



1. Welcome
2. Worship w/Prayer Board
3. Announcements - Thank you Pr. Robin LOVE (Week 17 Chpt 13)
4. Handouts: Repeat Weeks 12 Handout on the Gifts

Next week: Week 19 - 1 Corinthians 14 “The Issue With Women”

This we know:

There was a letter sent previous to 1 Corinthians reply (Could it be 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1?).

At the end of 2nd Corinthians, Paul mentions wanting to pay the Corinthians a THIRD visit...when did the 2nd visit happen? (1st = Acts 18).

Another very stern letter that Paul wishes he never sent (could it be 2 Corinthians 10-13?).

If it is, we can operate by this time frame:

- i. The ‘Previous Letter’, which *may* be contained in 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1 (N.B. 6:13 runs very smoothly into 7:2).
- ii. ‘Chloe’s people’ (1 Cor. 1:11_ bring Paul at Ephesus news of divisions at Corinth.
- iii. 1 Corinthians chapters 1-4 were written in reply and Timothy is about to take it to Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17).
- iv. Three men (Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus: 1 Cor. 16:17) arrive with more news and a letter from Corinth: Paul immediately writes chapters 5 and 6 and pens chapters 7-16 in reply to this letter. Timothy then takes the whole of 1 Corinthians to Corinth.
- v. The situation gets worse and Paul makes a disastrous visit to Corinth after which things get even more painful for Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 2:1).
- vi. He then sends the ‘Severe Letter’ (2 Cor. 10-13) by the hands of Titus (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13).
- vii. Paul is so worried that he cannot wait for Titus to return; he sets out to meet him in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5-13), and then writes 2 Corinthians 1-9, the ‘Letter of Reconciliation’.

(“Message of 1 Corinthians”, David Prior, pg. 18. The Bible Speaks Today, IVP 1985)

Begins to answer the letter that was written to him (Chloe):

Chpt 7 – Marriage

Chpt 8 – Idols (your freedom causing another to stumble)

Chpt 9 – Give Up your rights, run the race

Chpt 10 – ²³You say, “I am allowed to do anything”²⁴—but not everything is good for you. You say, “I am allowed to do anything”—but not everything is beneficial. ²⁴Don’t be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.

Chpt 11 – Public Worship/Lord’s Supper

Chpt 12 – Spiritual Gifts

Chpt 13 – Love

Chpt 14 – Tongues, Prophecy, Worship

Chpt 15 – Resurrection of Christ, The Dead, The Body [Teach on Last Things?]

Chpt 16 – Final Greetings



1 Corinthians 14

[Keep this idea of Unity in mind as we finish the chapter vs 26-40. ORDERLY WORSHIP]

1 Corinthians 14

Let love be your highest goal! *But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy. ² For if you have the ability to speak in tongues,^[a] you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit,^[b] but it will all be mysterious. ³ But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. ⁴ A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church. ⁵ Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but ^(E)even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. ⁶ Now, brothers,^[a] if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some ^(G)revelation or knowledge or prophecy or ^(H)teaching? ⁷ If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? ⁸ And ^(I)if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? **For you will be ^(J)speaking into the air.** ¹⁰ There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, ¹¹ but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be ^(K)a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.¹² **So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.***

¹³ Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; ^(L)I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will ^(M)sing with my mind also. ¹⁶ Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider^[b] say ^(N)"Amen" to ^(O)your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ For you may be giving thanks well enough, **but the other person is not being built up.** ¹⁸ I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, **in church** I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

²⁰ Brothers, ^(P)do not be children in your thinking. ^(Q)Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be ^(R)mature. ²¹ ^(S)In the Law it is written, ^(T)"By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." ²² **Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign^[c] not for unbelievers but for believers.** ²³ If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, ^(U)will they not say that you are out of your minds?²⁴ **But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all,** ²⁵ ^(V)the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, ^(W)falling on his face, he will worship God and ^(X)declare that God is really among you.

Slide #2

1 Corinthians 14:1
Pursue Love.

Slide #3

²⁶ What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has ^(Y)a hymn, ^(Z)a lesson, ^(AA)a revelation, ^(AB)a tongue, or ^(AC)an interpretation. ^(AD)**Let all things be done for building up.** ²⁷ If any speak in ^(AE)a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.



Slide #4

²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others ^(AF)weigh what is said. ³⁰ If a revelation is made to another sitting there, ^(AG)let the first be silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, ³² and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of ^(AH)confusion but of peace.

Slide #5

1 Corinthians 14

Verse 1 = Pursue Love
 Verse 26 = Let all things be done for building up
 Verse 31b = so that all may learn and all be encouraged
 Verse 33 = For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

Slide #6

What is the theme of 1 Corinthians 14?

Slide #7

What is the theme of 1 Corinthians 14?

Verse 1 = Pursue Love
 Verse 26 = Let all things be done for building up
 Verse 31b = so that all may learn and all be encouraged
 Verse 33 = For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

ORDERLY WORSHIP FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Slide #8

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

As in ^(AI)all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ ^(AJ)the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but ^(AK)should be in submission, as ^(AL)the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Slide #9

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

36 Or was it from you that the word of God came?

Or are you the only ones it has reached?



