no murmuring on that account; no tumults and rioting; no rebellion and insurrection of one against another; no dissension, no division. The use Menenius^{f243} Agrippa made of this simile, applying it to the body politic, as the apostle here does to the spiritual body, for the appeasing of a sedition among the people; is well known, and usually mentioned by interpreters on this place:

but that the members should have the same care one for another; that is, they are so tempered and mixed together, are in such close union with, and have such a dependence on each other, that they are necessarily obliged to take care of each other’s good and welfare, because they cannot do one without another; and so God has ordered it in the church, that persons

should be so placed in it, and gifts disposed of among them in such a manner, that every man is obliged, not only to look on, and be concerned for his own things, that he takes care of himself, and performs his office, but that he looks every man on the things of others, his good and safety being involved in theirs.

Ver. 26. *And whether one member suffer*, etc.] Pain; even the meanest, lowest, and most distant, as the foot or hand, toe or finger:

all the members suffer with it; are more or less affected therewith, and bear part of the distress; as is easily discerned, by their different forms and motions on such an occasion: so when anyone member of the mystical body is in affliction, whether inward or outward, of body or mind, the rest are, or should be, affected with it, condole, sympathize, help, and assist; and remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, as if they themselves were in bonds, and them that suffer adversity, whether spiritual or temporal, as being in the body, not only in the flesh, but as being part of the body, the church; and therefore should weep with them that weep, and bear a part with them in their sorrows. The Jews have a saying^{f244}, that

“if one brother dies, all the brethren grieve; and if one of a society dies, *hl wk hrwbhh l k gadt*, “the whole society grieves”;

and also another^{f245},

“that everyone that afflicts himself, *rwbyxh μ[*, “with the congregations”, is worthy to see or enjoy the comfort of the congregation or church;”

or one member be honoured; by being set in the highest place, and employed to the greatest usefulness, or by being most richly and beautifully clothed and adorned:

all the members rejoice with it; as sharing in the honour, Or benefit of it: so if one member of the church of Christ is honoured with an high office, with great gifts, with a large measure of grace, spiritual light, knowledge, and experience, with great discoveries of the love of God, with the presence of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, or with the good things of this life, and an heart to make use of them for the interest of religion, the other members rejoice at it; for so it becomes the saints to rejoice with them that rejoice, and be glad, both at the temporal and spiritual prosperity of each other: and upon the whole it is clear, that the

meanest have no reason to be discouraged, nor the highest and greatest to be proud and elated.

Ver. 27. *Now ye are the body of Christ*, etc.] Not his natural body, which his Father prepared for him, in which he bore our sins on the tree, and which was offered up once for all; nor his sacramental body, or the bread in the supper, which is a representation of his body; but his body mystical, the church; not that the Corinthians were the whole of the body, only a part of it, as every single congregational church is of the church universal. This is an accommodation of the simile the apostle had to so much advantage enlarged upon:

and members in particular; or in part: meaning either that they as single members were part of the general body: or that only a part of them were so, there being some among them, as in all particular and visible churches, who had not the true grace of God; and so are neither members of Christ, nor of the general assembly and church of the firstborn: or the sense is, that they were not only members of Christ, and of his body, but were particularly members one of another, in strict union and close communion, and of mutual use and service to each other.

Ver. 28. *And God hath set some in the church*, etc.] As before the apostle gives an account of the various different gifts of the Spirit, qualifying men for service in the church of Christ, here he enumerates the several offices and officers:

first apostles; as were the twelve disciples, and Paul the apostle; men that were immediately sent by Christ himself, and had their commission and doctrine directly from him; and a power of working miracles, to confirm the truth of their mission and ministry; they were sent into all the world to preach the Gospel, to plant churches everywhere, and to ordain officers in them; they were not confined to any particular church, but had power and authority in all the churches, to preach the word, administer ordinances, advise, counsel, direct, reprove, and censure:

secondarily, prophets; who either had the gift of foretelling things to come, as Agabus and others; or who had a peculiar gift, by divine revelation, of explaining the prophecies of the sacred writings, and of preaching the Gospel:

thirdly, teachers; the same with pastors, elders, and overseers; the ordinary ministers of the word, who have a gift of expounding the Scriptures; not by

extraordinary revelation, but by the ordinary gift of the Spirit, in the use of means, as reading, meditation, and prayer; and whose work is to preach the word, administer ordinances, feed and govern particular churches, over whom they are set: after that miracles; which is to be understood, not of some persons, as distinct from apostles, prophets, and teachers, who also had the power of working miracles; but from persons and officers in the church, the principal of which the apostle had mentioned, he passes to things, which belonged at least to some of them; unless it can be thought that there were in those times private Christians, who were neither apostles nor prophets, nor teachers, and yet had a power of doing miracles:

then gifts of healing; the sick, by anointing them with oil, which was only one species of doing miracles; and which was sometimes performed, not only by apostles, and such like extraordinary persons, but by the common elders and ordinary officers of the church:

helps: meaning either the ministers of the word in common, who are helpers of the faith and joy of the saints, and are means of increasing their knowledge and spiritual experience, and of establishing them in the truth; (see ^{<4827>}Acts 18:27 ^{<4024>}2 Corinthians 1:24) or else such evangelists and ministers of the word as were assistants to the apostles, such as Mark, and Timothy, and Titus; or rather the deacons of churches, whose business it is to take care of tables; the Lord's table, the minister's, and the poor's, and all the secular affairs of the church; and so are helps to the minister, relieve him, and free him from all worldly concerns, that he may the better attend to prayer, and the ministry of the word. These, whether one or the other, are so called, in allusion to the priests and Levites, who were *hyd[sm*, "helps", or assistants to the high priest, in the burning of the red heifer, and in other things ^{f246}:

governments; some by these understand the same with pastors and elders, who have the rule and government of the church; others lay elders, a sort of ruling elders in the church, as distinct from pastors. Dr. Lightfoot thinks such are intended, who had the gift of discerning spirits. I rather think with Deuteronomy Dieu, that the word designs counsellors; see the Septuagint in (^{<2114>}Proverbs 11:14 24:6) and here intends such as are men of wisdom and prudence, who are very proper persons to be consulted and advised with, by the pastor, elder, or overseer, in matters of moment and importance in the church:

diversities of tongues; such as have the gift of speaking with divers tongues; or of interpreting them, or both. The Vulgate Latin version and some copies add, “interpretations of tongues”.

