MINISTRY AS A DISTINCT CATEGORY AMONG CHARISMATA (1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-7)

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ABSTRACT

History of interpretation reveals a lack of consensus about how we are to understand the relationship between charismata, diakoniai, and energēmata (1 Cor 12:4-6). Today these terms are frequently seen as interchangeable, one major consequence being that all Christians are understood as being called to ministry (Käsemann). Linguistic and rhetorical considerations require, however, that the diakoniai be understood as ministries which are a commission from the Lord and reserved to apostolic preachers. They thus constitute a species, distinct from energēmata, within the generic concept of charismata.

1 CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS

Chrysostom introduced his treatment of 1 Corinthians chapter 12 with the statement, ‘This whole passage is profoundly obscure (sphodra asaphēs)’ (Migne 61:in loc). His main problem seemed to be that in the church of his day he could see no sign of the seeming extraordinary phenomena of tongues, miracles and prophecy to which Paul bore witness within the Corinthian congregation. As a consequence, Chrysostom confessed to not knowing precisely what Paul was referring to in these phenomena. His own comment on 1 Cor 12:4-6 focuses instead on the Spirit, Lord, and God who are severally acknowledged as the divine source of the charismata, diakoniai, and energēmata, and this exercise provides him with an opportunity to formulate teaching about the equality of operations of Father, Lord, and Holy Spirit within the triune Godhead.

The predisposition of the modern exegete is rather the reverse of Chrysostom’s. For the modern exegete the Trinity rests largely in its Second Testament obscurity; as Conzelmann (1975:207) notes, when ‘The Spirit is not a Person’ it is too early in the development of doctrine to be talking of Trinity. On the other hand, precisely in that area which Chrysostom found obscure, namely the whole range of phenomena in chapters 12-14, Conzelmann finds these chapters providing ‘a richer insight into community life than any other passage in the New Testament’ (204).
The contrast in approaches to this significant passage by the Greek Father and the modern exegete is all the more pertinent in that it exemplifies differences which repeat themselves across the ages.

Thus, instead of comparing Chrysostom and Conzelmann across the huge gap of one and a half thousand years, we can look across the mere one hundred years separating Gordon Fee's commentary of 1987 from the English translation in 1887 of the commentary by Frédéric Godet. In 1887 Godet insisted that in the three terms of 1 Cor 12:4-6, charismata, diakoniai, and energēmata, we have distinct designations of what he calls 'three principal classes' of spiritual forces in the church; over and above charismata, we have in diakoniai, as he says, 'a second kind of Divine manifestations', and in energēmata 'A third kind of varied manifestations' (Godet 1887:189-191).

In 1987, by contrast, in regard to the same three terms, Gordon Fee saw no such urgency to distinguish, recommending rather that we 'not make too much of the different words used' (Fee 1987:586), and preferring to see the three terms as simply 'three different ways' of looking at the manifestations of the Spirit (587). This view, a common one, was also put by Chrysostom, for whom any real difference between charismata, diakoniai, and energēmata would complicate theology of the operations of the divine persons: 'The differences are of name only,' he wrote, 'because the realities are the same: whatever charisma is, diakonia is, and this too [Paul] calls energeia [sic]' (Migne 61:in loc).

In this concurrence of views of the modern exegete and the Greek Father against the nineteenth century exegete Godet we have different hermeneutical influences at work. While Gordon Fee is not apprehensive about what his reading of the three terms might imply for the systematic theology of Trinity, Chrysostom writes as if the Trinity is looking over his shoulder. On the other hand, in Fee do we detect a subtle influence of concerns for church order which are entirely lacking in Chrysostom? Such influences we will certainly see at work in other comment on the passage from the late medieval to the contemporary period, nowhere more than in comment on the middle term of the triad, diakoniai.

Looking more closely at the middle term diakoniai, which is the term of special interest to us, again we run into difference of opinion. Usually translated services or ministries, the word 'obviously does not refer,' in the view of James Dunn, 'to ecclesiastical offices or regularly appointed ministries' (Dunn 1975:249). In an earlier era, by contrast, and in the different ecclesiological hermeneutic of Cornelius a Lapide of the seventeenth century, the word could be taken to refer to precisely such offices: these diakoniai were the sacred offices of ministering in the church such as episcopacy and diaconate (a Lapide 1635:297).

