

John Calvin's theology of the charismata: Its influence on the Reformed Confessions and its implications for the church's mission

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Abstract

In the face of the growing phenomenon of neo-Pentecostalism or Charismatic renewal and its aggression in mission, it is imperative to consider how other church traditions reflect on the theology of the charismata and mission. This study investigates the Reformed tradition as represented in this case by John Calvin. This study is necessitated by accusations levelled against the Reformed faith and theology that it lacks zeal for missions because it is reluctant to use the full armour of the charismata in the life of the church. This study explores the ways in which Calvin, the father of Calvinism and one of the leading Reformers of the 16th century, addressed the issue of the charismata through his writings. It also seeks to investigate the influence of Calvin's theology on the Reformed Confessions and the church's missionary calling. The study, therefore, reflects on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and His ongoing relationship to the church. It points to the fact that the evangelistic effect of Calvinism lies in its scriptural thought and phraseology, as well as its intense spirituality, lofty enthusiasm, and logical strength in its clear formulation of the Christian doctrines that have direct implications to the church's missionary calling.

Keywords Charismata, spiritual gifts, Reformed Theology, Calvin, Holy Spirit, Calvinism, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, Institutes of the Christian Religion, commentaries, Triune God

Introduction

The aggressive approach towards mission by the Charismatic movement, through its emphasis on the use of the spectacular charismata in the present age, makes it necessary to explore the Reformed theology on the charismata and its implications for the church's missionary calling. Calvin is examined in particular, as he was a leading Reformer during the sixteenth century Reformation and the founder of Calvinism. During the Reformation of the 16th century, claims from various quarters were made about the ability to perform spectacular miracles. Gromacki (1972:28) states that during the Middle Ages and the Reformation period (590–1648), specific Roman Catholic saints were alleged to have spoken in tongues. At this time, there were also the notorious Zwickau prophets, who were infamous for the claims that they made to visions and revelations, and Thomas Müntzer, with his repeated emphasis on visions and dreams (Budgen 1989:124). Calvin's theology on the charismata is thus investigated against this background.

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The theology of John Calvin on the charismata

Investigating Calvin's view on the charismata is rendered difficult because he does not treat this issue in detail in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Furthermore, his method of addressing the charismata is far more complex, for he does not describe the matter comprehensively. Therefore, the study also gives attention to his commentaries, which have relevant scriptural passages on the issue under reflection, that is, Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, and Ephesians 4.

Calvin begins by pointing at the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28, of which he remarks that: "For even if the prophet seems to restrict the gifts of the Spirit, God will make disciples of those who were previously destitute and empty of heavenly doctrine" (Kerr 1989:83). In this regard, Calvin is of the opinion that the Holy Spirit is the first gift received from God, who makes all partakers of the greatest gifts of His Holy Spirit (Baird 1960:148; cf. Faber 1990:289).

Usage of the concept 'charismata' in Calvin

Calvin used the word 'charismata' as a plural form of the word 'charisma', meaning 'gifts of grace'. He used the word, therefore, to mean the same as 'spiritual gifts'. In his commentaries on Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Ephesians 4, Calvin used the word 'spiritual gifts' more frequently than the technical term 'charismata'; hence, the meaning of the two has merged and can be used interchangeably.

From the above, the words 'grace' and 'gift' play a crucial role in Calvin's theology and usage of the word 'charismata'. Calvin (1854:271) maintains that the words 'grace' and 'gift' remind us that whatever may be our attainments, we ought not to be proud of them, because they lay us under deeper obligations to God who endowed his church with the spiritual gifts. In his usage of the word 'charismata', Calvin further made a distinction between ordinary gifts and miraculous graces. He points out that the former were to continue perpetually in the church whilst the latter were used by Christ to render illustrious his gospel (Calvin 1849:460).

