

## THE APOSTLE PAUL'S GENDER NEUTRAL *CHARISMATA* IN ROMANS 12.6-8<sup>1</sup>

Toward the conclusion of his letter to the Christian communities in Rome, Paul gives a “list” of *charismata* or “grace-expressions” (12.6-8) similar to but not identical to what he mentions elsewhere (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12.7-11, 27-31; Ephesians 4.7-13; 1 Timothy 4.11-16; cf. 1 Peter 4.10-11). These *charismata* are better defined as “grace-expressions” rather than the usual “spiritual gifts” or “gifts.” J. A. Fowler critiques the notion that the underlying Greek terms imply distinct “spiritual gifts.” He writes, “When the *charismata* or *pneumatika* are translated as ‘spiritual gifts’ and conceived to be detached entities or abilities distinct from Christ and distributed by the Spirit, the fallacious misconceptions continue to be perpetuated, and the problems associated with such continue to persist, both in denial and abuse.”<sup>2</sup> Concerning 1 Corinthians 12, he says:

There is nothing in the Greek word *pneumatikon* that necessarily implies “spiritual gifts.” To clarify what is meant by this term “spiritual,” it is best to allow the context to provide definition. This is available in verse 7 where Paul refers to the “manifestations of the Spirit” (*phanerosis tou Pneumatos*). Thus the *pneumatika* that Paul refers to are “spiritual-manifestations” or “spiritual-expressions,” rather than “spiritual gifts” per se. The misnomer of “spiritual gifts” has tainted and colored the interpretation and understanding of this passage through the ages by implying separated entities or endowments given to particular individuals by the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For this topic I am indebted to comments by John Mark Hicks in his presentation, “The Husband of One Wife: ‘Enough Said’ (Part 2),” Harbor Lectures (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University, May 2023); online at: <<https://johnmarkhicks.com/2023/05/04/the-husband-of-one-wife-enough-said-part-2/>>; accessed 8 July 2023.

<sup>2</sup>James A. Fowler, “*Charismata: Rethinking the So-Called ‘Spiritual Gifts’*” (Fallbrook, CA: Christ in you Ministries, 1999); online at: <[www.christinyou.net/pages/chrsmata.html](http://www.christinyou.net/pages/chrsmata.html)>; accessed 10 July 2023.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Fowler prefers to understand *charismaton*, *diakonon*, and *energmaton*, used by Paul, as “grace-expressions,” “service-expressions,” and “expressions of [God’s] outworking.” He argues:

There is nothing inherent in the words *pneumatika* or *charismata* themselves that necessarily conveys the idea of a “gift.” We do not translate *energmaton* (1 Corinthians 12.6) as “energy-gifts,” so why do we translate *pneumatikon* (1 Corinthians 12.1) and *charismaton* (1 Corinthians 12.4) as “spiritual gifts”? These words are more adequately translated as “spiritual-expressions” or “grace-expressions” which are, indeed, “given” (1 Corinthians 12.7, 8; Romans 12.6) by the grace of God.<sup>4</sup>

Part of the problem identified by Fowler could be in the choice of the word “gift,” since that seems to imply something static, permanent, irrevocable, or even an office, rather than what appears to be indicated by the work of God’s Spirit in scripture, that is, fluid, always creating and redemptive, projecting forward, and pertinent to the human condition or situation.<sup>5</sup> For this

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Frederick W. Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 381, defines *charisma* as “that which results from the activity of generosity, in the New Testament always in connection with divine generosity bestowed on believers, divine gift.” Christopher A. Beetham, editor, *Concise New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 962, says, “The noun *charisma* (found almost exclusively in the Pauline corpus) can be used by the apostle with reference to divine grace in a general sense, but it is mainly his distinctive term for the manifold outworking of divine grace in individual Christians through the one Spirit. In both Romans and 1 Corinthians Paul develops the meaning of this special, spiritual endowment for service in the life of the community.”

For NT uses of *charisma*, see Romans 1.11; 5.15, 16; 6.23; 11.29; 12.6; 1 Corinthians 1.7; 7.7; 12.4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 2 Corinthians 1.11; 1 Timothy 4.14; 2 Timothy 1.6; 1 Peter 4.10. John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, Volume III, translated by James Bryce (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 159ff., sees *charis* itself as one of the *charismata* and views “faith” (i.e., the rule of faith, the articles of faith, the creed) as the guiding factor for all the *charismata*, especially prophecy.

<sup>5</sup>See, though, Romans 11.29 that says God’s *charismata* are “irrevocable” (from the Greek *ametameletos*). But Paul’s point here must be understood in light of his argument about Israel’s election and rejection and the subsequent “grafting in” of the Gentiles.

reason, I will avoid use of “gifts” or “spiritual gifts” in this paper and use instead the underlying Greek word *charismata*.<sup>6</sup>

The themes of Paul’s exposition of *charismata* in the passages listed above run parallel as Paul is stressing to each of his recipients the unity of the body (i.e., the church) but the diversity of its individual members, that is, the unity worked by God’s Spirit but the wondrous and beneficial variety of the Spirit’s outpouring of grace. In the Roman letter, if one takes as its major theme the rightness of God’s actions, or God’s righteousness,<sup>7</sup> then the section about *charismata* falls in the concluding remarks by the apostle that caps off his previous discussion with pragmatic guidelines for the believers in Rome to follow. Apart from the formal introduction and conclusion (1.1-17; 15.14–16.27), there is the basis of God’s righteousness (chapters 1–4), the results of God’s righteousness (chapters 5–8), the problem of God’s righteousness (chapters 9–11), and the renewal brought about by God’s righteousness (chapters 12–15). In this latter section about renewal, Paul emphasizes that it is God’s righteousness that works sacrifice and transformation (12.1-2), humility and love among believers (12.3-16), love and good instead of hate and evil (12.17–13.14), and tolerance concerning scruples (14.1–15.13).

