

THE RELEVANCE OF PAULINE THEOLOGY OF *CHARISMATA* AND *SUMPHERON* IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-7 TO CHRISTIAN ECUMENISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The singular issue that has most divided the body of Christ today is the lopsided orientation about the proper usage and purpose of the Spiritual Gifts. The use of spiritual gifts can mar or make the church. Of all Pauline theological emphases, his teaching on the Church of Christ as a body, and Spiritual gift (*charismata*) as means of uniting (*sumpheron*) the body ranks one of the highest. Today it is most difficult to teach or write about the Holy Spirit. This is because there are several arguments, different teachings, various thoughts, different beliefs and divisions arising from the teaching on the Holy Spirit. The interpretation and discussion of the *charismata* have varied from the various extremes.

The most aspect of doctrine of Holy Spirit which has been the most controversial is the case for Spiritual Gifts. Spiritual Gifts is given to unite the body of Christ, but it has been the major cause of conflict and ecclesiastical disunity.¹ The subject of spiritual gifts has aroused unprecedented interest in every religious circle. With almost universal appeal, the tide of charismatic theology has cut across all theological barriers and ecclesiastical institutions. The word *charisma* (pl. *charismata*) emphasizes that a spiritual gift is a gift of God's grace: it is not a naturally developed ability but rather a gift bestowed on a believer for God's service (1 Corinthians 12:1-7). There now appears to be much emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and *charismata* are gaining more prominence than ever before, it is expedient that Christians be taught the purpose and the appropriate use of *charismata*. This work reveals that the spiritual gifts are not given to engender pride, hierarchy and disunity in the church but for the purpose of promoting church unity and also that *charismata* are not end themselves but a means to an end, and that end is *sumpheron* (uniting up of the body of Christ)

This research is purposeful. It is to remedy the misconceptions on the possession and exercise of spiritual gift in the community of believers and to highlight the relevance of spiritual gifts to promote Christian ecumenism. This will be done by undertaking exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-7 to showcase Pauline stand on the matter and its applicability to Nigerian context. Therefore, I hypothesize that the best solution to ecclesiastical disunity, unhealthy rivalry and egocentric charismatic display in ministry today is the proper understanding of Pauline concept of *charismata* and *Sumpheron* (profiting others, uniting) as the purpose of *charismata*.

¹ David Abolarin, *What Christians Believed* (Nigeria: Crown Oni Printing Press, 2010),50.

INTRODUCTION

Apostle Paul lived before his time; his theology remains imperative to solving some of the ecclesiological challenges in the twenty-first century Nigerian Church. This is exemplified by the importance of his theology of Christian ecumenism and charismata to Nigerian context. Any casual survey of Christian bookstore and libraries will show that the subject of the Spiritual gifts is a "hot item nowadays."² For the fact that 21st century Christian ministry is pneumacentric (full of and centered around the manifestation of Holy Spirit) has made the issue of the Holy Spirit to be in the forefront. Over the last decades the volume of the books written on the Holy Spirit have sprang in to a large proportion. Peter Wagner's prefatorial words affirm this trend. He says "I need to make a good case for adding another book to the already too-long list of book on spiritual gifts."³ This shows that a lot has been said about the concept of Holy Spirit. Also, the Wagner's assertion reflects that the most pneumatological concepts that has been widely discussed and demonstrated is the "*Charismata*." (Spiritual gifts) Some of the questions that have been raised and misunderstood are: "what is the biblical methodology for the usage of charismata? What is the intention of God in giving out the charismata to some individuals? How can these charismata be appropriately utilized in the body of Christ? Should the charismata be theocentric or anthropocentric? How can egocentric notions be removed from the usage of charismata, and which of the charismata should be given the highest preeminence in Christian body? Answers to these questions are important to how united the church will be. And how united the church is will affect the extent the church will go on the Great Commission.

Howbeit, the history of the early church shows that the misappropriation in the usage of Spiritual Gifts is not a new development. Throughout church history the theology of charismata, as well as the Holy Spirit Himself, has often been misunderstood. Early church fathers and theologians concentrated on hammering out their understanding of other doctrines such as Christology and soteriology so much

² Daniel J. Lewis, *Spiritual Gifts* (USA: Diakonos, Inc., 1999),4.

³ Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts can Help Your Church Grow* (Nigeria: Wellsprings Publications, 1979),11.

that little or nothing is said on the practical theologies such as ecclesiology and charismata. While the average Christians did have some understandings of the proper place of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and His importance in their lives, the doctrine was neither systemized (until more recently) nor was the emphasis on the Holy Spirit given its proper place. With the birth of the Pentecostal movement at about the turn of the twentieth century, followed by commencement of the charismatic movements some six decades later, all of these trends changed. Suddenly charismatic expression in Christian worship became prominent. This sudden change of trend bred some misconception and heretical teachings. Since false teaching has always forced the church to purify and crystallize its theology, therefore the need was felt to put forward the biblical stand on the place of Holy Spirit and Gifts in the church. On the negative side, much error and negative - overemphasis on the Holy Spirit and His ministry ensued. On the positive side, it forced Bible students to grapple with the Scriptures to comprehend the truth about the place of spiritual gift.

This lack of relevant knowledge on the place of charismata in the Christian ministry has occasioned the situations of unhealthy rivalry among the twenty century ministers. The present situation of egocentric use of the spiritual gift for personal gain is similar to the Corinthian church's problem in the early century. The church at Corinth was almost divided on the issue of Spiritual Gifts. James Adeyanju of ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Nigeria, notes that:

The church of Corinthians was a group which had little cohesion. It was tainted with problems such as factions, litigations and marital issues. Besides, there were spiritual problems concerning the Lord's Supper and the exercise of spiritual gifts. The church erroneously alleged that the ecstatic speech is loftiest of the spiritual gifts at the expense of other gifts. Tongue-speakers prided themselves as the most spiritual members in the church. Even those gifted in prophetic messages were not using it orderly. The resultant effects of these was a situation of confusion when the church met for worship services.⁴

⁴ James Olugbenga Adeyanju, *The Exercise of Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14 In the Context of the Apostolic Church Sango, Ibadan*. MA Dissertation at Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, (2007), 21 James Olugbenga Adeyanju is one of the foremost Africa biblists. His Christian scholarship is noteworthy.

This attests to the lopsided pneumatological emphasis of the Corinthians. This Corinthian problem is identical to that which is prevalent in 21st century Christian ministry. The contemporary church is prone to intellectual pride, placing a high value on their "knowledge" (*gnosis*) and spiritual exercise (1 Corinthians 12:8). The result was an attitude of boasting and competition within the Church, which was further fueled by their distorted cultural orientation. The contemporary church is making the same mistake the Corinthians made. Though gifts are significant to the church's mission of the world today, according to Lindsay, *charismata* enhance positive response to the gospel message.⁵ But the shoe is now on the other leg concerning spiritual gifts. It has caused division, denominationalism and factionalism, and commercialization of the Christian ministry in the contemporary time.

Statement of Purpose

Using historical-exegetical methodology, the researcher examines the text concern, in its context, that is, Corinthians situation, and its applicability and relevancy to the 21st century church and Christian ministry. The problems attempted to address here are three: to determine what Paul himself might have understood by the words "*charismata*" and *sumpheron*" since his own usage exhibits a considerable degree of fluidity, to examine the root cause of ecclesiastical disunity as the lopsided orientation about the purpose of *charismata* and to affirm the relevancy of Pauline notion on *Charismata* to the present phase of Christian ecumenism in Africa.

Charismata in the New Testament Church: Pauline Emphasis

According to Samson Fatokun, a church historian of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the first century Apostolic church was a community characterized with the indwelling of the Holy spirit.⁶ The role of Holy Spirit in the primitive church cannot be over-emphasized. The Holy Spirit, as promised by Christ, was the foundation for the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He also helped the first apostles to carry out the work that Christ has commissioned them. The church was able to record much

⁵ G. Lindsay, *An overview of Spiritual Gifts* (Kaduna: Evangel Press, 2001), 15.