In Calvin's exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 12:28, Romans 12:8–10, and Ephesians 4:11, he was compelled to reflect on the question of the relationship between offices and gifts. He indicates that it may excite surprise that, when the gifts of the Holy Spirit form the subject of discussion, Paul should enumerate offices instead of gifts (Calvin 1854:277). In his explanation, Calvin points out that there is a very close connection between offices and gifts. God does not confer on people the mere name of Apostles or Pastors, but also endows them with gifts, without which they cannot properly discharge their office. And, therefore, all those whom God called to particular offices do not just bear empty and useless titles; God also gives them abilities to perform their tasks (Calvin 1848:277).

Source of the charismata

A cursory reading of what Calvin has written about the charismata gives the impression that he addressed the matter from a Christological perspective. Calvin points out that if we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in Christ's anointing (Kerr 1989:80). Although Calvin lays much emphasis on the Christological nature of the charismata, his views on the source of the charismata can be viewed as nothing but Trinitarian in nature. Parker (1995:78) suggests that Calvin's theology on the charismata depicts a clear picture of a good Trinitarian theology, for the Spirit, through whom believers receive the benefits of Christ's salvation work, is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. The trinity was a starting point with regard to Calvin's theology of mission.

Calvin views the charismata as included in that which Christ has been said to benefit us through the secret activity of the Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that we receive the benefits of Christ's salvation works, which also include the spiritual gifts. In Calvinism, the Spirit is the first gift that brings about conversion, repentance, adoption, and new birth in all believers. Christ is the author of salvation and the centre of the gospel, but as He received fully of the Spirit and shares the gifts of the Spirit with those who accept the gospel, it might be said the Holy Spirit is the means of the gospel (Baird 1960:128).

In this regard, Calvin depicts a very clear and explicable idea of how the blessings that the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son come to us. It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that we receive the benefits that the Father bestowed on Christ. Calvin, therefore, viewed the charismata as Trinitarian in nature, as being from the Triune God (Parker 1995:78).

When speaking of the gifts of the Spirit, Calvin (1583:464) points out that there is no inconsistency in ascribing the glory of those gifts to the Father, inasmuch as He is the author of them, and at the same time, ascribing them to Christ, to whom they have been entrusted, that he may bestow them on his people. Kaiser and Silva (1994:256) are, therefore, correct in remarking that the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.

Distribution of the charismata

The distribution of the charismata is one of the many points that Calvin touches upon in his exegetical study of Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14 and Ephesians 4. Regarding the distribution of the charismata, God in Christ through the Holy Spirit distributes the spiritual gifts among believers. The question of the recipients of charismata is thus also addressed in this regard.

Believers are said to be recipients of the charismata as distributed by God, according to his will. Believers, in Calvin's vocabulary, would mean those in whom Christ dwells, the ones who are engrafted into Christ by the secret activity of the Spirit; hence, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is implied. Calvin maintains that the Holy Spirit makes the saving work of the Mediator efficacious in the lives of believers (Parker 1995:79). It is only those in whom the Holy Spirit produced saving faith, through the hearing of the gospel, who receive the charismata. Calvin holds that saving faith is wrought or worked out in a supernatural manner by the Holy Spirit, and makes its recipient a partaker of Christ and His benefits (Kersten 1983:400).

There is a correlation between faith and the gospel in Calvin. Parker (1995:80) remarks that Calvin went to the extent of saying, "Take away the Word and there is no faith left". According to the wise counsel of God, everyone has their own portion given to them, for it is necessary for the common benefit of the body that no one should be furnished with the fullness of gifts, lest he should heedlessly despise his brethren (Calvin 1849:459).

Calvin was, therefore, of the opinion that God distributes to each one of the believers a certain limited portion and thus no one could claim to have all spiritual gifts. Hence, on no-one does God bestow all things. Each received a certain measure to serve the entire body of Christ, the church. Being thus dependent on each other, people find it necessary to throw their individual gifts into the common stock, and thus render mutual aid (Calvin 1849:271).

Purpose of the charismata

In his exegetical study of Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12–14, and Ephesians 4, Calvin concludes that God endows his church, all believers, with the charismata with a specific purpose. In the first instance, the charismata were given because God wanted to authenticate Christ's ministry. Calvin (1849:460) maintains that, "It does not appear that Paul intended here to mention those miraculous graces by which Christ at first rendered illustrious his gospel; but, on the contrary, we find that he refers only to ordinary gifts, such as were to continue perpetually in the Church". Whether one agrees or not with Calvin's distinction of the miraculous graces and ordinary gifts, his argument is that miraculous graces were to authenticate Christ's ministry.