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<sup>6</sup>For an overview of *charismata* and their continuation in the church today, see Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Kostenberger, *The Holy Spirit, Theology for the People of God*, editors, David S. Dockery, Nathan A. Finn, and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 426-434.

<sup>7</sup>See the more nuanced and detailed treatment by Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Theme of Romans,” and also “Following the Argument of Romans” by Robert Jewett, both in Karl P. Donfried, editor, *The Romans Debate: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 333-345, 265-277.

And the humility and love among believers that is crucial for the proper functioning of the Christian body depends on, according to Paul, the use of the Spirit's *charismata* that differ.<sup>8</sup>

In his "list"<sup>9</sup> of *charismata* in Romans, Paul wisely omits any personal pronouns that could be misconstrued as a point of division in the *charismata* based on cultural understandings of body politics. For him, incorporation into the realm of Christ and the exercise of the Spirit's *charismata* is based on faith, not on any perceived status (see Galatians 3.26-28). This lack of personal pronouns as well as finite verbs, however, makes his grammar in verses 6-8 very terse,<sup>10</sup> something that has given translators problems. On verses 6ff., J. Denney states, "The grammar is very difficult. Both Authorized Version and Revised Version supply what is needed in order to read the verses as an exhortation."<sup>11</sup> S. Schatzmann says, "The grammatical construction of the passage is awkward."<sup>12</sup> H. C. G. Moule concurs, "The Greek construction from hence [verse 6]

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<sup>8</sup>The ideas of "sober-mindedness" or "sensibleness" (from *sophroneo*, verse 3) and "humility" or "lowliness" (from *tapeinos*, verse 16) bookmark this section that includes Paul's mention of *charismata*.

<sup>9</sup>"Paul's use of language in the lists of Romans 12.6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12.28 does not lend itself to an easy categorization of gifts, nor to the detection of patterns of distinction between gifts and the believer's charismatic functioning." Siegfried S. Schatzmann, *A Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 20-21.

<sup>10</sup>Compare in the immediate context verses 9-21, what Leander E. Keck calls "a staccato series of imperatives, drawing on the wisdom tradition and focusing on social relations." "The Letter of Paul to the Romans," *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Deuterocanonical Books*, general editor, Wayne A. Meeks (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 2133.

<sup>11</sup>James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, edited by W. Robertson Nicoll (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), Volume Two, 689.

<sup>12</sup>Schatzmann, *Pauline Theology of Charismata*, 20.

to the end of verse 8 is peculiar, because elliptical.”<sup>13</sup> C. K. Barrett writes, “The construction of this passage is obscure. Verse 6 begins with a participle, and up to the full stop which must be placed at the end of verse 8, there is no finite verb.”<sup>14</sup> And Zerwick and Grosvenor note for this passage, “Supply ‘let it be done’; likewise in the case of all seven gifts a verb must be supplied. . . . Here [at verse 7] and in the following supply, ‘let him use it’.”<sup>15</sup> But A. Hultgren argues that such “is not necessary and can be misleading. . . . To supply a main verb, indeed an entire clause, in 12.6 (such as ‘let us use them’), and the result is a hortatory passage to the end of the paragraph.”<sup>16</sup> He continues and says, “Syntactically 12.6-8 is one sentence and is descriptive, not prescriptive, of the community of believers.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, general editor, J. J. S. Perowne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892), 208.

<sup>14</sup>C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries, general editor, Henry Chadwick (1957; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 237.

<sup>15</sup>Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, Unabridged, Revised Edition in One Volume (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 487.

<sup>16</sup>Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 444-445; cf. Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 6, editor, Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 372.

<sup>17</sup>Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 445. For the prescriptive view, see Jack Cottrell, *Romans*, Volume 2, The College Press NIV Commentary, edited by Jack Cottrell and Tony Ash (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1998), 322-323. Paul’s descriptors *en haploteti*, *en spoude*, and *en hilaroteti* in verse 8 are not “of a hortatory character” necessarily and do not define “the previous expressions” as presumed by Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*, translated by John C. Moore and Edwin Johnson, revised by William P. Dickson (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 472.

Sanday and Headlam suggest that one must choose from two basic “methods of construction” for Paul’s grammar here, but they do not consider a third possibility—a poetic or symmetrical structure.<sup>18</sup> The driving verbs, though, for the sevenfold list of *charismata* are in verse 6a and are participles in the Greek—“and having gifts according to the grace having been given to us differing . . . (Greek, *echontes de charismata kata ten charin ten dotheisan humin diaphora*).<sup>19</sup> This opening expression is then followed by Paul’s use of two nouns and five participles to elucidate the seven *charismata*.<sup>20</sup> For the first four *charismata*, Paul uses the conjunction *eite* with prophecy, service, teaching, and exhorting. The first two are preceded by *eite* only (“if” or “whether”); the next two are preceded by *eite ho* (“if the one who” or “whether the one who”). The last three—giving, leading, and showing mercy—are given in succession after the article *ho*. As straightforward prose, yes the grammar may seem to be problematic due to its brevity. But if taken as poetic, perhaps reflecting an early Christian hymn or poem, the short

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<sup>18</sup>William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Fifth Edition, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 356.

<sup>19</sup>J. D. Douglas, editor, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, translated by Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1990), 565.