Once again, however, as we observe such difference of interpretation, are we to suspect of Lapideus in regard to this single word, as we did with Chrysostom in regard to the whole triad, that he is influenced by an overriding dogmatic po-
sition? Writing in the climate of the Counter-Reformation where the defence of a scriptural mandate for the Roman hierarchical arrangement of ministry was a constant preoccupation, would this Jesuit professor of the Roman College itself have been inclined to look beyond a hierarchical horizon in interpreting a word usually rendered in the Latin as *ministeria*? (In this instance, curiously, the Vulgate provided *ministrationes*, which Lapideus sees as coextensive with *ministeria*.)

These few opinions of commentators tell us that by relying on such views alone we would not be able to determine whether the *diakoniai* are to be identified with the *charismata* and *energémata* or whether they are to be distinguished from them. Nor could we determine even the point of reference of the service or ministry. For example, Conzelmann tells us that *diakoniai* is pointing to ‘everyday acts of service’ and that these acts of service are directed, in his words, ‘to the community as the goal of the Spirit’s working’ (1975:208). This is a characteristically modern view of the kind of service designated by the word *diakonia*. For Calvin, by contrast, the reference is just the opposite, ‘for there is a relation between the words “services” and “Lord”,’ he writes, going on to emphasise: ‘Paul says that the services are different, but there is one God whom we are bound to serve, no matter what service we are engaged in’ (1960:261). This referral of the service to God or, as it is usually expressed, to Christ as Lord, has been historically the major one, and stands in stark contrast to the modern insistence on *diakonia* as service to the needy. Thus in 1876 Stanley commented that the *diakoniai* ‘are considered as services...rendered to Christ as the Lord and Master’ (214).

### 2 BASIC TO MODERN ECCLESIOLOGY

Such conflicting opinions about various leading aspects of our passage reinforce Chrysostom’s view of its obscurity. It is important for us to note, however, that, in spite of these differences of opinion, commentators are agreed—modern commentators in particular—on the importance to ecclesiology of this passage where the term *diakoniai* occurs. Thus, after noting that all of chapters 12-14 is extremely important for various fields of theology, Allo (1956:318) goes on to observe that of possibly even greater importance is the way Paul’s treatment of *charismata* in this section opens up an ecclesiology which is to receive its fuller presentation in Ephesians.

More intimately connected with our own interest in the passage, and also emphasising the relevance of Paul’s treatment of *charismata* to ecclesiology, is the following well known claim with which Ernst Käsemann introduced his influential paper of 1949, ‘Ministry and Community in the New Testament’ (1964:63-64):
...it is possible to reach a proper appreciation of a fact which has almost always remained opaque to the exegetes, although it has to be counted among the most significant phenomena of the New Testament proclamation. While there is no real equivalent in the New Testament for our present-day conception of 'office', there is a concept in Pauline and sub-Pauline theology which describes in a theologically exact and comprehensive way the essence and scope of every ecclesiastical ministry and function—namely, the concept charisma.

If we add to this powerful claim Käsemann's other view that the diakonias and the charismata are, as he later puts it, 'interchangeable' (65), we realise that Käsemann's statement has a direct bearing on the question we need to answer about the nature of the diakonias. For such interchangeability would mean that just as charismata are churchwide so too are diakonia, which is to say that a term which was frequently taken as designating specific ecclesiastical ministries and offices is properly to be understood as designating tasks taken up by anybody in the church. Faithful to this ethos, Käsemann goes on to speak of all the baptised as 'office-bearers' (80), all of them 'carrying out the ministerium verbi divini, the diakonia tès katallagēs of 2 Cor 5.18... carrying it out jure divino; for it is committed and commanded to every Christian' (81). This culminates in a principle very close to our matter: 'There is not even a prerogative of official proclamation, vested in some specially commissioned individual or other.'