⁶Samson A Fatokun, *Church in the Apostolic Age* (Nigeria: Erodite Publications),144.

success because the Holy Spirit was their back bone. There was a great expression of the spiritual Gifts/ grace of God in the ministries of the Apostles. Associate Prof. Samson Fatokun continues that:

A church where the Holy Spirit is given a free hand cannot but be a growing and developing one. The charisma of the first century apostolic church made her to grow with much rapidity. The more the church was persecuted the more she was growing simply because an enterprise managed by Holy Spirit cannot suffer bankruptcy. The charismatic qualities of the early church made her attractive to the public as solutions carrier. A church of genuine miracles, signs and wonders.⁷

Nonetheless, as a beginning point one must at least look at how Paul uses some key words. The term "gifts of the Holy Spirit" does not occur often in Pauline corpus. Nonetheless, the occasional collocation of "gift" concept in Romans and 1 Corinthians 12-14 makes the term a legitimate Pauline. The word *charismata* is a distinctively Pauline word which can only be found elsewhere in 1 Peter 4:10 in the whole of New Testament corpus. According to Carson, the term occurs seventeen times in the New Testament and sixteen of these occurrences are in Paul.⁸ The noun is formed from the Greek word *charis* (grace). In Pauline usage of the word, it refers to a variety of ways God's grace has been evidenced among his people (the church). There are a lot of seemingly controversy in defining what might be the meaning of the term as used by Paul, this is because Pauline fond of polyvalence in his usage of terms.

Gordon Fee opined that *charismata* does not necessarily refer to Spirit activity and when it does, it seems, in the opinion of Paul, to refer to specific visible ways in which the Spirit manifests himself in the believing community, granting them "gracious bestowments" to meet their various needs and thus to build them as the eschatological people of God.⁹

Spiritual gifts (*charismata*) constituted an important subject in the liturgy of the early church. The term *charismata* was used sparsely in secular work and it occurs only rarely before the New

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ D. A Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Homebush West: Lancers, 1988), 20.

⁹ Gordon Fee, "Gifts of the Holy Spirit," in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, eds., Gerald F Hawthorne et al (England: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 342-345.

Testament era.¹⁰ The implication of this is that, the expression of Holy Spirit and His gift in Old Testament era is scarce when compared to the New Testament era. This in turn implies that the Holy Spirit is sent after the ascension of Christ for the purpose of teaching and building the church.

Divergent Views on Charismata

There are many views as to whether the charismata are related to the ministry of the church or not. A view claims that *charismata* had ceased with the first generation of Christians in the early church while the second view maintains that the gifts are relevant to the today's church ministry. One of the biblical support upon which the ceasationists argue their view is the 1 Corinthians 13. As explained by Adeyanju James, P.G Steve opined that the gifts of the Holy Spirit gradually began to disappear from the life of the church. They later ceased completely and gave way to what is better than them in the church now.¹¹ This view is not without its flaws and it is a parochial view of the promise of Jesus in sending the Comforter who will teach and guide the church of Christ. Besides, Holy Spirit is the hall mark of the church, it is on His presence that the church was found on the day of Pentecost. Suffice to say that the mark (seal of ownership) with which God placed His authority and ownership on the church is Holy Spirit and this Holy Spirit is characterized by the expression of His Gifts (*Charismata*).

On the other hand, there is a view that the spiritual gifts are still relevant and present today. This refers to as continualists' theory. It argues that ceasationism is baseless and unbiblical. Tom Guy says that the spiritual gifts are still available to the contemporary church as they were in the early church. This view is the most biblical and theological, from exegetical and objective perspective. First, according to Ferguson,¹² the claim that the gifts had ceased in the past would implies that there are two dispensations in which the gifts of God are given by God. He asserts that the NT knows only one age which is

¹⁰H. H. Esser, "Grace" in C. Brown, eds. NIV Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1986), 116.

¹¹ Adeyanju James, opp cit. see P.G Steve, *Are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit meant for Today's church?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006). Though Steve could not ascertain "what is more important" in his opinion. L Graham is also of the same opinion.