<sup>20</sup>See Schatzmann’s brief treatment of the grammar and his comment: “The list of seven gifts (prophecy, service, teaching, exhorting, encouraging, giving assistance or aid, showing mercy) describes the broad base of charismatic functions which Paul understood as part of the church’s life and ministry.” *Pauline Theology of Charismata*, 20. This section of Romans, and immediately following (verses 9ff.), with its heavy use of participles and no finite verbs, could reflect Semitic idioms. So Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek: Illustrated by Examples*, English Edition (Rome: Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1963), 129-130. Joseph Shulam, *A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans* (Baltimore: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1997), 402, says, “Paul may here be relating to a midrashic tradition based on Psalm 68.18,” as he does in Ephesians 4.8.

recitation of *charismata* by Paul is balanced and symmetrical.<sup>21</sup> The structure of the Greek can be seen as follows:

*echontes de charismata*  
    *kata ten charin ten dotheisan humin diaphora*  
*eite propheteian*  
    *kata ten analogian tes pisteos*  
*eite diakonian*  
    *en te diakonia*  
*eite ho didaskon*  
    *en te didaskalia*  
*eite ho parakalon*  
    *en te paraklese*  
*ho metadidous*  
    *en haploteti*  
*ho proistamenos*  
    *en spoude*  
*ho eleon*  
    *en hilaroteti*<sup>22</sup>

This poetic structure jumps out at you when reading the Greek, and it is surprising that most English translations have not adopted it. No Greek text that I have seen highlights 12.6-8 as poetry either (contrast with the doxology of Paul in 11.33-35).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Craig C. Hill, “Romans,” *The Pauline Epistles*, The Oxford Bible Commentary, edited by John Muddiman and John Barton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 85, writes, “The listing of maxims, as in verses 9-12, is characteristic of ancient paraenesis and is a feature commonly found near the conclusion of Paul’s letters (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 5.12-22; Philippians 4.4-9). Probably Paul draws from no one source but rather from the broad stream of Christian ethical teaching, incorporating elements of the Jesus tradition, Jewish wisdom literature, and Graeco-Roman philosophy.” If this eclecticism also is true of Paul’s *charismata*, then verses 6-8 could be reflecting an ancient Christian hymn, which would explain its terse grammar.

<sup>22</sup>Brown and Comfort, *New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, 566. For a recording of this text according to its historical Koine pronunciation, see “Hear the New Testament (and Other Texts) Read in Koine,” KoineGreek.com (Benjamin Paul Kantor, 2023); online at: <[koinegreek.com/audio](http://koinegreek.com/audio)>; accessed 16 January 2024.

<sup>23</sup>On the importance of pronunciation to meaning, see Benjamin Kantor, *A Short Guide to the Pronunciation of New Testament Greek* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023, 113ff.

But R. Jewett, in his critical commentary on Romans, describes the grammar in detail and emphasizes, “Verses 6 through 8 feature an artfully constructed series of seven charismatic gifts.

. . . The rhetorical flair in this passage leads one to admire the congruence between subject matter and style: Paul speaks charismatically on the subject of the charismatic gifts.”<sup>24</sup> Jewett also mentions that “the poetic balance and equality of gifts are conveyed by the grammatical construction *eite . . . eite* (‘whether . . . whether’).”<sup>25</sup> And this symmetrical arrangement comes across nicely in his translation:

yet having charismatic gifts that differ  
according to the grace given to us,  
    whether prophecy—according to the analogy of faith,  
        or service—in the serving,  
        or the one who teaches—in the teaching,  
        or the exhorter—in the exhortation,  
            the sharer—with generosity,  
            the leader—with diligence,  
            the one showing mercy—with cheer.<sup>26</sup>

Another English translation, that of P. Esler, likewise shows Paul’s use of symmetry and keeps the participles of 6a as guiding the thought of the rest of the short passage (i.e., as in the Greek).

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<sup>24</sup>Robert Jewett, *Romans—A Commentary*, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, edited by Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2007), 737. Compare Paul’s “rhetorical triadic presentation” in 1 Corinthians 12.4ff. and the brief discussion by Hans Conzelmann, “*Charismata*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Volume IX, edited by Gerhard Friedrich, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 404-406.

<sup>25</sup>Jewett, *Romans—A Commentary*, 746.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 736.



Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us,  
if prophecy in proportion to faith,  
if service, in service,  
the one who teaches, in teaching,  
the one who consoles, in consoling,  
the one who distributes, with generosity,  
the one who leads [or cares], with zeal,  
the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.<sup>27</sup>

These two translations, as well as a few others (see below), understand Paul's *charismata* in 12.6-8 as descriptive not prescriptive and as gender neutral, that is, they avoid the problem introduced by many English translations, especially those completed before more recent concerns about inclusive or gender neutral language, with the consistent omission of any gender-laden pronouns (e.g., "one who" rather than "he who").

I would assume that some of the English translations that render "he who" or supply "let him" for the article *ho* with the participle do so on the basis that the participles for the last five *charismata* are nominative masculine singular. But to arbitrarily assign gender in English translation to a Greek participle, based on its masculine, feminine, or neuter form, is tricky and may result in mistranslation.<sup>28</sup> M. Aubrey reminds us:

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<sup>27</sup>Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 314.

<sup>28</sup>Since participles function in Greek in relation to verbs or as verbs themselves, standard grammars say little if anything about the role of gender in determining meaning for participles. See, for example, G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Eighth English Edition, translated by W. F. Moulton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), 427ff.; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 174-175, 212-213; cf. James Allen Hewett, *New Testament Greek: A Beginning and Intermediate Grammar*, Revised Edition, revised and expanded by C. Michael Robbins and Steven R. Johnson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 183ff., 203ff.