3 ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED

If now we have drawn attention, on the one hand, to uncertainties about what these diakonias are and, on the other hand, to convictions that the same diakonias are basic to Pauline ecclesiology, clearly we have some tasks in front of us. Firstly, it should be clear that we can make no progress in understanding by what principles this Pauline church works unless we are in a position to decide whether charismata, diakonias and energēmata are co-extensive, that is, interchangeable, or not. Similarly, and in the second place, our picture of the workings of this church will differ in so far as we understand its diakonias as designating tasks common to all within it or as designating tasks restricted to some. Thirdly, our picture of the workings of the church will differ according to whether we understand these diakonias as services directed to the community or as services carried out in the name of the Lord.

Until such questions are determined, it is futile to present historical reconstructions of the church of Corinth, just as it is premature to attempt to present a paradigm for churches of our day. Since the latter is not our task for the moment, we turn now to look more closely at what is, namely, the question as to the nature and function of the diakonias in the mind of the writer Paul.
4 MINISTRIES FROM THE LORD

Since in my detailed study of 1990, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Collins 1990), I have already put forward an interpretation of this passage, I point out that in what follows I am presenting a significant revision of that earlier opinion. This revised interpretation now forms the substance of a chapter in a new book entitled *Are all Christians ministers?* (Collins 1992:120-136).

The earlier interpretation was part of a survey of early Christian uses of the *diakonia* words in the light of traditional Greek usage. In that extensive examination a first principle quickly established itself. This was in regard to the primary term of reference of the service of which the words speak and which we need to clarify here once again.

In modern times—but only in modern times, and indeed very largely in response to the article on *diakonia* in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary* (Beyer 1935) or under the stimulation of Eduard Schweizer's chapter on office in *Church order in the New Testament* (Schweizer 1961)—the primary term of reference has been understood as the recipient of the service, and, in addition, the service has been understood in Christian writings to be of a particular kind, namely, a lowly, caring service of love.

A classic expression of this perception of *diakonia* has recently appeared in the revised translation of Mt 25:44 provided by the *New Revised Standard Version*. Whereas the *RSV* reported those standing for judgement on the left hand side of the king as saying, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry ... and did not minister to thee?' the *NRSV* reports them as saying, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry ... and did not take care of you?' This attribution of such a specifically Christian caring service to the *diakon-* words in early Christian writings has contributed substantially to the establishment of a pervasive 'servant theology', and the mere presence of one of the *diakon-* words is likely to trigger off some reflection upon it.

Thus, in the course of Kevin Grayston's encyclopaedic enquiry into the theologies of the death of Christ in the New Testament, we see the influence of servant theology in his treatment of the saying at Mk 10:45, 'the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.' Here, on Grayston's estimation, 'the fundamental teaching' is that Jesus 'will bring suffering upon himself ... in order to serve others' (Grayston 1990:233, and see 191-192) And we are led to ask what difference it would make to Grayston's account of Markan theology here if the term of reference of the Son of man's service was not 'others' but, as from a linguistic point of view it must be, God himself?

Servant theology of what is sometimes called this *diakonic* style frequently colours treatment of the services or *diakonias* in our own passage. We have already alluded to broad acceptations of this term by Ernst Käsemann and Hans
Conzelmann: their views developed from just such an estimation of diakonia as an expression of a condition of servanthood common to all Christians. Gordon Fee, too, finds the diakoniai of 1 Cor 12:5 appropriately correlated by Paul with the Lord Jesus because 'this word group is used everywhere in the NT to describe the 'servant' ministry of both Christ and his 'ministers' (Fee 1987:587). On this basis Fee is able to envisage Paul attributing ministry to all those who are recipients of the various gifts nominated in verses 8-10 (588).