¹²S.B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 222.

inaugurated by the Holy Spirits. Secondly, Charismatic movement has spread throughout the world, this worldwide expression of Holy Spirit in ministries of some people around the world, attests to the continual existence of the Spiritual gifts. Since the Holy Spirit who gives spiritual gifts is immutable, the gifts would continue to be available for the church until the Parousia.¹³

The view that the spiritual gifts have ceased can be said to be reactionary and it can quench the spirit. The spiritual gifts are still in existence and are relevant to the church today. However, the usage of these *charismata* (e.g. word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, gift of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discerning of spirit, tongues, interpretation of tongues and others) is to be accompanied by a great deal of orderliness and with the purpose of unity of the body of Christ in mind (ecumenism). If this is left out, what is supposed to be a unifying factor can become a divisive factor, like the case of the Corinthian church which Paul corrected in Corinthians, Chapter twelve. The practical applicability and relevancy of Pauline response to the contemporary church is noteworthy. To this we now turn.

Exegesis of the Text Concerned

No book of the Bible was written in a vacuum. They were all written to meet certain situations. Some were written to commend the audience, others to correct or instruct certain teachings and others as a biography. It is therefore an exegetical fallacy to interpret any biblical text without considering the context with which it was written. According to Paul Enns, there are three contexts to be examined for proper exegesis of any biblical text, *viza viz*, immediate context, more remote context, and the context of the entire book.¹⁴ This Enns Paul's hermeneutical hypothesis is appropriate to our current task.

Context of 1 Corinthians 12

According to Leon Morris, the immediate occasion of Epistle to the Corinthians was the letter which Paul had received from Corinthian church, and to which a reply was necessary. Accordingly, he wrote, answering the questions that had been put to him, questions about marriage and celibacy, about

¹³ J.I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 10.

¹⁴ Enns Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 176.

food offered to idols, holy communion, probably also about public worship and spiritual gifts. Paul was troubled about the division in the church. Parties had been formed attaching to themselves the names of Paul or Apollo or Peter or even of Christ. Some of the issues that were dealt with by Paul in this epistle include the problem of sexual impurity and sensuality, the problem of quarrelsome, and the misuse of charismata, the debate about Christian resurrection and others. The result of this, as argues by Leon Morris, is an inexhaustible mine of Christian thought and life. Nowhere else in the New Testament is there a more many-sided embodiment of the imperishable principles and instincts which should inspire each member of the body of Christ for all time.¹⁵

As the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, Corinthians was populous, wealthy, and morally corrupt. The church in Corinth was also infested with a multitude of problems, such as immorality, instability, divisions, jealousy, and envy, lawsuits, marital difficulties, sexual immorality and misuse of spiritual gifts. Paul wrote the book of first Corinthians to them to curb the Spiritual problem in the church, to correct the misuse of spiritual gift and to answer certain questions in the church.¹⁶ Chapter 12-14 of the letter focus on the Corinthians' attitude toward and their misuse of spiritual gifts. They seem to accord respect to some gifts at the expense of others. In chapter 12, Paul writes about the manner in which the spirit bestows gift upon believers, how it results in interdependence and unity with diversity, and the divine purpose of the gift.

The Corinthian were envying each other in their factionalism (1 Corinthians 3:3). Their zeal and improper attitude toward spiritual gifts certainly stirred up envy and self-centeredness.¹⁷ They had 'corinthianized' the ministry and expression of Holy Spirit. According to Gordon Fee, the rhetorical and sometimes polemical, nature of the argument in 1 Corinthians 12, suggests that Paul's purpose is primarily corrective and not instructive. In his effort to curb the Corinthians misguided zeal, Paul first argues for

¹⁵ Leon Morris, *First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1966), 25-26.

¹⁶ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the NT (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 626.

¹⁷ Pius Hau, *Exposition of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a* in American Journal of Theology. vol.12 issue 6, (July 2011), 6.

the necessity of diversity, if the community is to be built up. It is obvious that Paul was very enthusiastic about the urgent need to correct the Corinthians' selfish notion about spiritual Gift. The urgency with which Paul wished to correct this problem of misuse of spiritual gifts becomes clear if one considers the last verse of 1 Corinthians 11 and the first verse of 1 Corinthians 12 with objective mind:

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest (*of your problems on which you have requested solution*) will I set in order when I come. 1. Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (1Corinthians 11:34, 12:1 words in bracket are mine)

What does that mean? Paul is saying, "...the rest will I set in order when I come, but concerning spirituals, I do not want you to be ignorant." The Corinthians could not wait for Paul to come in order to settle some of the issues. There was too much at stake. It needed to be dealt with at the moment.