Ver. 29. *Are all apostles?* etc.] No some are prophets, as distinct from apostles; and some are teachers, as distinct from them both, and some are neither:

are all prophets? no; some are apostles, above them, and some are teachers, inferior to them; and but very few there were who had that peculiar character and gift:

are all teachers? no; the far greater part of the members of churches are hearers, or persons that are taught in the word; are neither in the office of teaching, nor have they the qualifications for it.

Are all workers of miracles? no; in those early times, when the gift of doing miracles was bestowed, it was not given to all, only to some; and now there are none that are possessed of it.

Ver. 30. *Have all the gifts of healing?* etc.] No; when these gifts were in being, all had them not. When anointing with oil, in order to heal the sick, was in use, it was only performed by the elders of the church, not by the common members of it, who were to be sent for by the sick on this occasion:

do all speak with tongues? no; it was not true in fact, as they well knew; though this was greatly coveted after, as a following chapter of this epistle shows;

do all interpret? that is, unknown tongues, strange languages; or can they? no. This also was a peculiar gift bestowed on some persons only.

Ver. 31. *But covet earnestly the best gifts,* etc.] Which may be rendered either indicatively as an assertion, “ye do covet earnestly the best gifts”: of prophesying and teaching, of doing miracles, healing diseases, speaking with, and interpreting, different tongues and languages; but I can, and do show you something that is better, and more excellent than these: or, by way of interrogation, “do ye covet earnestly the best gifts?” do you zealously affect them, fervently desire them, and emulate one another in your endeavours after them? I have something to observe to you which exceeds them all, and which you would do well to follow after, and eagerly

pursue; or imperatively, as an exhortation, as it is rendered by our translators: and by the best gifts may be meant, the best of these external gifts before mentioned; and not those of the highest class, and the more extraordinary, but which are the most useful and beneficial to the church, as preaching or prophesying was: the Corinthians seemed most covetous and desirous of speaking with different tongues; but the apostle shows, in (~~434~~1 Corinthians 14:1-40), by divers reasons, that prophesying was preferable, being more serviceable and useful to the church, and so more eligible and to be desired by them, to which he may have regard here: or else by them are meant the internal graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, and love, which are all of them gifts of God's grace; all useful and valuable, and better than all external extraordinary gifts whatever, which a man might have, and be nothing, be lost and damned; whereas he that believes in Christ, has a good hope through grace, and love in his soul to God, Christ, and his people, though he is destitute of the other gifts, shall certainly be saved; wherefore these are the gifts which men should be solicitous for and covet after, and be greatly concerned to know that they have them, and to be content without the other:

and yet show I unto you a more excellent way: if by the best gifts are designed the above graces of the Spirit, then by “the more excellent way”, Christ must be meant, the author and object of these graces; who is the way to the covenant, and to a participation of all the blessings of it, as justification, pardon, adoption, and eternal life; the way into a Gospel church, and to all the ordinances of the Gospel dispensation, as baptism, and the Lord's supper; for faith in him is the prerequisite, and proper qualification for the enjoyment of each of these: Christ is the way of salvation, and the way to the Father, and to heaven and eternal happiness; and an excellent one he is, the more, yea, the most excellent; he is the only way to each of these; he is the new and living way, a plain and pleasant one; and so a safe and secure one, in which all that walk shall certainly be saved: now this way the apostle showed, declared, pointed out in the ministry of the word; it was his chief and principal business, the sum of his doctrine, to make known Christ, and him crucified, as the way, the truth, and the life; to direct souls to him, and to show them the way of salvation by him: but if by the best gifts are meant the more useful ones of those before mentioned, as prophesying, or preaching, then the more excellent way designs grace, special and internal grace; and that either grace in general, regenerating, sanctifying grace, including all sorts of grace; which

is the way of a soul's passing from the death of sin to a life of faith and holiness; and is the way to eternal glory, and which gives a meetness for it, and is inseparably connected with it. This is a more excellent way than gifts; for gifts, be they ever so great, may be lost or taken away, through disuse or misimprovement; but grace always remains, can never be lost, nor will ever be taken away, but will issue in everlasting life: men may have the greatest gifts, and yet not be saved, as Judas and others; but he that has the least degree of faith in Christ, hope in him, and love to him, shall be saved by him with an everlasting salvation: or particularly the grace of charity, or love to the saints, may be intended by the more excellent way; which is the evidence of a man's passing from death and life; the new commandment of Christ, and the fulfilling of the law; without which, a man, though he has never such great gifts, he is nothing as a Christian, nor in the business of salvation; and is the greatest of all the graces of the Spirit; and is of such a nature, that when prophecies, tongues, knowledge, and all external gifts shall fail, and even the internal graces of faith and hope shall cease, the one being changed for vision, and the other swallowed up in enjoyment, this will continue; and the rather this grace may be thought to be meant, since the apostle immediately passes to treat it in the next chapter, and prefers it to all gifts, and even graces.