Contrary to these prevailing perceptions of diakonia, the first perception we are to take from the word is not the benefit accruing to the recipient of the service, as in the concept of loving care, but instead it is the obligation of the servant to carry out the task imposed by the master. Striking illustrations of the difference these opposing perceptions of diakonia bring to the interpretation of a passage are provided in translations of references in these terms by Paul or Luke to collections for Jerusalem. Thus, Rm 15:25, poreuomai eis Jerousalēm diakonōn tois hagiois, became for RSV, 'I am going to Jerusalem with aid for the saints', revised in NRSV to 'I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints', in either case the dative 'saints' being taken as the beneficiaries of the ministry denoted by the verb diakonōn. Syntactically, however, such a dative must denote the body authorising the ministry; such authorisation then makes of the diakonia in these circumstances a delegation. Accordingly, we translate, 'I am going to Jerusalem on a mission from the saints.' (We might draw attention to the curious inconsistency of RSV's translation of diakonia in Luke's two references to the delegation from Antioch to Jerusalem, the first at Ac 11:29 being named a 'relief'—this word going back in fact to King James—and the second at Ac 12:25 being named a 'mission'; this odd pairing is retained in NRSV.)

The grammar and its implications for the interpretation of such passages have been amply laid out in chapter 11 of my Diakonia, 'Emissaries in the Church' (Collins 1990, and see especially 327n9). With this change in the term of reference from the needy saints in Jerusalem to the delegating saints in Macedonia the history, politics, and theology of Paul's involvement in the collection for Jerusalem change. Change must come too to our basic understanding of other passages where interpretation has also been skewed by referring the diakonia first to the recipients of the ministry instead of to the master in whose name the ministry is carried out.

This then is the first perception we are to bring to the diakoniai of 1 Cor 12:5. These diakoniai are not—to repeat Conzelmann's description of them—'everyday acts of service' and as such setting the church in an orientation 'to the community as the goal of the Spirit's working'; they are instead and in the first place ministries imposed by the Lord, and their exact character we shall now attempt to determine.
5 ACCREDITED MINISTRIES

Conscious of the need to establish this term of reference in my previous treatment of the passage, I nonetheless misconstrued the passage in two other ways which are already familiar to us from earlier comment in this paper but which I now consider to be seriously misleading. Thus, like Chrysostom and most, I saw the gifts, ministries and activities as only nominally differentiated, and, almost as a consequence and again like most, saw them as churchwide. It was here, in a churchwide distribution of diakoniai, that I had difficulty, and, in proposing in this paper that their distribution should be understood as strictly limited, I will provide what I believe is the clue for the fuller and more accurate interpretation of the passage.

To come to the passage, as I had, from a close consideration of Paul's estimation of his own ministry or diakonia is to experience puzzlement, if not some form of theological shock, at the seeming suggestion that all in the church are gifted with diakonia of one kind or another. The ecclesiological import of such a suggestion is great, and indeed has been working its deep effect in churches over recent decades. What the reader must bear in mind in coming to this passage, however, is that in other passages of a Pauline character about church (with the single exception of Phlp 1:1) diakonia and its cognates denote proclamatory or diplomatic activity of a religious kind which is reserved to designated individuals. (The diakonoi of Phlp 1:1 also formed, of course, a reserved group, but their function within that church is not clearly proclamatory or diplomatic and remains obscure.) Measured against such usage, then, the instance of diakoniai at 1 Cor 12:5 is singular. Uniquely in Pauline usage, the term seemed to be predicated of all believers, at least as appeared to me then and as has certainly been agreed among many other commentators from the time of Chrysostom to that of Käsemann and so to our day. Accepting this general attribution with some difficulty at that stage, I was nonetheless at pains both in the section of the book called Gifts (Collins 1990:232-233) and in my Afterword (255-256) to limit the ecclesiological implications of churchwide diakoniai by reading the word in an indeterminate sense of duties or obligations common to all Christians and by emphasising the normally exclusive access to diakonia by apostles and their peers.

For the purposes of preparing a revised understanding of diakoniai at 1 Cor 12:5, what do we carry forward from these reflections, and what do we yet need to clarify?