Place in its context, here Paul is showing the need and urgency with which issues that has to do with charismata has to be clarified. It cannot wait. More than ever, the body needs to have clear talk and straight shooting on the matter of spiritual things and spiritual gifts. We can never ignore any portion of God's Word without paying a price for it in our churches and when we ignore the Bible's teaching on spiritual gifts we get into deep trouble for several reasons.

Exegetical Engagement of the Text

For convenience and concise handling the researcher divides this text in to two places, a The Biblical criterion for Knowing the spirit of God and His activity 1 Corinthians 12:1-3, b. The Purpose of charismata: Common Good, 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7.

a. *The Biblical Criterion for Knowing the Spirit of God and His activities (verse 1-3)*

**Verse 1 - Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.
Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.**

The introductory *Περὶ* (concerning, about or around, depending on the case of the accompanying noun) continues the series of Pauline answers to a set of issues raised by the Corinthians themselves. *δέ* is an adversative particle, Simply indicating a transition from one issue or subject to the other. For

example it is used in Mk 5:11; Lk 3:21; 1 Cor 16:12. It can also be used as a sign of shifting one's thought between two ideas, most especially after a negative idea. Here it is used to transit from chapter 11 and 12. It is the link word between the point of discussion in chapter 11 and 12. Another literary term that Paul used here that is worthy of notice is 'πνευματικῶν' (spirituals). This word is of indeterminate gender, it could accordingly denote 'spiritual men' or 'spiritual things' This is a adjective normal genitive neuter plural from πνευματικός. That the term is used by Paul to refer to "Spiritual person" is preferred on two premises; one, it is used in 1 Corinthians 2:15 to refer to '*the spiritual person*, whose powers of judgment are directed by the divine (πνεῦμα), secondly, one can notice that the immediate context is full references to persons, it shows that both Paul and his audience are thinking of men who exercised the gifts.

Solomon Abogunrin suggests that the use of the term (πνευματικῶν) may have been informed by the fact that some of the Corinthians prized themselves as Spirit-people in order to distinguish themselves from remaining members of the church.¹⁸ Accordingly, Paul's direct use of the word indicates that the idea of Spirituality and its relationship with spiritual gifts is what Paul is about to address. When Paul tells us that he does not want us to be ignorant of *pneumatikos*, he is talking about far more than just gifts. He is talking about the whole realm of pneumatics. Therefore, we have learned that the whole arena of spirit manifestations is under discussion first. Then, in a few verses, Paul will narrow the discussion to what is commonly called spiritual gifts.

James Adeyanju opines that the opening paragraph (i.e. 12:1-3) sets the scene in regard to both its audience and setting. The phrase οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἄγνοεῖν. (I do not want you to be ignorant) is Pauline idiomatic expression by which he reassures his audience about a teaching that is part of Christian tradition and it also indicates Paul's pastoral concern for the Corinthian church. The phrase is used to introduce the various answers to the question that the Corinthians had asked (cf. 7:1, 25; 8:1). He stresses that he wants them to be accurately informed regarding the concept of spiritual gifts.

¹⁸ Abogunrin, S.O. *The First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians: African Bible Commentaries* (Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1991), 125.

**Verse 2- Οἶδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε πρὸς τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι.
You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.**

It was not uncommon in many religions of antiquity that some adherents had special experience in trances, ecstatic speech and so forth. Such phenomena were not unique to Christianity. Here the root cause of Corinthians problems is a set forth- syncretism. The people were barely removed from paganism and yet were spiritually proud. They were used to religions that manifested some elite, ecstatic supernatural experience. S.J Hafemann's ¹⁹ view that the Corinthians were characterized by spirituality influenced by Greco-Roman philosophies is plausible. What is our point? What is Paul's point? The first point that Paul is making is this, not all ecstasies, not all spiritual manifestations are of the Holy Spirit! Many are cheap imitations! The mystery religions all have their false and counterfeit religious experiences, their trances, their visions, and their ecstasies. The Corinthians lived in a world that was full of spiritual manifestations. They knew that behind those speechless idols of wood and stone were real demons, real spiritual forces that had led them off (as a victor would lead his captives) toward their doom.