Languages with gender systems like Greek are not like gender in English. The Greek gender system is not a sex-based gender system the way English is. This reality can be difficult to grasp for English speakers. It is a natural tendency to interpret another language's grammatical system in terms of our own, where gender refers to biological / social categories.<sup>29</sup>

Aubrey also stresses the important fact that the rendition of gender in grammar is complicated and difficult and, for ancient Greek, is an under studied topic. But based on the work of G. Mussies on post-classical Greek morphosyntax,<sup>30</sup> Aubrey recognizes that, for participles used as nouns (i.e., substantive participles), feminine gender “can only have a female person referent,” masculine gender “does not refer solely to males, but rather personhood, regardless of biological sex,” and neuter gender “can refer to any kind of entity or participant regardless of their status as a person.”<sup>31</sup> For these distinctions, he gives several examples from the New Testament and summarizes, “The feminine gender has the narrowest possible domain of reference. The masculine gender covers a larger domain that subsumes person, including women. The neuter gender may be used to refer to anything.”<sup>32</sup> In other words, gender in participles in koine Greek is not strictly determinative, especially for masculine or neuter participles. Context is important.

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<sup>29</sup>Mike Aubrey, “Gender As Classification,” *Koine-Greek: Studies in Greek Language and Linguistics* (July 2022); online at: <<https://koine-greek.com/2022/07/10/gender-as-classification/>>; accessed 22 May 2023.

<sup>30</sup>Gerard Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism*, Volume 27, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1971).

<sup>31</sup>Mike Aubrey, “Mussies (1971) on Greek Gender,” *Koine-Greek: Studies in Greek Language and Linguistics* (June 2022); online at: <<https://koine-greek.com/2022/06/23/mussies-1971-on-grammatical-gender/>>; accessed 11 August 2023.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

For this reason, Paul's omission of any gender-specific pronouns in this brief section of Romans 12 is significant.

In addition to one personal pronoun in reference to himself (*moi* or "to me" in verse 3), Paul does use a couple other personal pronouns in the broader section (*humin* in verse 3; *hemin* in verse 6). These are both plural, which is fitting for what he is trying to convey to the followers of Christ in Rome. E. Kasemann titles this section "Advice for Charismatics Who Stand Out," as if to say that Paul is trying to tone down those in the Roman churches who might try to dominate to the exclusion of the exercise of the *charismata* of others (something Rome did not do very well historically).<sup>33</sup> In other words, let everyone participate, in the social life of the community and in the assemblies for instruction and praise of God, and let each one use their differing *charismata* for the benefit of all and make no distinction based on social status which would include gender.

Some read Paul's enumeration of *charismata* here as indicating the development of formal offices in the early Christian communities. But M. Black says that Paul's "use of the participles . . . emphasize function rather than status."<sup>34</sup> S. Schatzmann concurs and states emphatically:

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<sup>33</sup>See Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 331ff. Kasemann highlights Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and says that Paul "falls back surprisingly on Greek ethics." His comments on this section are lengthy, about ten pages, and interesting. See too the Greek parallels in Craig Keener, *Romans: A New Covenant Commentary*, New Covenant Commentary Series, series editors, Michael F. Bird and Craig Keener (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 145. Compare also Esler's treatment, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 312ff. Esler gives 12.3-8 the heading, "Arrogance and the Identity Descriptors of the Christ-Movement."

<sup>34</sup>Matthew Black, *Romans*, The New Century Bible Commentary, general editors, Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 153.

It is premature to read into Romans an already developing or existing ministerial order. There is no textual evidence whatsoever in 12.6-8 of a trend to institutionalize ministries, offices, or gifts. Such needless speculation is to be avoided. It is sufficient to affirm that Paul's paraenetic purpose was that bearers of different gifts were to function harmoniously for the upbuilding of the church.<sup>35</sup>

And J. A. Fitzmyer says, "The septet [of *charismata*] stands symbolically for the totality of such God-given charisms. Whether they are more than charisms, e.g., specific offices in the Christian community, is a debate for dogmatic theologians. One cannot answer that question on the basis of Paul's writings."<sup>36</sup>

In his interesting discussion of Romans 12.6-8, B. Byrne agrees that the apostle, in his introductory clause (verse 6a), "dubs these functions *charismata*: there are a range of *charismata* (literally, 'different *charismata*') according to the 'grace' (*charis*) given to each." But Byrne says that there is a difference in Paul's use of *charis* and *charismata*. He writes:

The formulation [of verse 6a] suggests some distinction between *charis* and *charisma*. *Charis*, while it can refer generally to the grace of God (cf. especially 5.12-21), refers here to the distinctive favor or "gift" that individual believers receive from God at the moment of coming to faith (in Paul's case [cf. verse 3], the grace of being apostle for the Gentiles). *Charisma* refers to the way in which the gift (*charis*) impacts upon others: more precisely, *charisma* denotes the sense of God's graciousness that the gifted person communicates to others through the exercise of his or her own particular *charis*. This is why, in the illustrative list that follows (verses 6b-8), Paul not only

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<sup>35</sup>Schatzmann, *Pauline Theology of Charismata*, 21. Contrast what Schatzmann is saying with the older and incorrect view that Paul in Romans 12.6-8 is enumerating the *charismata* of church leaders or officers and not believers in general. See Jeffrey T. Riddle, "The Charismata of Romans 12.6-8," *Stylos* (January 2012); online at: <[www.jeffriddle.net/2012/01/charismata-of-romans-126-8.html](http://www.jeffriddle.net/2012/01/charismata-of-romans-126-8.html)>; accessed 04 August 2023.

<sup>36</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, Volume 33, general editors, William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 647.

indicates seven gifts but adds after each an indication of each one's function or effect; the first term in each case refers to the *charis*, the second indicates the *charisma*.<sup>37</sup>

It could be debated whether or not Paul's intent is so precise in the use of the two different words and the grammatical construction of verse 6a. What seems certain, though, is that these *charismata* are to reflect God's *charis* in the community of believers and elsewhere in a beneficial way (see verses 9ff.).