Firstly, as already strongly emphasised, we must understand that these diakoniai are rendered as services to the one Lord of verse 5 in response to that Lord's summons. No specific term of reference ad extra is stated or implied, although the word diakoniai does denote an obligation to bring a task to completion. Thus, the diakoniai are firstly tasks to be undertaken at the behest of the
Lord, in the Lord's name, and bearing with them the obligation of taking them to completion. But what specific activity, if any, within the church does the word *diakoniai* denote?

In other Pauline writings we encounter instances of these words amid strong contextual aids which lead us to recognise that Paul is designating specific tasks. These tasks include the role of Paul as the accredited purveyor of the word of God: we instance the extended context of 1 Cor 3:5 and 2 Cor 3-6, the powerful apologetic involving 2 Cor 11:23, and the triumphant claim to *diakonia* at Rm 11:13.

In addition to being a clearcut designation of the mandate to bear the word of God, the words also designate in Paul's letters mandates to represent one church of God to another. I refer to usage in connection with the collection for Jerusalem in 2 Cor 8-9 and in Rm 15 which we have already sampled.

Related to this are instances designating Phoebe, Stephanas, and Onesimus as delegates in matters affecting the gospel. delegates, that is, either of their communities or of the apostle. We have no space to argue that interpretation here (but see Collins 1990:217-221 and especially 1992:66-85).

To the ancients such usage as I have invoked was unmistakably clear; more than that, it was an impressive assertion of just how highly the writer Paul evaluated the roles of accredited preacher and accredited delegate. A modern appreciation of the usage is dependent, however, on our ability to relate the usage to the rhetorical impact of the context.

6 SPECIAL TERM

From our knowledge of such contexts, and for the moment leaving the instance of 1 Cor 12:5 to one side, we can say that nowhere did Paul use *diakonia* or its cognates in ways which left his meaning open to misunderstanding. He was conscious, as his hearers were conscious, that in *diakonia* and its cognates he was drawing on a set of words with a special place in ancient rhetoric and poetry.

Today, unfortunately, we are yet to disabuse ourselves of the myth created among us in our time that these words were part of ordinary and everyday language. That estimation of the words has been a most unfortunate outcome of otherwise praiseworthy efforts in the nineteenth century to remake a diaconate or *diakonia* of service to the needy; these socially responsible reformers not only understood the ancient diaconate to be essentially an office of service but also assumed that its deacons or *diakonoi* were named after the servants of the slave world. The impact of this assumption upon our appreciation of the words in this century has been that we read them as coming into Christian usage from the world of slavery. We have even been invited to envisage early Christians—and Paul was the first of these to leave us evidence of the words—choosing these...
words because of their lowly associations. Nothing could be further from the ways of early Christians with the language which they shared with their Hellenistic contemporaries. In this instance they took up the words, Paul leading the way, from the high levels of rhetoric at which the words had traditionally been employed, and Christians continued to employ them to similar effect.

Thus we have no reason to think of the *diakoniai* among the *charismata* and *energémata* of 1 Cor 12 as establishing a servant setting for his theology of church. On the contrary, whatever the mandates designated by *diakoniai* precisely embrace, they come from on high and bring with them the dignity, authority, and urgency proper to mandates so designated.

Further to these observations about the character of the word Paul uses here, we need to take into account that its usage is very properly religious. The oldest literary association of the words is with the heavenly messenger, Hermes, and throughout a thousand years, into the usage of the Neoplatonists theorising about the daemonic powers which act as God's lieutenants, indeed into the usage of the Greek Fathers treating of the operations of the Word, these terms find their place when the need is to designate a role subordinate to the divine but participating in a divine purpose for the world.

In the light of such a rhetorical background, then, we can safely assume that Paul's *diakoniai* in verse 5 is not designating the casual actions of individuals within a group of Corinthian believers. The word is not designating the ordinary everyday deeds of those Christians, nor the occasional or episodic deeds of braver note which individuals might see fit to attempt. Instead of looking for a meaning in those directions, we need to ask, if we are going to be able to relate Paul's usage here with known usage elsewhere, whether these *diakoniai* might not rather be of another kind altogether.