Usually in the NT the word pagans means non-Jews, but sometimes it may mean all who are not Christian (cf. 1 Thes. 4:5). The characteristic feature of paganism is that the pagans are easily carried away to idol. The pagan are men who are not freely following the gods they are intellects have fully approved but as under compulsion and as helpless man who knows no better. ἄφωνος, means *silent* (Ac 8:32), *incapable of speech* 1 Corinthians 12:2; 2 Pt 2:16; *incapable of conveying meaning* (1 Corinthians 14:10). It is used here as an adjective that tells us the nature of the idols and image that were prevalent in pre-Christian Corinthians' religion. They were worshiping idols that were incapable of conveying meaningful messages therefore disorderliness could have its place since there was no any meaningful message to be conveyed. Here Paul was using the pre-Christian experience of his audience to show them the difference between spiritual experience in their formal religion and in the new religion.

¹⁹ S.J. Hafemann, "Letters to the Corinthians" in Hawthorne, et al, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, 174.

ἄν an adverb incapable of translation by a single English word, denoting that the action of the verb is dependent on some circumstance or condition; its effect upon the meaning of its clause varies with the construction. Here the adverb ἄν modifies the verb ἀπαγόμενοι (to lead away). This is used here to portray the plight of the heathens or idol worshippers.

Verse 3- Διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦν· καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν, Κύριον Ἰησοῦν, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

Here Paul is affirming the fundamental issue which is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Christ. Paul is christologising his response to the Corinthians. According to Paul here the initial gift of the Holy Spirit is the awareness of belonging to Christ and becoming part of divine family of faith.²⁰ Their old experience of heathenism had not prepared them to understand the concept of charismata. Paul therefore supplies that loyalty to Jesus Christ is the true test of validity of any spiritual gift. The sentence "Jesus is Lord" marks out the genuine charismata. The term Ἀνάθεμα is Hebraic in biblical use denoting that which is vowed to God for destruction as under his curse. Furthermore, the difference between λαλῶν and λέγει is well stated here. The former is to speak under the influence of the Holy Spirit while the latter is to speak ordinarily. It thus means that it is through the Holy Spirit that man can only speak of the Lordship of Christ. Does this mean that an unbeliever cannot say "Jesus is Lord," no, he can say this in mockery.²¹ It is under the influence of the Holy Spirit that one can confess the Lordship of Christ appropriately. This is in line with the promise that Jesus made to His disciples in his priestly prayer. (John 16-17).

b. The Purpose of Charismata; Bringing together (verses 4-7)

Verse 4- Διαιρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα.
Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

²⁰ Ralph Martins, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12-15* (MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 10.

²¹ Ibid.

Διαιρέσεις (noun nominative feminine plural) is a form of expressing the idea of a differences but here it deals much with distribution. According to Morris, the noun thus mean 'apportionment' or 'allotment.' χάρισμα, means *a gift (freely and graciously given), a favour bestowed* may be generally Ro 1:11; 5:15f; 6:23; 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 1:11. or of special gifts bestowed on individual Christians 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Ti. 4:14; 2 Ti. 1:6; 1 Pt 4:10. It is used here to refer to extraordinary endowment that Holy Spirit confers on men and the fact that it is freely given. It has its root from the Greek *Charis* (grace). I am of the opinion that Paul was using this term to remind the people the origin of the Spiritual gifts. It is God who gives it out through the Holy Spirit by grace not by merit. If, then, it is God who gives it to people base on grace, then it becomes a misguided usage for one to use what he got through faith for self-adulation and pride. The Corinthians had apparently used the gifts as a means of fomenting division. They regarded the possession of such gifts as a matter for pride, and set up one against another on the basis of possession of a gift. The recognizes that there is diversity in the gifts given by the Holy Spirit but He gives to whosoever He wishes and determining factor is GRACE.

