

Each true congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ is charismatic by nature—in the sense that every believer receives a gift (or gifts) and is responsible to exercise it (or them) in practising the priesthood of the believer (Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 1 Peter 4:10–11). This does not mean, however, that the equipping work of the Holy Spirit is limited to the gifts that are explicitly mentioned in the New Testament. Neither does it mean that all the gifts which are mentioned still appear today. Clearly, the gifts associated with the work of the apostles in the time before the New Testament was completed—especially the revelatory gifts—disappeared with the finalisation of the canon, since they were no longer needed (see §6.2).

(Sola 5 Confession 6.9)

One of the curses of African Christianity is an abusive prosperity gospel. This “gospel” is marked by several things, including claims to spectacular healings and miracles. The source of these claims, of course, is the overt nature of the supernatural gifts in the early chapters of Acts, where great miracles and healings were performed. One of the major differences between Reformed theology and prosperity gospel is the nature and exercise of spiritual gifts in the contemporary church. Confession 6.9 gets to the heart of this.

The Confession begins with the claim that **each true congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ is charismatic by nature**. Personally, how do you hear that claim? What is your understanding of a “Charismatic” church? Before reading this Confession, would you ever have described BBC as a “Charismatic” church? _____

The Greek word *charisma*, from which we derive our English word “charismatic,” is used in the New Testament to describe the gifts of the Spirit given to God’s people for the building up of the church. In this sense, **every believer receives a gift (or gifts) and is responsible to exercise it (or them) in practising the priesthood of the believer (Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11; 1 Peter 4:10–11)**.

The Confession talks about the responsibility of the believer to exercise his or her spiritual gift **in practising the priesthood of the believer**. The Reformers actually spoke of “the priesthood of all believers,” which may be more helpful in this discussion than **the priesthood of the believer**. Why is this so? Is there a difference between **the priesthood of the believer** and the priesthood of all believers? _____

Read the proof texts supplied carefully and note the context in which God expects us to exercise our spiritual gifts. What is that context?

Romans 12:3–8: _____

1 Corinthians 12:4–11: _____

1 Peter 4:10–11: _____

Give your answers above, how do you know when a Christian is using his or her spiritual gift as God intends for it to be used? _____

The Confession goes on to note that **the equipping work of the Holy Spirit** is not necessarily **limited to the gifts that are explicitly mentioned in the New Testament**. **Neither does it mean that all the gifts which are mentioned still appear today**. Read again the proof texts supplied above and jot down the various gifts that each of the texts specifically mentions. Can you think of other things in the ministry of a church that might qualify as spiritual gifts?

Romans 12:3–8: _____

1 Corinthians 12:4–11: _____

1 Peter 4:10–11: _____

Other possible spiritual gifts: _____

Is there a difference between a natural talent and a spiritual gift? If so, what is the difference? _____

Natural talents must be well stewarded and grow in effectiveness through training and use. Is the same true of spiritual gifts, or do spiritual gifts show automatic effectiveness apart from training? _____

The Confession closes with a clear claim about what is obviously not very clear to all streams of Christianity: **Clearly, the gifts associated with the work of the apostles in the time before the New Testament was completed—especially the revelatory gifts—disappeared with the finalisation of the canon, since they were no longer needed (see §6.2).**

The Confession provides no clear proof text to support this claim, primarily because a single, clear proof text is difficult to find. How would you reason from biblical principles for this affirmation? (Note that this question has to do with **especially the revelatory gifts**.) _____

What is your understanding of the continuation or discontinuation of other gifts like miracles and healing? Do they fall into the same category as revelatory gifts? _____