**7 MINISTRIES OF THE WORD**

Let us come to the context in which the *diakoniai* are listed. Among the several uncertainties resulting from attempts to provide a coherent account of Paul's meaning in chapter 12, one broadly agreed point is that the writer was upholding the right of individuals among the Christians of Corinth to respond in diverse ways to the new religious environment they found themselves in. The Corinthians themselves were acutely aware of this diversity, enduring divisions arising from unequal evaluations of their diverse experiences. Paul's contribution to resolving their concerns is instructive about how such Christians were expected to live with the diversity, how they might safely cultivate it, be surely nurtured through it, how they might contain it for the greater good of all. In Paul's endorsement of the diversity, interests of his concerning the control of the diversity emerge.
The first control is mentioned in verse 3, where confession of the Lord Jesus is the mark that the community member is responding authentically to the spirit of God, in whatever particular manner the person's response might find expression.

Another control of the diversity is a firm realisation that, however diverse they might be, all outward expressions of the spirit are sourced in the one inward divine power. This is the purpose of the acknowledgements of God, Lord, and Spirit in verses 4-6. This divine source of all manifestations is the guarantee of unity amid diversity.

Having assured his hearers in these ways in chapter 12, and having celebrated the godly diversity of their responses in the spirit, but before passing on in chapter 14 to a detailed response on points affecting tongues and prophecy, Paul concludes his overview of Christian religious experience in chapter 12 verse 28 with a systematic listing of certain roles. The element of prioritising in this listing is clear. Paul uses ordinal numbers to introduce the first three roles in the list, which are all teaching roles, and retains these roles in this order in verse 29 when he presses the rhetorical questions, 'Are all apostles?' etcetera.

This pointed endorsement of teaching roles at the conclusion of a celebration of diverse expressions of religious conviction in the earlier sections of the chapter effectively indicates what chiefly preoccupied Paul in settling the Corinthian confusion. This was that the Corinthians were to appreciate that their unity in confessing Jesus as Lord would arise, amidst their diversity, from a common acceptance of the teaching they had received. What else are they instructed about in chapter 14 on prophecy?

Paul's audience had already been fully advised of the emphasis Paul placed on sound teaching. The initial chapters of the letter expound his convictions in this matter. And there, we recall, the peak expression to depict himself and Apollos in roles of divinely accredited purveyors of God's word was diakonoi, 'ministers through whom you believed' (3:5). Of this designation it must suffice to say that Paul's emphatic use of the self-designation diakonos would not have been lost on the Corinthians, nor was there any chance, such being the prestige and authority attaching to the term, that its significance could have slipped from their minds in the course of the public reading from chapter 3 to chapter 12 of his letter. The inescapable import is that Paul's claim to be a diakonos of the Lord—and it is the kurios himself who assigned his role to his minister (3:5)—would have lent a powerful sense to what Paul intended the Corinthians to understand by his inclusion of diakoniai among constitutive elements of a church in chapter 12:5.

Of course, we late twentieth century readers of Paul form a different audience from Paul's Corinthian brothers and sisters who spoke his Greek and shared its cultural values. To make our task more demanding, we come to his letter not...
only lacking in the values attaching to his words *diakonos* and *diakonia* but with expectations of them which neither he nor his Corinthian audience would recognise. To Paul's high world of godly *diakonia*, through which ancient Corinthians anticipated receiving heaven's mysteries written large on their hearts (to borrow Paul's later imagery of the process involved in *diakonia*, 2 Cor 3:3), we now bring the banal inadequacies arising from Kittel's lexicography of the 1930s. By the weight of this 1930s learning Paul's high rhetoric has been brought down to the lowlands of short horizons where mysteries are beyond the range of vision, and the divinely commissioned *diakoniai*, by which churches are constituted, became, in the phrase cited earlier, 'everyday acts of service'.

Since the 1930s, and in the name of reconstructing a first century environment for the healthy growth of churches in our twentieth century, two or three generations of exegetes, theologians and popular religious communicators have constructed a 'diakonic' environment which we name in English 'the servant church'. Within its artificial atmosphere, as the predominating English translations of 1 Cor 12:5 instructed us over the past forty years, there flourish all 'varieties of service', a prosaic instruction delivered even more platitudinously in another well known translation officially promulgated for public reading, where we are told 'there are all sorts of service to be done'. Thus has a tendentious and reductionist semantics of the *diakon-* words rendered the fertile field of Corinthian *diakonia* a linguistic desert.