**Verse 5- Καὶ διαιρέσεις διακονιῶν εἰσὶν, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος.
And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.**

The Greek word translated "ministries" is "διακονιῶν" noun genitive feminine plural common from "διακονία" which can also be translated "service." When this word is used in conjunction with "διαιρέσεις" (difference or diversity), it means that there are different ways of service but the variety is not important, it is the same Lord. Though the word διακονία may be used to refer to any service render to Christ, but if the word is to be examined in its context, it is the action of the divine within the Christians, that is the service that are carried out through the enablement of indwelling spirit. Though this service differs from person to person it is the same Lord in them that work. It is reasonable to suggest that the way the term διακονιῶν is used here signifies the relevancy and necessity of charismata to the service of God.

**Verse 6- καὶ διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσὶν, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν.
And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.**

This is most likely a piece of Semitic parallelism, where both clauses make essentially the same point. One argues for diversity another argues for unity.

"ἐνεργημάτων" is a noun genitive neuter plural from "ἐνέργημα". It is derived from the Greek word for "energy." The word "energy" was derived from "ἐνεργημάτων". In physical science the word energy means "capacity to do work". In this context, the word ἐνεργημάτων is used to denote the enablement of the Holy Spirit in various way to work or serve (note that διακονῶν is used in the previous verse) God. Next to this Paul mentioned 'δέ' ('but'- adversative particle) to let his audience know that even if there are varieties of gifts of Holy Spirit (here Holy Spirit giving them the enablement in different ways), yet it is the same God who provides the "gifts" that is energizing. The conjunction δέ shifts the emphasis from the differences in the gifts to the source of the gift who is One and the same. Also, Paul's repetitive use of "all" is important (πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν). The first πάντα is in neuter gender and thus means "all things" while the second πᾶσιν can refer to masculine gender or neuter, but some biblical reference to it make the masculine to hold more water. Again, the emphasis in this chapter is God working within men. Paul, therefore, shows that it is the same God who are working in ALL in different ways.

**Verse 7 - Ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδεται ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.
But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.**

The word 'δέ' (but) is a coordinating conjunction, it is indicating a shift in process of thought and discussion from one to another. Paul here uses it to mean that though all the gifts flow from the one God, the manifestation by which the spirit acts varies in each individual. Ἐκάστῳ -"each one" which can also be translated "everyone" (it is used in 1 Corinthians 12:18 in this way) It is used in this to show that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not reserved for a few outstanding people. From here, Paul now mention the purpose of the gifts - "συμφέρον" verb participle present active accusative neuter singular from συμφέρω which is polyvalent in meaning- 1. *bring together* (a look at the prefix "συν" which means together) Act 19:19.—2. *confer a benefit, be advantageous or profitable or useful*—a. impersonal construction συμφέρει (*it is good*, etc. Mt 5:29; 19:10; 1 Cor 6:12; 2 Cor 8:10.—b. the participle "συμφέρον" - *profitable*, etc. τὰ συμφέροντα means "*what is good for you*"- Act 20:20. τὸ συμφέρον- *profit, advantage*

1 Cor 10:33. In this place, the term refer to both "bring together" and "profiting." This shows that while it is true that a man who has spiritual gift is thereby profited, the advantage is wider. Other people are also profited. Spiritual gifts are always given to be used, and for edification of the whole body of Christ, not for egocentric use of the possessors.

Pauline emphasis here in using the term '*συμφέρον*' is to call the people to the understanding of the real purpose for which the charismata are given. It is for the common goods. *συμφέρον* can also mean "with a view to what is for the best" when it is used with the preposition "*πρὸς*" and article "*τὸ*." (1 Corinthians 6:12). Some scholars are of the opinion that this purpose is an aspect of *oikodome* (up building) which in turn focuses attention on the well-being and maturity of the entire community, not the individual.²² Pride or envy is not to be encouraged. This would form and foment divisions and parties; but for profit and advantage not a man's own but public that is the good of the whole. The term *συμφέρον* here reinforces the fact that spiritual gifts are not end themselves but a means to an end and the end is "bringing together," that is to be a unifying factor in the church of God. Promotion of unity is one of the aspect of *oikodomen* (building up) which Paul emphasized much in chapter fourteen.