Along this line of viewing the *charismata* as functional, a lot of business and managerial literature oriented to biblical thinking refers to Paul's *charismata* in Romans 12 as "motivational gifts" to be developed by leaders.<sup>38</sup> But Paul's community of "the beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints" (1.7; cf. his use of *ekklesia* in 16.1, 4, 5, 16, 23) is not to be mistaken for a civic organization or an association of trade or commerce by either ancient or modern standards. More accurate is the assessment of J. Leidenhag who says "one can better understand how the Holy Spirit unifies both the universal and local church by viewing charismatic gifts as liturgical group actions."<sup>39</sup> And these "liturgical group actions" are to be viewed as gender neutral.

What follows below is a sample listing of English translations of Romans 12.6-8. Many older translations use male pronouns to fill the gap to supply what Paul omits in his terse

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<sup>37</sup>Byrne, *Romans*, 369-370.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Lydia R. Knopf, "Profiles of Entrepreneurs: Discriminant and Cluster Analyses of the Romans 12 Motivational Gifts and Locus of Control as Predictors of Entrepreneurs and A Canonical Analysis of the Romans 12 Motivational Gifts and IEO" (PhD dissertation; Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University, School of Business and Leadership, 2017).

<sup>39</sup>Joanna Leidenhag, "For We All Share in One Spirit: Charismatic Gifts and Church Unity," *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, Volume 4, Issue 1 (2020); online at: <<https://ojs.uclouvain.be/index.php/theologica/article/view/52633>>; accessed 04 August 2023.

grammatical construction. Whether or not they intend gender distinctions in the *charismata* with such pronoun use would be a guess without access to notes from the translators.<sup>40</sup> Some of these translations vary what is supplied in English, while some of them try to keep what is supplied consistent. Most of the translators, I think, would understand their use of male pronouns in this passage in a generic sense, something common to usage by earlier generations but not so much today. Better are English translations that use indefinite or no pronouns in this passage. A few of these are quite wordy, as are several of those that use male pronouns. The best, however, like the NRSV (below) and the translations by Jewett and Esler (above), give a crisp and consistent English rendition of Paul's Greek in Romans 12.6-8 and preserve both its brevity and beauty.

To sum up, gender distinctions in classical languages such as Greek and Latin, according to Tom Hendrickson, are “complex and shifting” and something that ancient grammarians were conscious of and addressed. He notes:

They debated whether grammatical gender was inherent in the things themselves or a product of human convention. They devised a technical vocabulary to articulate the difference between grammatical gender identity and grammatical gender expression. They argued about whether their language had three genders—as we teach—or perhaps only two, or maybe five, or even as many as seven.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Historically, most of the work on English translation of the Bible has been done by males to the exclusion of females, but this is changing (e.g., the Common English Bible). See, though, the excellent overview by Mimi Haddad, “Correcting Caricatures: Women and Bible Translation” (Minneapolis: CBE International, 2021); online at: <[www.cbeinternational.org/resource/correcting-caricatures-women-and-bible-translation/](http://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/correcting-caricatures-women-and-bible-translation/)>; accessed 31 July 2023; also Elizabeth Ann Remington Willett, “Feminist Choices of Early Women Bible Translators,” *Open Theology*, Volume 2, Issue 1 (2016), 400-404; online at: <[www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/opth-2016-0033/html?lang=en](http://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/opth-2016-0033/html?lang=en)>; accessed 31 July 2023.

<sup>41</sup>Tom Hendrickson, “Gender Diversity in Greek and Latin Grammar: Ten Ancient Discussions,” *Ad Aequiora: Toward A More Equitable Classics* (January 2020); online at: <<https://medium.com/ad-meliora/gender-diversity-in-greek-and-latin-grammar-ten-ancient-discussions-df371fe19af8>>; accessed 29 July 2023.

From our perspective today, Hendrickson states, “The fact that we think of these classes [i.e., grammatical genders] at all is a product of historical circumstance rather than linguistic necessity.”<sup>42</sup> In light of this, it is important that English translations of the Bible strive to achieve “gender-accurate” wording. Gail Wallace argues that this is necessary for four reasons: (1) “to communicate clearly in the language of our culture”; (2) “to facilitate spiritual growth and development in both women and men”; (3) “to ensure good theology”; and (4) “to help fulfill the Great Commission.”<sup>43</sup> She emphasizes, “While male pronouns were once understood as sometimes referring to both men and women, that is no longer the case. When we use an English translation of the Bible that ignores this, the gospel message is distorted, pushing women to the margins.”<sup>44</sup> And she concludes, “God’s Word is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, but the words we use to communicate that message change from generation to generation. Let’s not hold on to obsolete language forms that are no longer useful in communicating the gospel. As ‘people of the Book,’ let’s give our best efforts to present the truth of the Bible accurately and clearly.”<sup>45</sup>

Romans 12.6-8 is just one text where older and even more recent English translations can distort the biblical message regarding gender. In his brief study, Philip Payne highlights the following:

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Gail Wallace, “Four Good Reasons to Use A Gender-Accurate Bible Translation” (Minneapolis: CBE International, 2017); online at: <[www.cbeinternational.org/resource/4-reasons-use-gender-accurate-bible-translation/](http://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/4-reasons-use-gender-accurate-bible-translation/)>; accessed 29 July 2023.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

In a number of passages dealing with men and women, Bible translations like the ESV and NASB twist the meaning of God’s inspired Word by adding words, changing the meanings of words, changing sentence structure, and concealing crucial evidence for a message of gender equality that runs throughout the Bible. Scripture accurately describes male-dominant cultures, but it doesn’t prescribe them.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, Paul certainly is not a man of the world, but he knows his world, or worlds, and the cultural boundaries. The revelation he received about Jesus the Messiah opened up exciting possibilities for him personally and for his work as a passionate believer in Yahweh and Torah. He understands the social limitations, including those of gender, of his own Jewish world, the Hellenistic world, and the Roman world. But he does not restrict himself, his work, or his writings to these limitations. This clearly is seen from his interactions as recorded in the book of Acts and his letters to various Christian communities including that of Rome. Paul would have us realize, contrary to social restrictions among those in the world, that in Christ all of us are “one body” and “members one of another” yet with distinct *charismata* for the benefit of everyone (Romans 12.3-8). But even for Paul, how this oneness in Christ is brought about by the exercise of the Spirit’s *charismata* might vary from locale to locale.