Slide #10

1 Corinthians 14:37-40

³⁷ If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. ³⁸ If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

³⁹ So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.

⁴⁰ But all things should be done decently and in order.

Slide #11

1 Timothy 2:11-12

*¹¹ Let a **woman** learn **quietly** with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.*

This verse is covered in Hayford’s handout.

Same word in vs. 2 of 1 Timothy 2 = quietly. Not silently.

Note it is woman, not women.

See handout for the full dissertation on 1 Timothy.

Slide #12

2 Timothy 2:15

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Slide #13

Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics is the science of properly interpreting the various types of literature found in the Bible. This is the purpose of biblical hermeneutics—to help us to know how to **interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.**

Slide #14

Hermeneutical Steps: To interpret. To understand. To apply the Bible.

Slide #15

#1 – The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally.

#2 – A second crucial law of biblical hermeneutics is that a verse or passage must be interpreted

contextually, grammatically and historically.

Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered.* Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Slide #16

Contextually

Contextual interpretation involves always taking the surrounding context of a verse/passage into consideration when trying to determine the meaning.

What is this paragraph speaking about?

What is this chapter speaking about?

What is 1 Corinthians speaking about?

Orderly Worship

Order in the Church



Slide #17

Grammar

Grammatical interpretation is recognizing the rules of grammar and nuances of the Hebrew and Greek languages and applying those principles to the understanding of a passage.

Singular? Plural?

Literature type: Poetry? Prophecy? Law? Letter? Historical?

Are there any specific Greek punctuations?

L/G

How does this GRAMMATICAL information focus your interpretation:

Slide #18

The Greek word here for “women” (*gunaikēs*) is also **used in the singular** for “wife” in 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4 and elsewhere in the New Testament.

³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Thus the focus may be more on a husband-wife conflict than a man-woman one.

Slide #19

1 Corinthians 14:33b-36

*As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the **women** should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

*As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴ the **wife** should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. ³⁵ If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

Slide #20

There are several reasons scholars believe that verses 34 and 35 of this passage are quotes from the letter Paul is answering.

The most important clue is that the Greek symbol η (with a grave accent) is used at the beginning of verse 36 to signal to the reader that the preceding statement is quoted. Because Greek does not have what we know as quotation marks, this device is used instead.

Grady, J. L. (2013). *Ten lies the church tells women: how the bible has been misused to keep women in spiritual bondage*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House.

Slide #21



26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret;
28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Slide #22

“34 Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.”

36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.

38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

40 But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

Slide #23

Who would quote the Law?

How would this go down with those not of Jewish decent in the Corinthian church?

Where do you suppose Chloe landed on this issue?

What other questions are coming to your mind?

Actually there is another possible way to interpret this difficult passage about silencing women in 1 Corinthians 14. Many scholars of the New Testament who are familiar with the technicalities of the Greek language insist that part of this chapter is actually a quote taken from another source—a letter written to Paul by the leaders of the church in Corinth. This letter is referred to by Paul in chapter 7, when he mentions “the things about which you wrote” (v. 1). Most of the specific issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, in fact, are topics that were included in that letter.

Paul’s seemingly restrictive words about women in chapter 14 take on a different light when we consider that he was very likely quoting a letter from church leaders who were imposing on the young Corinthian congregation a harsh, anti-woman position that was rooted in their rabbinical Jewish traditions. Consider this portion of the passage below, with the quoted section set apart:



Slide #24

Historical Context

- ▶ **Understanding the City of Corinth**
- ▶ **Understanding the make up of the church of Corinth... Who is the church of Corinth?**
- ▶ **What is Paul's stance on women in other books?**
- ▶ **Historical interpretation refers to understanding the culture, background, and situation which prompted the text**

How does this HISTORICAL information focus your interpretation:

Romans 16

*I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, a servant^[a] of the church at ^(A)Cenchreae, ² that you ^(B)may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.*

³ Greet ^(C)**Prisca** and **Aquila**, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴ who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. ⁵ Greet also ^(D)the church in their house. Greet my beloved **Epaenetus**, who was ^(E)the first convert^[b] to Christ in Asia. ⁶ Greet **Mary**, who has worked hard for you. ⁷ Greet **Andronicus** and **Junia**,^[c] my kinsmen and my ^(F)fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles,^[d] and they were in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet **Ampliatius**, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet **Urbanus**, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved **Stachys**. ¹⁰ Greet **Apelles**, who is approved in Christ. Greet those ^(G)who belong to the family of **Aristobulus**. ¹¹ Greet my kinsman **Herodion**. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of **Narcissus**. ¹² Greet those workers in the Lord, **Tryphaena** and **Tryphosa**. Greet the beloved **Persis**, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³ Greet **Rufus**, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. ¹⁴ Greet **Asyncritus**, **Phlegon**, **Hermes**, **Patrobas**, **Hermas**, and the brothers^[e] who are with them. ¹⁵ Greet **Philologus**, **Julia**, **Nereus** and his sister, and **Olympas**, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶ ^(H)Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