In the second instance, Calvin points out that God endowed the church with the charismata for the authentication of the ministry of the apostles. In the preface to the *Institutes*, Calvin states that the signs that followed the preaching of the apostles were intended to authenticate the preaching, as recorded in Mark 16:20. He states further that the Lord gave testimony to the Word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by the hands of the apostles as recorded by Luke in Acts 14:3.

Calvin, thus, views the miracles performed by the apostles as confirmation to the apostolic doctrine and that they were peculiar to the age of inspira-

tion (Calvin 1983:9; cf. Budgen 1989:128). To strengthen his point on the fact that certain charismata were for the confirmation of the apostolic ministry, Calvin appeals to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which mentions “the Lord bearing witness with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles” (Heb. 2:4).

In the third instance, Calvin points at the edification of the church. In his exegetical study, Calvin concludes that believers are adorned by God with spiritual gifts for the edification of their fellow believers. The gifts of God are so distributed that each has a limited portion, and that each ought to be so attentive in imparting his own gifts to the edification of the church, that no one, by leaving his own function, may trespass on that of another (Calvin 1849:459). Indeed, God does not confer his gifts upon his church in vain, nor does he intend that they shall serve the purpose of enriching individuals on their own accord.

Consequently, the spiritual gifts were not conferred upon believers by God that everyone should enjoy his own separately, but that one should help another. The Spirit of God thus distributes spiritual gifts among believers, in order that all may contribute to a common advantage: edification of the body of Christ. “I admit then that the society of the godly cannot exist, except when each one is content with his own measure, and allows himself by turns to be assisted by the gifts of others” (Calvin 1849:404).

In the fourth instance, Calvin maintains that the charisma of tongue speaking was given to the church as a sign to the unbelievers. In this way, the missionary endeavours of the apostles and the early church was made possible by this charisma. Calvin believes that the advantages derived from tongues were many and various, in the sense that they provided against necessity—that diversity of tongues might not prevent the apostles from disseminating the gospel over the whole world. Consequently, there was no nation with which they could not hold fellowship (Calvin 1849:454).

Continuity of the charismata

In *Institutes* and his exegetical study of the relevant passages in Scripture on the charismata, Calvin addresses the question on the continuity of the charismata in the church in a very complex way. The following are the conclusions regarding Calvin’s views on the continuity of the charismata: Firstly, there are spiritual gifts that served their purpose during the foundation of the Christian church, the era of the apostles. And thus, according to Calvin, those gifts were temporary and extraordinary. In his exegetical study of Ephesians 4:11, Calvin states that the prophetic charisma, with particular reference to those who excelled in a particular revelation, either does not exist today or is less commonly seen (Kerr 1989:140). The apostle Paul also regards the apostolic office as a temporary charisma, terming this office, along with that of evangelists,

“extraordinary”. According to Calvin, they have no place in duly constituted churches (Kerr 1989:140).

The gift of healing is also among those charismata that Calvin concludes were temporary in the Church. In the *Institutes*, Calvin writes, with respect to the passage from James 5 used by the Roman Catholics as their basis for the sacrament of extreme unction: “They make themselves ridiculous, therefore, by pretending that they are endued with the gift of healing” (Budgen 1989:128; Calvin 1855:355).

As to the gift of working miracles, Calvin sharply criticises his counterparts, namely: the Roman Catholic saints. He maintains, “But our opponents tell us that their miracles are wrought not by idols, not by sorcerers, not by false prophets, but by saints: as if we did not know it to be one of Satan’s wiles to transform himself ‘into an angel of light’ (2 Cor. XI.14)” (Calvin 1983:9). He thus concludes, “In demanding miracles from us, they act dishonestly; for we have not coined some new gospel, but retain the very one truth of which is confirmed by all the miracles which Christ and the apostles ever wrought” (Calvin 1583:8).