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<sup>46</sup>Philip B. Payne, “How Bible Translations Distort God’s Word Regarding Gender,” CP Voices (July 2023); online at: <[www.christianpost.com/voices/bible-translations-distort-gods-word-on-the-issue-of-gender.html](http://www.christianpost.com/voices/bible-translations-distort-gods-word-on-the-issue-of-gender.html)>; accessed 29 July 2023. Compare Talley Cross, “Writing Women Out of the Bible: Gender Exclusive Language in the ESV,” *Flesh of My Flesh: Reflections on Gender, Sexuality, Singleness, and Marriage* (November 2022); online at: <[www.patheos.com/blogs/fleshofmyflesh/2022/11/writing-women-out-of-the-bible-gender-exclusive-language-in-the-esv/](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/fleshofmyflesh/2022/11/writing-women-out-of-the-bible-gender-exclusive-language-in-the-esv/)>; accessed 31 July 2023.



Postscript: I know this conclusion is general and somewhat vague, but I am reflecting on the remarkable statements by Paul that indicate the equality and freedom we all have, including women, in Christ (Galatians 3.28; 2 Corinthians 1.20; 3.17; 5.17),<sup>47</sup> and I also am reflecting on the apostle's instructions, to specific places and situations (e.g., Ephesus and Corinth),<sup>48</sup> that seem to indicate a different role for women under certain circumstances.<sup>49</sup> In other words, in this lack of or removal of social distinctions—this freedom, this liberty, this newness, this “Yes!” that we enjoy in Christ—the apostle is a champion but also a realist. He understands that some will take such freedom as a license for misconduct. He also knows that such freedom (i.e., the disintegration of cherished and longstanding social distinctions that existed in the Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman worlds) would not be accepted easily or quickly.<sup>50</sup> In such cases, I think,

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<sup>47</sup>John and Kathleen Court, *The New Testament World* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 35, note that in the New Testament, “The number of women who are mentioned by *name* is no less than twenty-nine. The ratio of named women to named men in Paul's letter to the Romans, for example, is fifteen to eighteen.”

<sup>48</sup>It is interesting to connect the amount of time that Paul spent in Corinth and Ephesus to his understanding of the local customs and practices. His greater familiarity with these two cities in the first-century Roman world inform his detailed instructions about social relations as well as many other things.

<sup>49</sup>See overviews about women in the churches in Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, translated by John Richard de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 460-463; also Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 774-778.

<sup>50</sup>For a detailed analysis of the challenges faced by women in Roman societies, see Chapters 2 and 3 on “Women and Class in the Roman Empire,” James Malcolm Arlandson, *Women, Class, and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 14-66, 67-119. For a good sampling of the complexities involved in interpretation, see Beryl Rawson, editor, *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

Paul is happy to mediate and provide guidance that is acceptable and normative for those situations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>See, for example, the discussion of 1 Timothy 2.8-15 in John Mark Hicks, *Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding Their Story in the Bible* (Nashville: John Mark Hicks, 2020), 176ff.; cf. Craig Keener, “Women in Ministry,” *Bible Background: Research and Commentary* from Dr. Craig Keener (September 2019); online at: <<https://craigkeener.com/women-in-ministry/>>; accessed 19 August 2023.

English Translations That Use Male Pronouns in Romans 12.6-8

“Seeing that we have divers gifts according to the grace that is given unto us: if any man have the gift of prophecy, let him have it that it be agreeing unto the faith. Let him that hath an office, wait on his office. Let him that teacheth, take heed to his doctrine. Let him that exhorteth, give attendance to his exhortation. If any man give, let him do it with singleness. Let him that ruleth, do it with diligence. If any man show mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness.”<sup>52</sup>

“Having, then, gifts differing according to the favor which is given to us—if prophecy *act* according to the measure of faith—if a ministerial office, in that office—if one is a teacher, in teaching—and the exhorter, in exhortation. *Let* him who distributes *act* with disinterestedness—him that presides, with assiduity—him that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>53</sup>

“Since our gifts differ in accordance with the particular charge entrusted to us, if our gift is to preach, let our preaching correspond to our faith; if it is to minister to others, let us devote ourselves to our ministry; the teacher to his teaching, the speaker to his exhortation. Let the man who gives in charity do so with a generous heart; let him who is in authority exercise due diligence; let him who shows kindness do so in a cheerful spirit.”<sup>54</sup>

“We have gifts that differ with the favor that God has shown us, whether it is that of preaching, differing with the measure of our faith, or of practical service, differing in the field of service, or the teacher who exercises his gift in teaching, the speaker, in his exhortation, the giver of charity, with generosity, the office-holder, with devotion, the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>William Tyndale, translator, *Tyndale’s New Testament*, a modern-spelling edition and with an introduction by David Daniell (1534; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>53</sup>Alexander Campbell, translator, *The Living Oracles* (1826; reprint, Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 2001).

<sup>54</sup>*The Twentieth Century New Testament: A Translation into Modern English*, Revised Edition (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1904).

<sup>55</sup>Edgar J. Goodspeed, translator, *The New Testament: An American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923).