Phoebe. In Romans 16:1 Paul writes, "Now I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a [διάκονον (*diakōnon*)] [translated as "servant" in ESV, NASB, NET and as "deacon" in NIV, NRSV] of the church at Cenchreae." There is ambiguity over the meaning of the term διάκονος (*diakonos*, "deacon, servant") here. Should this term be understood in an "official sense," or does it merely refer to "Christian service rendered spontaneously by Phoebe" (Massey, *Women*, 52)? The answer to this question is not immediately obvious. The inclusion of women like Phoebe and Junia in Rom 16 could indicate there were Christian women whose status in the church paralleled the growing status and "new roles for women" in Graeco-Roman society (Winter, *Roman Wives*, 204). Paul's goal in Rom 16 is to commend these women for their service. He does not spell out the specifics of what that service entails. Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity, some scholars have argued that Phoebe should be understood as a leader. First, the word *diakonos* is used by Paul to refer to himself, Tychicus, Timothy, and Epaphras (Massey, *Women*, 60). In these instances, *diakonos* is often translated "minister." Massey contends that it is problematic to attribute "less weight" to the term *diakonos* when it is used to describe Phoebe. Second, and also significant, Phoebe is the only one mentioned from the church at Cenchreae (Massey, *Women*, 51). Thus, while it is difficult to comment on the specifics of Phoebe's office or functions, it is at least clear that "she was an outstanding woman in Paul's estimation and that she was of great value to the church" (Massey, *Women*, 51).

Junia. In Romans 16:7, Paul greets two people, a man named Andronicus and a woman named Junia, and describes them as ἐπίσημοι (*episēmoi*) [variously translated as "outstanding" (NASB, NIV), "prominent," (NRSV), or "well-known," (ESV, NET)] ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις (*en tois apostolois*) [usually translated as either "among the apostles" (NASB, NIV, NRSV) or "to the apostles" (ESV, NET)]. The initial interpretive issue is evident in the way that *episēmoi en tois apostolois* is rendered by the major English translations. Following



the translation provided by the ESV and NET, Andronicus and Junia are “well-known to the apostles,” but they are *not* apostles themselves. Alternately, the translation option preferred by the NASB, NIV, and NRSV presents Andronicus and Junia as apostles themselves. The NASB, NIV, and NRSV translate both *episēmoi* (“outstanding, prominent”) and *ἐν* (*en*, “among” when it precedes a plural noun) according to their most natural sense. However, there is a second interpretive issue.

The names in Rom 16:7 are both in the Greek accusative case, meaning that the form *Ἰουνίαν* (*Iouinian*) could be understood as the masculine name “Junias,” perhaps a shortened form of the name Junianus (see *BDAG*, s.v. *Ἰουνιάς*, *Iouinias*). Perhaps recognizing the difficulty posed by the existence of a female “apostle,” the NASB and the RSV render the Greek name as Junias (the masculine name), rather than as Junia (the feminine name). The ESV, NET, NIV, and NRSV, however, translate the name as Junia, taking the name as referring to a female figure. Reading “Junias” is problematic, however, because the masculine name is “unattested in hellenistic Greek” (Tetlow, *Women and Ministry*, 120). On the other hand, the feminine name “Junia” is “attested as a common name in contemporary hellenistic Greek” (Tetlow, *Women and Ministry*, 120). Moreover, most commentators, including many of the early church fathers, interpreted the Greek name as Junia, the name of a woman, until as late as the 13th century (*Women and Ministry*, 120). Thus it is not unlikely to suppose that a woman named Junia was recognized by Paul as an “apostle,” though it is still unclear what that term might have entailed at the time Romans was written. Dunn contends that Junia (a woman) was “one of the earliest and leading members of the larger group of apostles” (*Romans 9–16*, 900).

Slide #26

1 Thessalonians 5:19

- ▶ “Do not quench the Spirit.” ESV, NKJV, NASB
- ▶ “Do not try to stop the work of the Holy Spirit.” NLT
- ▶ “Don’t stifle the Spirit.” HCSB

Remove ourselves from trying to be the Holy Spirit. Pursue Love. Build up the Church of Jesus Christ, His body here on earth.

Remove yourself from interpreting scripture.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION: People who misuse 1 Timothy 2:12 to deny ministry opportunities to all women at all times usually pride themselves on being so-called biblical literalists. “The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!” they say smugly. But in actuality, taking the Bible “literally” can sometimes lead to serious error.

For example, what if we take 1 Timothy 5:23 as a literal, universal command to the church? In it, Paul tells Timothy, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” Is this verse to be applied to all ministers of the gospel? Does it give ministers the freedom to drink alcoholic beverages? My Anglican friends would say yes, but many conservative evangelicals insist that the drinking of wine or any other alcoholic beverage is sinful. (Or they insist that wine, in Christ’s day, was actually grape juice—an argument that has no basis in scholarship.) They obviously do not accept a “literal” interpretation of Paul’s advice to Timothy in this case.

