

IX. Distinction between Ordinary Spiritual Gifts and Miraculous Sign Gifts

A number of writers on this subject distinguish between spiritual gifts that are ordinary, general, and non-miraculous, and those that are extraordinary, special, miraculous, and supernatural. The latter category they refer to as "sign gifts".

Their point of departure scripturally appears to be the textually suspect ending of Mark, particularly 16:15-20, and I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30.

Mark 16:15-20 -- "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.' "

I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30 -- "To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues."

Michael Green (p. 195) writes:

The charismatic gifts are nothing other than the gifts of God's love. They begin with our redemption. They include the heightening of qualities already present or latent within us, such as gifts of administration, leadership, teaching, marriage, or celibacy. These natural qualities can be charismata if, and so long as, they are dedicated to the service of the Lord and the building up of his people in the strength that he gives. If they are used selfishly they can be disastrous. The same is true of the gifts which are beyond normal ken, such as prophecy, tongues, discernment of spirits, healing and exorcism. They too can be a blessing or a curse, depending on whether they are used for the common good or the gratification of the member who possesses them.

Thomas R. Edgar (p. 278) includes "miracle-working, "healing" and "tongues-speaking" as "sign gifts".

John Williams (p. 122) calls them "miraculous manifestations" and "miracle gifts"; and includes in this category healings (p. 123), workings of miracles (p. 126), discerning of spirits (p. 126), and tongues (pp. 207, 225).