The Reality of Disunity in the 21st Century Church: A Call for Christian Ecumenism in Nigeria

The church ministers nowadays are acting in several ways that ignored or contradicted what is the biblical standard of using the spiritual gifts. Envy, unhealthy rivalry and spiritual hierarchization have permeated the whole of the atmosphere of the church in this century. The fact that the Spirit reserves the right to give or withhold the charisma has been undermined. They (ministers) are envious of one another. Some are feeling slighted or passed over because they do not enjoy the more spectacular gifts.

In the contemporary Christian ministry, they are those who are suffering inferiority complex, feeling they could never aspire to the more flamboyant and showy gifts of service. They are jealous and full of bitterness they feel they are cheated, and easily show resentment toward others who have the gifts. At the other extreme are those prominent who are referred to as "gifted," they have turned this grace of

²² Martins, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12-15*, 20.

God to a superiority complex. They started to look down on others and despise them. They are sheer exhibitionists.

The snow-ball effects of this problem is evident in various ecclesiastical aspects. Respect and popularity are accorded to people on the basis of the expression of charismata they can exhibit. Spiritual gifts almost have become the canon of divine calling and source of egocentric expressions. Some prideful ministers have turned spiritual gifts to their source of income and economic advancement. It is now obvious that what was intended to enhance unity has almost become a divisive tool in Christian church. Denominationalism and factionalism in the Christian church are, in great length, due to this lopsided orientation about charismata. All the attempts made by ecumenical bodies to promote unity in the Nigerian church are futile and fruitless because of this worldwide spiritual epidemic and ecclesiastical adarbaku. Spiritual gifts have become the tool of concretizing egocentric ideas and all sorts of self-adulations. If Paul is still alive with us today would not he see the need to write another 2nd Corinthian not to a Corinthian church this time around but to the Nigerian Church. This intractable problem has affected the Great Commission since the extent we will mirror Christ to others is determined by the strength of unity within us. It is by our love and unity that the world will know we are Christians. If Christian ecumenism will thrive in Nigeria, this proper understanding on the usage of charismata as taught by Apostle Paul should be made paramount

Concluding Remarks

The theological proposition of this work can be regarded as an exegetical reformation of the biblical concept of charismata and its relevance to Ecumenism in Nigeria. The etymology of the term charismata shows that it involves 'grace' in giving out these gifts by God and not by human merit. This implies that we have nothing that is not given to us. No believers should pride themselves or boast about the gifts and grace of God in their lives. God gives these gifts according to His grace for the purpose of uniting and building the body of Christ. Whatever gifts we have are meant to be used to fulfill God's end and intention. Paul's response to the Corinthians problem is that the charismata are not end in themselves

but a means to an end and that is *sumphero* (bringing together). This shows that spiritual gifts are given to individuals not for their benefits alone but for that which will bring the people together and unite them. This is a major part of Pauline oikodomen, which takes the church as a body and charismata as the agents through which the member of the body can be edified and built up. Pauline ecclesiology is relevant for solving the ongoing ecclesiastical disunity of the 21st century Nigeria.

For the fact that one does not have particular charisma, he should not disown or exclude or criticize those who have it. God wants His gifts and their variety to promote harmony and unity, not discord and schism, members of Christian fold need to care about one another without haughtiness or envy. The 'haves' and the 'have-nots' must remember that they are part of the same body.

In sum, exegetical assessment of 1 Corinthians 12:1-7, observed above, shows that the intention of God for charismata is be a cohesive force not adhesive force for the body of Christ. This work can be rightly concluded with some of the Yoruba proverbs that emphasize the importance of unity in a community: *Igba ikan ni nfowo tile* (It takes 200 united termites to build a mound), *Agbajowo la fin soya, atete owo kan o gberu dori* (It is appropriate to use the whole palm to beat chest while a single hand cannot take a load from the floor to the head). Therefore, unity in the church of God cannot be substituted for either fame or self-adulation, neither can the spiritual gifts be productive without directing it to build unity in the Christian community.

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