Secondly, whilst Calvin believed that the above-mentioned charismata were temporary and extraordinary in the Church, he goes on to state that he does not deny that the Lord has sometimes at a later period raised up apostles, or at least evangelists in their place, as has happened in our own day (Calvin 1979:319). In this regard, reference is made to the special gifts that accompanied the previously mentioned offices, and not to the offices themselves. For, in his further explanation, Calvin (1979:319) claims that our teachers have the same resemblance of or correspond to the ancient prophets, and our pastors to the apostles, an office that Calvin treats in the same class as that of the evangelists. In principle, Calvin never sought to restrict the operation of the Spirit of God to a particular era.

Thirdly, Calvin asserts that certain charismata were not bestowed upon the Church perpetually. For instance, he regards the offices of Pastors and Teachers as ordinary and permanent in the Church (Calvin 1979:318). On the issue of the continuity of the charismata, it is, therefore, aptly remarked that Calvin has specially developed an influential tradition, namely that the times of unusual gifts have passed, although he allows that these gifts in times of a special religious situation could be manifested (Van Wyk 1986:9).

Reformed Confessions on the charismata

The fundamental question in this regard is what do the Reformed Confessions say about the charismata? Attention is given to the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt,² although they do not treat the issue on

² No special reference is made to the Belgic Confession because its teaching on the charismata coincides with that of the Heidelberg Catechism.

the special charismata in a clear and detailed manner. Whilst recognition is given that neither the Heidelberg Catechism nor the Canons of Dordt treats the issue of the charismata comprehensively, that they do indeed mention the spiritual gifts necessitates investigation. It should also be noted at the outset that the theology of Calvin implicitly shaped these confessions in their dealing with the issue under consideration.

The Heidelberg Catechism addresses this issue in Lord's Days 7, 19, 20, 21, and 25, and more explicitly in Questions and Answers 20, 51, 53, 55, 65, and 75. And the Canons of Dordt considers the matter in the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, specifically:

- Divine election and reprobation;
- The death of Christ, and human redemption;
- The corruption of human beings, their conversion to God, and how that takes place.

The following can be mentioned with regard to what the Reformed Confessions state about the charismata:

Usage of the concept charismata in the Reformed Confessions

The Heidelberg Catechism uses the words 'benefits', 'heavenly gifts', and 'gifts' in Lord's Days 7, 19, 20, 21, and 25. The three words broadly include not only salvation, but also other gifts of the Holy Spirit (Cochrane 1966:308, 313, 314). The Canons of Dordt, however, employs the term 'gift of God' when referring to the charisma of the Holy Spirit, of faith, of salvation, and eternal life, in the First Head of Doctrine, Articles 4, 5, and 6. Other terms that the Canons of Dordt make use of are 'gifts of salvation' in Article 9 of the First Head of Doctrine, 'saving gifts of the Holy Spirit' in Article 8 of the Second Head of Doctrine, 'excellent gifts' in Article 1 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine, and 'gifts' in Article 9 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine.

There can be no doubt that, in some way, reference to the spiritual gifts was intended in all instances. Thus, it can be concluded that the Reformed Confessions use the concept 'charismata' to mean the same as 'spiritual gifts'. It should, however, be noted that no distinction is made between ordinary and extraordinary gifts, and no enumeration is found of the charismata, except for the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, faith, salvation, and eternal life.

Source of the charismata in the Reformed Confessions

The Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is the author of the charismata. He is the source of the spiritual gifts. Question and Answer 53, Lord's Day 20, of the Catechism emphasises that the Holy Spirit is a gift from the Father and the Son (John 14:16, 17; cf. De Bruyn 1997:93). It

further points out that the Holy Spirit is also a giver who, according to the Catechism, is given to a believer to make him by true faith a partaker of Christ and all His benefits, to comfort him, and to abide with the believer forever. The same God who gave his Son as Mediator and Saviour for us, also gives his Holy Spirit to his church (De Bruyn 1997:92).