“But we have gifts differing according to the grace which was given to us. He that has the gift of prophecy, let him prophesy according to the proportion of his faith. If it is the gift of administration, let us give ourselves to our service. Let the teacher give himself to his teaching; and he who exhorts others to his exhortation. He who gives, let him do it in singleness of mind. He who rules, let him rule with diligence; and he who shows mercy must be cheerful.”<sup>56</sup>

“Having then different gifts according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy in agreement with the faith; or service, let us give ourselves to serving; or he who teaches, let him give himself to teaching; or he who exhorts, to exhortation; he who gives [or, distributes the alms], let him do it with simplicity; he who presides, let him do it with earnestness; he who shows mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness.”<sup>57</sup>

“And having different qualities by reason of the grace given to us, such as the quality of a prophet, let it be made use of in relation to the measure of our faith; or the position of a Deacon of the church, let a man give himself to it; or he who has the power of teaching, let him make use of it; he who has the power of comforting, let him do so; he who gives, let him give freely; he who has the power of ruling, let him do it with a serious mind; he who has mercy on others, let it be with joy.”<sup>58</sup>

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, *let us wait* on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Helen Barrett Montgomery, translator, *The New Testament in Modern English* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1924).

<sup>57</sup>*The Book of Books: A Translation of the New Testament Complete and Unabridged* (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1938).

<sup>58</sup>*The New Testament in Basic English* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1941).

<sup>59</sup>*Authorized King James Version*, from *Scotfield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945).

“We have different gifts and functions according to the grace which God has given us. So, if one has the gift of prophesying, let him exercise that gift in proportion to his faith. If another has a gift for some other form of service, he should give himself to that service: the teacher should exercise his teaching gift and the exhorter his gift for exhortation. The man who shares what he has with others should do so generously, the man with the gift of leadership should cultivate it diligently, the man who is engaged in work of mercy and charity should do his work cheerfully.”<sup>60</sup>

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them; if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>61</sup>

“So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to preach God’s message, we must do it according to the faith that we have. If it is to serve, we must serve. If it is to teach, we must teach. If it is to encourage others, we must do so. Whoever shares what he has with others, must do it generously; whoever has authority, must work hard; whoever shows kindness to others, must do it cheerfully.”<sup>62</sup>

“The grace of God has given us each special gifts, which are all different, and each man must use his gift. If a man has the gift of prophecy, he must use it in proportion to his faith. If he has the gift of administration, he must use it in administration. If he is a teacher, he must use it in teaching. If by his words he can lift up men’s hearts, he must use them to do so. If a man can contribute to someone else’s need, he must do so generously. If he has the gift of leadership, he must exercise it with enthusiasm. If he is helping those in distress, he must do so gladly.”<sup>63</sup>

“And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>F. F. Bruce, translator, *The Letters of Paul: An Expanded Paraphrase* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

<sup>61</sup>*Revised Standard Version*, from *Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>62</sup>*Today’s English Version* (New York: American Bible Society, 1966).

<sup>63</sup>William Barclay, translator, *The New Testament: A New Translation* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1969).

<sup>64</sup>*New American Standard Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971).

“Through the grace of God we have different gifts. If our gift is preaching, let us preach to the limit of our vision. If it is serving others let us concentrate on our service; if it is teaching let us give all we have to our teaching; and if our gift be the stimulating of the faith of others let us set ourselves to it. Let the man who is called to give, give freely; let the man in authority work with enthusiasm; and let the man who feels sympathy for his fellows in distress help them cheerfully.”<sup>65</sup>

“The gifts we possess differ as they are allotted to us by God’s grace, and must be exercised accordingly: the gift of inspired utterance, for example, in proportion to a man’s faith; or the gift of administration, in administration. A teacher should employ his gift in teaching, and one who has the gift of stirring speech should use it to stir his hearers. If you give to charity, give with all your heart; if you are a leader, exert yourself to lead; if you are helping others in distress, do it cheerfully.”<sup>66</sup>

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; or ministry, *let us use it* in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>67</sup>

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”<sup>68</sup>

“We have different gifts which vary according to the grace that has been given us. If the gift is for prophecy, it should be based on faith. If one is gifted for service, he should serve; the teacher should teach, the comforter should bring comfort; the contributor should show his generosity, the leader his energy, the charitable man his graciousness.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>J. B. Phillips, translator, *The New Testament in Modern English*, Revised Edition (New York: Collier Books, 1972).

<sup>66</sup>*The New English Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>67</sup>*New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

<sup>68</sup>*New International Version* (New York: International Bible Society, 1984).

<sup>69</sup>Richmond Lattimore, translator, *The New Testament* (New York: North Point Press, 1996).

“. . . but having different gifts according to the grace bestowed upon us. If a man’s gift is prophecy, let him use it but to the extent of the amount of his faith; or if it is **the gift of** practical service, let him be an administrator; or if it is that of moral exhortation, let him preach; or if it is that of philanthropy, let him be generous; or of skills of leadership, let him be conscientious; or if it is the gift of showing compassion, let him do it with a cheerful disposition.”<sup>70</sup>

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>71</sup>

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>72</sup>

“And we have different gifts according to the grace given to us. If the gift is prophecy, that individual must use it in proportion to his faith. If it is service, he must serve; if it is teaching, he must teach; if it is exhortation, he must exhort; if it is contributing, he must do so with sincerity; if it is leadership, he must do so with diligence; if it is showing mercy, he must do so with cheerfulness.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Sidney Brichto, translator, *The Genius of Paul: Paul’s Letters*, The People’s Bible Series (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 2001).

<sup>71</sup>*English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001).

<sup>72</sup>*Revised Standard Version Bible*, Ignatius Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

<sup>73</sup>*The New English Translation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2019).