Actually there is another possible way to interpret this difficult passage about silencing women in 1 Corinthians 14. Many scholars of the New Testament who are familiar with the technicalities of the Greek language insist that part of this chapter is actually a quote taken from another source—a letter written to Paul by the leaders of the church in Corinth. This letter is referred to by Paul in chapter 7, when he



mentions “the things about which you wrote” (v. 1). Most of the specific issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, in fact, are topics that were included in that letter.

Paul’s seemingly restrictive words about women in chapter 14 take on a different light when we consider that he was very likely quoting a letter from church leaders who were imposing on the young Corinthian congregation a harsh, anti-woman position that was rooted in their rabbinical Jewish traditions. Consider this portion of the passage below, with the quoted section set apart:

26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.
27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret;
28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.
29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.
30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.
31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;
32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;
33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
34 LET THE WOMEN KEEP SILENT IN THE CHURCHES; FOR THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK, BUT LET THEM SUBJECT THEMSELVES, JUST AS THE LAW ALSO SAYS.
35 AND IF THEY DESIRE TO LEARN ANYTHING, LET THEM ASK THEIR OWN HUSBANDS AT HOME; FOR IT IS IMPROPER FOR A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN CHURCH.
36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?
37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.
38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.
40 But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

There are several reasons scholars believe that verses 34 and 35 of this passage are quotes from the letter Paul is answering.

The most important clue is that the Greek symbol η (with a grave accent) is used at the beginning of verse 36 to signal to the reader that the preceding statement is quoted. Because Greek does not have what we know as quotation marks, this device is used instead.

Prophecy/Tongues – Order in the Church – The Issue with Women

NOTES:

What Is Biblical Hermeneutics?

Biblical hermeneutics is perhaps summarized best by 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” **Biblical hermeneutics is the science of properly interpreting the various types of literature found in the Bible.** For example, a psalm should often be interpreted differently from a prophecy. A proverb should be understood and applied differently from a law. This is the purpose of biblical hermeneutics—to help us to know how to **interpret, understand, and apply the Bible.**

#1 – The most important law of biblical hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. Literal Bible interpretation means we understand the Bible in its normal/plain meaning. **The Bible says what it means and means what it says.** Many make the mistake of trying to read between the lines and come up with meanings for Scriptures



that are not truly in the text. Yes, of course, there are some spiritual truths behind the plain meanings of Scripture. That does not mean that every Scripture has a hidden spiritual truth, or that it should be our goal to find all such spiritual truths. Biblical hermeneutics keeps us faithful to the intended meaning of Scripture and away from allegorizing and symbolizing Bible verses and passages that should be understood literally.

#2 – A second crucial law of biblical hermeneutics is that a verse or passage must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually. Historical interpretation refers to understanding the culture, background, and situation which prompted the text. Grammatical interpretation is recognizing the rules of grammar and nuances of the Hebrew and Greek languages and applying those principles to the understanding of a passage. Contextual interpretation involves always taking the surrounding context of a verse/passage into consideration when trying to determine the meaning.

Some mistakenly view biblical hermeneutics as limiting our ability to learn new truths from God’s Word or stifling the Holy Spirit’s ability to reveal to us the meaning of God’s Word. This is not the case. **The goal of biblical hermeneutics is to point us to the correct interpretation which the Holy Spirit has already inspired into the text.** The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to protect us from improperly applying a Scripture to a particular situation. Biblical hermeneutics points us to the true meaning and application of Scripture. Hebrews 4:12 declares, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Biblical hermeneutics is keeping the sword sharp!¹

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH (14:34–38)

Women were very active in the ministries of both Jesus and the apostle Paul. They frequently followed or traveled with them, and many were involved in their financial support. **Lydia** was Paul’s first convert in Macedonia (Acts 16:14) and **Phoebe** was a helper to him and others in their ministry in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1, 2), the port city near Corinth. **Priscilla**, always mentioned with her husband Aquila, was commended by Paul as an active partner in ministry. Paul had a high regard for the value and ministry of women.

The major consideration in the context of these brief verses was the proper exercise of spiritual gifts—with decorum—in the local church. In chapter 11 Paul seemed to allow women to publicly pray and prophesy before men in the Corinthian congregation, while in this passage (14:34–38) as well as 1 Timothy 2:12 he seems to deny that same option. This apparent contradiction has been the subject of much debate.

Perhaps it would be helpful to note that the Greek word here for “women” (*gunaikes*) is also used in the singular for “wife” in 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4 and elsewhere in the New Testament. **Thus the focus may be more on a husband-wife conflict than a man-woman one.** Rather than muffling the ministry of women as a gender, this prohibition may be aimed against wives “taking authority” over their own husbands (Gr. *andras*, v. 35) or speaking disrespectfully to them in public. The fact that Paul goes on in verses 34 and 35 to talk of the need for their “submission” (Gr. *hupotassomai*) and to “ask their own husbands at home” if they want to learn something suggests to some scholars that some of the wives may have been disruptive during the worship services, asking questions aloud of their husbands and causing confusion.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This fourteenth chapter closes with an admonition, which also serves as a summary of the whole unit of thought concerning spiritual gifts: “desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (vv. 39, ²

WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP Explores the interpretive options for the New Testament texts most relevant to the discussion of the role of women in the New Testament church.