The Holy Spirit is a giver in the sense that he is the third Person in the divine Trinity, for Answer 53 of the Catechism states: "He is true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son". Hoeksema (1956:164) suggests that the Spirit of God, as the Spirit of Christ, in whom Christ dwells in us, makes us partakers of Christ and all His benefits. It must be recognised that Christ and all his acts of salvation would mean nothing unless the Holy Spirit enabled us to share in them (De Bruyn 1997:94).

The Canons of Dordt also adopt a similar position to the Heidelberg Catechism, that is, that the Triune God is the source of the charismata. Articles 9 and 10 of the First Head of Doctrine show that it is the good pleasure of God that is the sole cause of the gracious election, which is the fountain of every saving good, and from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and ultimately eternal life itself. We must thank the Lord continuously for the work of the Holy Spirit as the Gift of God and Divine Giver (De Bruyn 1997:96).

Distribution of the charismata in the Reformed Confessions

On the question of the distribution of the charismata, the Reformed Confessions demonstrate the following:

Firstly, it is the Triune God who distributes the spiritual gifts to his church. As mentioned above, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is given to the church. In turn, the Holy Spirit, who is given to the believers, makes them partakers of Christ and all his benefits by true faith (Cochrane 1966:314). The Canons of Dordt in the Third and Fourth Head of Doctrine (Article 9) assert this by revealing that faith is to be considered a gift of God because God works in people's lives both to will and to work, and produces the will to believe and the act of believing also.

Secondly, each believer is a partaker of the spiritual gifts that God provides to his church. Question 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "What do you understand by 'the communion of saints'?" And the first part of the answer says, "Believers, all and every one, as members of Christ, are partakers of Him and of all His treasures and gifts". There is, therefore, no individual believer, no member of Christ's body, who has not received gifts; God has distributed to every one certain gifts.

Thirdly, God distributes spiritual gifts to men according to his perfect will. Article 15 of the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine in the Canons of Dordt, state that God is under no obligation to confer his grace upon any, for

how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? It adds further that, “He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever”. Article 6 of the First Head of Doctrine explains, “That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God’s eternal decree”. This understanding is clearly embedded in the Reformed doctrines of election and predestination.

Purpose of the charismata in the Reformed Confessions

The second part of Answer 55 in the Heidelberg Catechism says, “Every one must know himself bound to employ his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage and salvation of other members”. The ultimate purpose of God giving individual believers certain gifts is that they should serve one another as members of one body of the Church and reach out to those who are still outside the church of Christ. Those who truly share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts is so full of thankfulness that he, with his spiritual and material gifts, wants to help his fellow believers, and also the people around them his fellow men who are not believers (De Bruyn 1997:101).

Continuity of the charismata in the Reformed Confessions

Reformed Confessions do not discuss the matter of the continuity of the charismata in detail; therefore, very little is said in this regard. There is no place in the Reformed Confessions where mention is made of the cessation of any charismata. A logical explanation for this is that these confessions were not written specifically to address the question of the charismata. Hence, the only fact that is very clear is that the Triune God bestows to every believer a certain portion of spiritual gifts, which are also visible today in the church.

Implications for the church’s missionary calling

The study of the Reformed theology on the charismata has direct implications for the missionary calling of the church in every age, and the following is thus relevant: It places emphasis on the ‘*Missio Dei*’ concept in mission. Mission is primarily the work of the Triune God. The Father sent his son Jesus to be the redeemer and to mediate between God and people. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit to apply the redemptive work of Christ and to assemble the church of God in the entire universe. Mission has its origin in the heart of God (1 John 4:9). In the mission of God, God becomes not only the Sender, but also simultaneously the one who is sent.

The Church of every age is reminded that she is only an instrument in the hands of the missionary God in advancing God’s kingdom on earth, through the proclamation of the kingdom gospel. The *missio ecclesiae* is in the service of the *missio Dei*, in order to bring glory to the sovereign Lord. God, in his free will, chose to work with the church to advance his

missionary activities. The church is privileged to participate in the mission of the Triune God. The church, by its very nature, is the witnessing community of God. On the one hand, the church can only be a true church of Christ if it does not neglect its missionary calling, and on the other hand, the missionary church is the church in the service of the kingdom of God.