8 A SPECIFIC GIFT

Let us return to what Paul was intending to say and what the Corinthians undoubtedly understood in his listing of *charismata*, *diakoniai* and *energēmata*. In claiming priority for apostles and teachers at the end of chapter 12, Paul was laying down the fundamental law of survival for the community amidst the lively diversity provided in the spirit. The promulgation of this principle at chapter 12:28-29 would have come as no surprise to Paul's audience, however, because they would have already recognised earlier in the same chapter an overt claim to the prerogatives of teachers in Paul's opening formula *charismata*, *diakoniai* and *energēmata*. The *diakoniai* publicised at 12:5 can be none other than the ministerial roles of apostolic preachers; in fact they are the roles of Paul himself, of Apollos, Cephas and others to whom Paul refers in chapter 1. The differences in the 'varieties' or 'apportionments' of these ministries may be no more complex or significant than the difference Paul alludes to between his own ministry and that of Apollos in chapter 3.

If the *diakoniai* of verse 5 are the apostolic responsibilities exclusive to Paul and his peers, how does his tripartite formula work? Early in the paper we saw that some commentators read the three elements as only nominally distinct. Our evaluation of *diakoniai* as apostolic responsibilities, however, disallows any
merely nominal distinction between the three elements; as apostolic, the *diakoniai* can be gifted to apostolic figures like Paul but not to the body general of the Corinthians: 'Are all apostles?' (12:29) is the rhetorical question signaling Paul's reminder to the Corinthians that not all labour under the divine commission is of this kind of *diakonia*.

A less common view of the formula is that the three elements are really distinct. Such a threefold division could, of course, easily accommodate an understanding of the *diakoniai* as the apostolic commission special to some and beyond the claims of most. It is unsatisfactory, however, in that the first item, the *charismata*, becomes difficult to identify or apportion within the church.

To meet the demands both of the rhetoric of these chapters and of the semantic values of the term *diakoniai* one other pattern imposes itself. This is that *charismata* is a generic term for all the gifts enriching the congregation, and that the *diakoniai* and the *energēmata* are two distinct species of gifts, the *diakoniai* being apostolic commissions exclusive to Paul and his like, and the *energēmata* being the range of gifted spiritual attainments exemplified by Paul in verses 8-10.

In recent times E Earle Ellis (1989:35-36) has similarly recognised here what he calls 'a twofold classification of the gifts', distinguished as teaching ministries (*diakoniai*) and miraculous powers (*energēmata*) within the general category of gifts. The same view was propounded in the earlier era of the Counter-Reformation by William van Est, who died in 1613, a Jesuit professor of renown at the Collegium Romanum enjoying the posthumous honorific from Pope Benedict XIV of 'doctor fundatissimus'. Van Est (1709:326) noted that the Latin exegetical tradition had generally also been thus, contrasting in this with the Greek tradition which assumed merely the nominal distinction. As *diakoniai* he instanced ecclesiastical offices of apostleship, episcopacy, and diaconate.

I would offer the following translation of verses 4-6:

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Divisions exist among gifts,
although the Spirit is one and the same:
both divisions of ministries,
the Lord too remaining the same;
and then divisions of activities,
with God of course remaining the same,
the one who activates everything.
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This translation represents, in my view, what Paul intended by the tripartite formulation. That the Corinthians perceived his intention without difficulty or confusion is what one must conclude from the high estimation of apostolic *diakonia* which they, like any Greek, would have shared with Paul.
As a concluding comment I venture the view that this interpretation disturbs the wide modern consensus in regard to the charismatic origin and nature of ministry and in regard to historical tensions between charismatic ministry and ecclesiastical office. To advance this view a larger work needs to be taken up.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Beyer, H W 1935. s v διακονία TWNT.

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