This article focuses on the exegesis and historical background of the New Testament texts related to women in positions of church leadership. The goal is to survey the complexity of the New Testament textual evidence and introduce the main exegetical options that interpreters have offered for dealing with the evidence. It does not address the contemporary debate over applying such passages to the present-day church.

The New Testament Evidence of Women in Church

¹ Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

² Hayford, J. W., & Curtis, G. (1997). *Pathways to pure power: learning the depth of love’s power, a study of first Corinthians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



Two factors contribute to disputes in scholarship regarding whether women held or could have held leadership roles in the New Testament church:

1. Some New Testament passages—such as Acts 18:24–28; Rom 16:1–7; and 1 Cor 11:2–11—appear to present women as occupying leadership roles and carrying out leadership functions in the church.
2. Other New Testament passages appear to prohibit, or at least severely restrict, the participation of women in the church, which would limit or remove their eligibility for serving in leadership roles. The texts commonly appealed to for this perspective are 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:8–15.

Reconciling these two categories of New Testament texts is not always easy, as Susan Mathew notes: “Women in Pauline church leadership have been a focus of much attention due to the incompatible statements Paul makes about the role of women in the church... There seems to be a question of inconsistency in Pauline views on women” (*Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1–16, 10*).

The New Testament Examples of Women Serving the Church

As Paul concludes his letter to the church at Rome, he includes a list of noteworthy individuals, many of whom are women. It is significant that so many of these individuals are women. In fact, Massey notes that six of the 27 people mentioned by name are women and that the list also includes two other unnamed women (*Women, 52*). However, it is also important to note that many of the women are commended specifically for their service and contribution to the Christian church. These women, in the estimation of scholars such as Dunn, “evidently assumed roles of some prominence in the Roman churches” (Dunn, *Romans 9–16, 900*). To what extent, though, should these women be understood as occupying leadership roles? In this regard, it is necessary to look at how three of these women in particular are described.

Phoebe. In Romans 16:1 Paul writes, “Now I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a [δῆκονον (*diakonos*)] [translated as “servant” in ESV, NASB, NET and as “deacon” in NIV, NRSV] of the church at Cenchreae.” There is ambiguity over the meaning of the term δῆκονος (*diakonos*, “deacon, servant”) here. Should this term be understood in an “official sense,” or does it merely refer to “Christian service rendered spontaneously by Phoebe” (Massey, *Women, 52*)? The answer to this question is not immediately obvious. The inclusion of women like Phoebe and Junia in Rom 16 could indicate there were Christian women whose status in the church paralleled the growing status and “new roles for women” in Graeco-Roman society (Winter, *Roman Wives, 204*). Paul’s goal in Rom 16 is to commend these women for their service. He does not spell out the specifics of what that service entails. Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity, some scholars have argued that Phoebe should be understood as a leader. First, the word *diakonos* is used by Paul to refer to himself, Tychicus, Timothy, and Epaphras (Massey, *Women, 60*). In these instances, *diakonos* is often translated “minister.” Massey contends that it is problematic to attribute “less weight” to the term *diakonos* when it is used to describe Phoebe. Second, and also significant, Phoebe is the only one mentioned from the church at Cenchreae (Massey, *Women, 51*). Thus, while it is difficult to comment on the specifics of Phoebe’s office or functions, it is at least clear that “she was an outstanding woman in Paul’s estimation and that she was of great value to the church” (Massey, *Women, 51*).

Junia. In Romans 16:7, Paul greets two people, a man named Andronicus and a woman named Junia, and describes them as ἐπίσημοι (*episēmoi*) [variously translated as “outstanding” (NASB, NIV), “prominent,” (NRSV), or “well-known,” (ESV, NET)] ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις (*en tois apostolois*) [usually translated as either “among the apostles” (NASB, NIV, NRSV) or “to the apostles” (ESV, NET)]. The initial interpretive issue is evident in the way that *episēmoi en tois apostolois* is rendered by the major English translations. Following the translation provided by the ESV and NET, Andronicus and Junia are “well-known to the apostles,” but they are *not* apostles themselves. Alternately, the translation option preferred by the NASB, NIV, and NRSV presents Andronicus and Junia as apostles themselves. The NASB, NIV, and NRSV translate both *episēmoi* (“outstanding, prominent”) and ἐν (*en*, “among” when it precedes a plural noun) according to their most natural sense. However, there is a second interpretive issue.