Reformed theology rediscovers the ecclesiology that accommodates the office of the believers in mission. It does not only place emphasis on the church as an institution with the office-bearers as the only functionaries in her activities, but also on the church as an organism, with individual members spread in diverse walks of life, where they are responsible for being faithful witnesses of Christ wherever God places them. Individual members of the true church of Christ are entrusted with the responsibility of being kings, prophets, and priests. They are the witnessing community of God. To this end, the indwelling Spirit in their lives equips them with different charismata. He also empowers them to be true and faithful witnesses of Christ in the world. Reformed theology acknowledges that the Spirit is the first gift we receive from God, but at the same time, he is the one who makes us partakers of the spiritual gifts. Calvin writes, "It ought to be the great object of our daily wishes, that God would collect churches for himself from all the countries of the earth, that he would enlarge their numbers, enrich them with gifts, and establish a legitimate order among them" (Calvin, Inst. 3.20.42).

Reformed theology on the charismata calls, therefore, for *partnership in mission*. All members of the body of Christ are in partnership with God as his co-workers, in reconciling himself with all of fallen humanity. That is why he has given each one of them the charismata not only to serve him, but to serve one another, fellow human beings, and all of God's creation. This is the responsibility given to the local and the ecumenical church.

Through the charisma of verbal communication of the gospel (kerygma), Reformed theology emphasizes the *primacy of the Word* in mission. As already noted, there is a correlation between faith and the gospel in Calvin. The proclamation of the Word of God to outsiders is imperative in reaching out to the sinners from among nations. For they can only profess Christ their personal Lord and Saviour if they have the opportunity of hearing the gospel, which is the power of God to bring saving faith to their lives through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Reformed theology on the charismata also demonstrates that *true faith calls one to service* (diakonia). Individual members of the multicultural body of Christ are entrusted with spiritual gifts, so that in the end they can serve God, one another, fellow human beings outside the church and the entire creation of God as faithful witnesses and stewards of the cross. This is based on one of the fundamental principles of Calvinism that the true knowledge of God consists more in living experience than in vain and lofty

speculation. Christians, therefore, are not called to preserve the letter of the law as the Pharisees did, but to practise what they preach.

The operation of diverse charismata in the church also creates the fellowship (*koinonia*) of all members of the body of Christ, and this, in itself, is a way of witnessing to their true and living fellowship with God. This fellowship with God calls for a life of worship (*leitourgia*), in that each time the church gathers, they worship God and bring glory to him, by using their gifts as they participate in the worship service. They also use these gifts in all areas of life in which God places them. Accordingly, the liturgical dimension places the *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* into perspective. “We proclaim not because we know better; we serve not because we are more privileged; we have fellowship not in order to patronize; we do all this – gladly – because the greatness of God’s love leaves us no other option” (Saayman 1994:38).

Reformed theology as outlined above, also rediscovers the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. The Holy Spirit applies the redemptive work of Christ in the lives of the believers, when the Word of God is preached. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit gathers the elect, the church of God, from eternity to eternity. Salvation of the fallen humanity is therefore dependent on God. He is very much in control. As the church participates in the harvesting process, she must do so prayerfully so that the Lord of the harvest will bring life wherever he deems fit. Furthermore, Reformed pneumatology acknowledges that the Spirit does not only work in the hearts of individuals, but also in the larger context of the world. It is not only concerned with one’s heart and faith, but also with experiencing the world and discovering God’s footprints in the created order (Mashau 2004:216).

On the question of the continuity of the charismata, Reformed theology maintains that the times of the extraordinary gifts have passed. Reference is made, in particular, to those gifts that were given to authenticate the Word. There is logic in such a position, but it should also be noted that Reformed theology leaves room for the Spirit of God to operate as he wills. The manifestation of the Spirit of God cannot be restricted to a particular epoch in history; in mission fields and in extraordinary circumstances the Spirit of God can still bring forth such charismata. In such a case, the call to discern the spirits should be exercised with the Scripture as a measure (1 John 4:1). The church must be alert to any spiritual wave that the Spirit may awaken in any generation and follow wherever the Spirit is leading.

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