English Translations That Use Indefinite Or No Male Pronouns in Romans 12.6-8<sup>74</sup>

“Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your gift is prophecy, the use it as your faith suggests; if administration, then use if for administration; if teaching, then use if for teaching. Let the preachers deliver sermons, the almsgivers give freely, the officials be diligent, and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully.”<sup>75</sup>

“We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us; prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”<sup>76</sup>

“Let us use the different gifts allotted to each of us by God’s grace: the gift of inspired utterance, for example, let us use in proportion to our faith; the gift of administration to administer, the gift of teaching to teach, the gift of counselling to counsel. If you give to charity, give without grudging; if you are a leader, lead with enthusiasm; if you help others in distress, do it cheerfully.”<sup>77</sup>

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”<sup>78</sup>

“God’s gracious love gave us different gifts:  
If it is prophesying, then prophesy by degree of faith.  
If it is helping other people, then help.  
If it is teaching, then teach.  
If it is encouraging people, then encourage.  
If it is giving money, then be generous.  
If it is leading others, then work hard.  
If it is showing mercy, then be cheerful.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>I am not aware of any English translation that uses female pronouns in Romans 12.6-8.

<sup>75</sup>*The Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1966).

<sup>76</sup>*New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperOne, 1989).

<sup>77</sup>*The Revised English Bible* (Oxford & Cambridge: Oxford University Press & Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>78</sup>*Today’s New International Version, New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>79</sup>*The Great Book: The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Plain English* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, Publishers, 2003).



“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”<sup>80</sup>

“Having different gifts according to the grace given to us; maybe prophecy in proportion to our faith, maybe serving in ministry, maybe the teacher in teaching, maybe the encouraging person in encouraging, the generous person in simplicity, the leader in enthusiasm, the compassionate in exercising compassion.”<sup>81</sup>

“God’s marvelous grace imparts to each one of us varying gifts. So if God has given you the grace-gift of prophecy, activate your gift by using the proportion of faith you have to prophesy. If your grace-gift is serving, then thrive in serving others well. If you have the grace-gift of teaching, then be actively teaching and training others. If you have the grace-gift of encouragement, then use it often to encourage others. If you have the grace-gift of giving to meet the needs of others, then may you prosper in your generosity without any fanfare. If you have the gift of leadership, be passionate about your leadership. And if you have the gift of showing compassion, then flourish in your cheerful display of compassion.”<sup>82</sup>

“We have different gifts in accordance with the grace given us: whether prophecy, in proportion to faith; whether service, with service; whether teaching, with teaching; whether encouraging, with encouragement; whether giving, with generosity; whether leading, with diligence; whether showing mercy, with cheerfulness.”<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>*New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Biblica / Zondervan, 2011).

<sup>81</sup>Henry Wansbrough, translator, *The Revised New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Image, 2019).

<sup>82</sup>*The Passion Translation: The New Testament* (Savage, MN: Broadstreet Publishing Group, 2020).

<sup>83</sup>James M. Arlandson, “Gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12.6-8,” *Dr. Jim’s Essential Bible Teaching* (Riverside, CA: James M. Arlandson, 2020); online at: <<https://drjimsebt.com/2020/04/12/gifts-of-the-spirit-in-romans-126-8/>>; accessed 31 July 2023.

Summary of English Translations for Romans 12.6-8

- \*Tyndale's NT has "any man" or "let him" for each and all of the *charismata* enumerated.
- \*KJV has "let us" or "he that" for the various *charismata*.
- \*RSV has "let us" then "he who" for the *charismata*.
- \*NASV has "we" or "let each" and "he" (although not for prophesy or service).
- \*NEB is mixed with "a man's faith" and "his gift" (teaching) and "one who" and "you" for other *charismata*.
- \*REB takes out gender pronouns and uses "us" and "you" for all.
- \*Surprisingly, Phillips NT in Modern English, Lattimore's NT, and Bruce's Letters of Paul retain the male pronouns, as do Barclay's NT, Brichto's Genius of Paul: Paul's Letters, Ogden's NT in Basic English, Montgomery's NT in Modern English, The Twentieth Century NT, and The Book of Books: A Translation of the NT.
- \*Goodspeed's NT: An American Translation removes the gender pronouns, as does The Great Book: The NT in Plain English.
- \*My first thought was that ESV followed the Tyndale tradition (i.e., KJV, RSV) in how they retained the male pronouns. But this is probably not the case, since the English translations are mixed in how they use male pronouns to fill the gap (i.e., supply what Paul omits in his terse grammatical construction). Some that use male pronouns vary what is supplied in English, and some try to keep what is supplied consistent.

My English Translations for Romans 12.6-8

*More Literal Translation*

but having endowments according to the favor having been given to us various	<i>echontes de charismata kata ten charin ten dotheisan humin diaphora</i>
if proclamation according to the proportion of belief	<i>eite propheteian kata ten analogian tes pisteos</i>
or service in the service	<i>eite diakonian en te diakonia</i>
or the one teaching in the teaching	<i>eite ho didaskon en te didaskalia</i>
or the one comforting in the comforting	<i>eite ho parakalon en te paraklese</i>
the one sharing with sincerity	<i>ho metadidous en haploteti</i>
the one leading with enthusiasm	<i>ho proistamenos en spoude</i>
the one showing compassion with gladness	<i>ho eleon en hilaroteti</i>

*Freer Translations*

So we have various endowments,  
    according to God's favor given to us—  
either to proclaim according to our amount of belief,  
    or to serve by our serving,  
either to teach by our teaching,  
    or to comfort by our comforting,  
        to share with sincerity,  
        to lead with enthusiasm,  
        to show compassion with gladness.

So we have talents  
–according to God’s favor given to us–  
a variety of them

either to proclaim  
according to our amount of belief

or to serve  
by our serving

either to teach  
by our teaching

or to comfort  
by our comforting

to share  
with sincerity

to lead  
with enthusiasm

to sympathize  
with gladness

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