The names in Rom 16:7 are both in the Greek accusative case, meaning that the form Ἰουνίαν (*Iounian*) could be understood as the masculine name “Junias,” perhaps a shortened form of the name Junianus (see *BDAG, s.v. Ἰουνιάς, Iounias*). Perhaps recognizing the difficulty posed by the existence of a female “apostle,” the NASB and the RSV render the Greek name as Junias (the masculine name), rather than as Junia (the feminine name). The ESV, NET, NIV, and NRSV, however, translate the name as Junia, taking the name as referring to a female figure. Reading “Junias” is problematic, however, because the masculine name is “unattested in hellenistic Greek” (Tetlow, *Women and Ministry, 120*). On the other hand, the feminine name “Junia” is “attested as a common name in contemporary hellenistic Greek” (Tetlow,



Women and Ministry, 120). Moreover, most commentators, including many of the early church fathers, interpreted the Greek name as Junia, the name of a woman, until as late as the 13th century (*Women and Ministry*, 120). Thus it is not unlikely to suppose that a woman named Junia was recognized by Paul as an “apostle,” though it is still unclear what that term might have entailed at the time Romans was written. Dunn contends that Junia (a woman) was “one of the earliest and leading members of the larger group of apostles” (*Romans 9–16*, 900).

Prisca or Priscilla. Paul also mentions a woman named Prisca (or Priscilla) in Rom 16:3. (Priscilla is a diminutive form of the name Prisca.) Paul refers to both her and her husband, Aquila, as συνεργός (*synergos*, “coworker, fellow worker”). Prisca, and her work on behalf of the gospel, is mentioned by both Paul (compare 1 Cor 16:19) and by the author of Luke-Acts (compare Acts 18). The story involving Prisca in Acts 18 is particularly interesting. Acts 18:24–28 recounts the story in which Apollos, a native of Alexandria, arrives in Corinth and begins preaching in the synagogue. After Apollos addresses the synagogue, Prisca and Aquila approach him and they *both* “explained the way of God to him more accurately” (Acts 18:26 NRSV). The Greek word ἐκτίθημι (*ektithēmi*), translated as “explained,” is in its plural form. **Thus in Acts 18:24–28, one of Paul’s female “coworkers” is instructing a man (Apollos) in the “way of God.”** Moreover, Prisca does not appear to be a complete anomaly. In Philippians 4:2–3, Paul writes that two women, Euodia and Syntyche, “labored side by side with me in the gospel” (RSV). In Romans 16, Paul also names Mary (16:6), Tryphaena, and Persis (16:12), “all of whom he called ‘hard workers’ in the Lord” (Tetlow, *Women and Ministry*, 126).

1 Corinthians 11:2–11. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:2–11, Paul apparently did not explicitly disapprove of women praying and prophesying in public in the context of the church gathering (as long as they wore a head covering; Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969). This passage in 1 Corinthians also regulates how women should dress *when* they prophesy in church, but it does not prohibit them from prophesying. Moreover, Massey suggests that we should not distinguish too sharply between prophesying and teaching/preaching. As Massey contends, “Women who possessed prophetic gifts played an active role in inspired teaching and preaching, both in assemblies and in public evangelism” (*Women*, 84).

The New Testament Restrictions on Women in Church

The primary New Testament texts that seem to severely restrict the participation of women in public Christian worship or ministry are 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12. Due to the tension between these stark statements and the positive attitude toward women in other passages such as Rom 16, these texts have become a focal point for detailed exegesis. The exegetical issues are evident from an initial, surface-level reading of these two passages:

“As in all the churches of the saints, the women must be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but they must be in submission, just as the law also says. But if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor 14:33b–35 LEB).

“A woman must learn in quietness with all submission. But I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (1 Tim 2:11–12 LEB).

A straightforward reading of these passages suggests that women should remain silent in church, that their disposition should be characterized by submission, and that they should not occupy a place of authority over a man.

Summary of Interpretive Difficulties

The New Testament evidence is ambiguous, especially over the question of whether the ministry work of the women mentioned in Rom 16 (and elsewhere) implies they served in any capacity that could be construed as a formal leadership role. Paul does not flesh out exactly what he means by the term *synergos* (“coworker”). Paul may refer to certain women as “hard workers,” but he does not dwell on the specifics of what their “hard work” entailed. There is also ambiguity concerning whether Junia should be viewed as one of the apostles or simply as one who was well-known *to* the apostles. It is also not entirely clear if words like “deacon” (*diakonos*), “coworker” (*synergos*), or “apostle” (*apostolos*) should even be viewed as technical (or quasi-technical) terms referring to official leadership positions at the time that Romans was written. Nevertheless, the list in Rom 16 has led Dunn to conclude: “So far as this list is concerned, at any rate, Paul attributes leading roles to more women than men in the churches addressed” (Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, 900). It is at least reasonable to conclude, with Sampley, that women “were significant workers in the churches and in the gospel” (Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969). However, it is harder to determine the extent of their specific roles and the tasks they performed in the early church. At least one example of a woman engaging in evangelism is found in Acts 18:24–28, when Prisca (and her husband Aquila) “explained” to Apollos the ways of God (Massey, *Women*, 50; Tetlow, *Women and Ministry*, 126).

However, the explicit statements restricting the participation of women present a contradiction (or at least a strong tension) between the attitude toward women reflected in Rom 16 and the attitude reflected in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12. The letter to the Roman church ends commending several women who are apparently serving in



some sort of leadership position in the church. This list could be supplemented with texts such as Phil 4:2–3; 1 Cor 11:5; and the examples that Luke-Acts provides of female prophets (Anna at the temple in Luke and the daughters of Philip in Acts). Yet 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy demand silence and submission from women in church and restrict them from occupying a place of authority over a man. How do biblical scholars resolve or at least address this tension? What are the interpretative options?

Proposed Solutions for the New Testament Evidence

The main exegetical question concerning the role of women in the churches of the New Testament period is how passages like 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 should be reconciled with passages such as Acts 18; Rom 16:1–7; Phil 4:2–3; and 1 Cor 11:2–11.

One way to deal with an apparent tension in Scripture is positing that the passage in question that appears to reflect a different teaching may come from a different author. For this reason, some solutions hinge on conclusions about the authorship and date of these particular passages. While the authorship of 1 Corinthians is not disputed, the authorship of 1 Timothy is a matter of intense debate (see Mangum, *1 Timothy*, “Composition”). First Corinthians is recognized as one of the so-called undisputed Pauline letters (along with Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon), but some scholars, such as Conzelman (*1 Corinthians*, 246), view 1 Cor 14:34–35 (and sometimes v. 36) as a late, non-Pauline interpolation (see Brown, *1 Corinthians*, “Did Paul Write 1 Corinthians 14:34–35?”). Some of the exegetical possibilities discussed below depend on both (1) a late date for and non-Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and (2) 1 Cor 14:34–35 being a late, non-Pauline interpolation. Others assume or argue in favor of the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy and/or the originality of 1 Cor 14:34–35.

The following four positions reflect the most common conclusions on the New Testament evidence for the role of women in the early church:

1. Women are always and without qualification prohibited from leadership roles.
2. Women were eventually prohibited from leadership roles, but this was a later development.
3. Women were generally prohibited from leadership roles, but there were some notable exceptions.
4. Women were not categorically prohibited from leadership roles, and the prohibitions in the New Testament are directed at specific situations that should not be taken as universal restrictions.

Position 1: The New Testament Reflects an Unqualified Prohibition of Female Leadership

This view claims that the New Testament *always* prohibits women from assuming roles of leadership, or at least roles that involve public speaking and teaching. This position is considered extreme by even many traditional, conservative-leaning biblical scholars. Reading texts such as 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 as unqualified prohibitions makes it difficult to explain the presence and role of women such as Phoebe, Prisca, Euodia, Junia, and others. How should the terms *synergos* (“coworker”) and *diakonos* (“deacon”) be understood when applied to such women? In explaining what he considers to be two dubious extreme ends of the exegetical spectrum, Towner contends, “These verses [1 Tim 2:11–15] have been overused in the modern church by some who have sought to demonstrate a return by one of Paul’s students to a patriarchal system inimical to the Pauline gospel, and by others to prove the unsuitability of women for the role of teaching in the church” (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 190). While Towner may too quickly dismiss the first of these two exegetical options, he rightly notes that texts such as 1 Tim 2:11–12 (and 1 Cor 14:34–35) have been “overused” by people attempting to “prove the unsuitability of women” for holding positions of church leadership. Sensitive readings of 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 must attend to the literary, historical, and social contexts of these passages.

Position 2: Prohibitions against Female Leadership Are a Later Development

This position argues that the church only began to ban women from leadership at a later point in its history. The earliest church did not prevent women from holding various leadership positions in the congregation. This position, as alluded to in the preceding section, depends on two key factors. First, it is argued that 1 Timothy (as well as 2 Timothy and Titus—the so-called “Pastoral Letters”) are later, non-Pauline texts. First Timothy was written by a disciple of Paul at some point after Paul’s death and reflects a more hierarchical, less egalitarian system of church governance. Second, 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is a late, non-Pauline addition to the letter of 1 Corinthians. While Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, a later compiler of his letters added 14:34–35 (and possibly 14:36) to the text.

This position merits consideration for a number of reasons. First, although Loader disagrees with this view, he summarizes one of its main arguments well: “The removal of the passage [in 1 Corinthians], or at least, 14:33b–36, would leave a smooth and coherent flow from 14:33a to 14:37” (Loader, *New Testament on Sexuality*, 383–84). The flow of the passage is not interrupted by the removal of 14:33b–36. This observation is certainly not decisive in and of itself, but, when combined with a number of other factors, it contributes to the overall force of the argument. Second, as Sampley contends, the content of 1 Cor 14:34–35 contradicts statements that Paul makes about women elsewhere, including statements that he makes about women in 1 Corinthians itself (Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969). As Bassler



asks rhetorically: “How can women like Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2–3), Prisca (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19), Mary (Rom. 16:6), Junia (Rom. 16:7) and Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12) function as co-workers in the churches if they cannot speak in those churches? How can Phoebe fulfill her role of deacon (Rom. 16:1–2) if she cannot speak out in the assembly?” (Bassler, “1 Corinthians,” 327).

In the same regard, it seems problematic that Paul would ban women from speaking publicly after he mentioned (without censure) the public prayer and prophesying of women only a few chapters earlier in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul assumes that it is “quite proper” for women to prophesy as long as it is properly regulated (Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969). First Corinthians 14:34–35, however, requires them to remain silent in church.

Finally, some who embrace this perspective note that 1 Cor 14:34–35 is the only passage in Paul’s undisputed letters (i.e., Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) that “suggests any limitation on the roles or functions of women in the Pauline churches” (Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969; emphasis original). If 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 were to be removed from 1 Corinthians, nothing in the undisputed Pauline corpus would suggest that Paul prohibited women from engaging in public ministry and occupying leadership positions. In fact, as Rom 16:1–7 demonstrates, Paul seems to otherwise embrace female leadership in the church.

Thus, according to this position, women were free to hold leadership positions and speak publicly in the earliest Pauline churches. However, 1 Timothy (and the other “Pastoral Letters”) reflects a very different situation in the late first century when the responsibilities of teaching and preaching were “being absorbed by the office of the presbyter” (Tetlow, *Women*, 127). Women were excluded from the office of the presbyter (as well as the office of bishop) and therefore were also excluded from teaching and preaching in the church (Tetlow, *Women*, 127). According to this view, 1 Cor 14:34–35 was added to the text in order to bring the letter into “conformity” with the perspective espoused in the Pastoral Letters (Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, 969). It is important to note here that this treatment of the issue of female leadership in the New Testament posits a genuine contradiction between the view presented in Rom 16 (and the rest of the undisputed Pauline letters with the exception of 1 Cor 14:34–35) and the view presented in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12.

Position 3: Female Leadership Was Generally Prohibited, with Some Exceptions

This view holds that, generally speaking, the church’s position was always to ban women from leadership positions, but the church recognized that certain women, specially inspired by the Holy Spirit, were qualified to lead. This position does not require that 1 Cor 14:34–35 be read as a later, non-Pauline interpolation and also allows the conclusion that, as a general rule, Paul (and other early Christians) restricted and even banned women from leadership. This, it is argued, is consistent with the many passages in the New Testament that seem to subordinate women to men. Some of these passages have been quoted above, but additional support for this view is also found in Col 3:18; 1 Cor 11:2–10; and Titus 2:4–9.

According to this position, the New Testament worldview is clear in its hierarchical orientation. As Loader argues, this hierarchical perspective is rooted in the account of creation in Gen 1–3 and is the perspective that Paul (and other early Christians) share in common with the wider Jewish milieu of this period (Loader, *New Testament on Sexuality*, 375, 388). As Loader notes concerning the general disposition of Pauline churches, “As in Jewish communities, normally women would be expected to be silent, so this was to apply in the churches, which, at least in the beginning, understood themselves as Jewish communities anyway” (Loader, *New Testament on Sexuality*, 388). However, Loader acknowledges that there are exceptions to this principle since Paul clearly names women who held leadership positions in the early church. Loader explains, “As in Jewish life there were exceptions where women were inspired to leadership, so in Christian communities there were inspired women exercising ministry, including that of prophecy.... Paul did not conclude that all women were so inspired, but apparently had no difficulties in the fact that some were, provided that they dressed appropriately” (Loader, *New Testament on Sexuality*, 388). Paul conceded that at times the Holy Spirit would transcend this general prohibition. However, even in such cases, Paul maintained the hierarchical order.

Position 4: Prohibitions against Female Leadership Are Contextual

This position asserts that the church never categorically banned women from leadership. The prohibitions against female leadership in the Bible were specific to each church’s situation. This view does not necessitate reading 1 Cor 14:34–35 or 1 Tim 2:11–12 as late and/or non-Pauline. Proponents of this position do not see a genuine contradiction between passages such as Rom 16:1–7; 1 Cor 11:2–11 and 1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–12. While an initial, surface reading of the texts may suggest a contradiction, an analysis of the literary and sociohistorical context of each passage demonstrates that we are dealing with *apparent* contradictions, not genuine contradictions. In order to do justice to this perspective, it is necessary to highlight a few of the exegetical and contextual strategies used to resolve and account for the *apparent* contradictions.



1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Scholars such as Thiselton note that Paul’s letters address particular situations in particular places at a particular historical moment. Modern exegetes, however, only have access to Paul’s words in his letters. Paul uses words and phrases in the context of specific situations. The situation that Paul is addressing (at any given time) was not necessarily elaborated upon or described at length because the original recipients of the letters would not have needed extensive elaboration or description of the situation. Thus, when Paul writes, “[Women] are not allowed to speak [λαλεῖν (*lalein*)]” (1 Cor 14:34), he assumes that his reader understands the point that he is making based on the “*context of the situation*” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1147; emphasis original). Translation, then, is “immensely difficult” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1147). What seems like an unqualified prohibition (i.e. “[Women] are not allowed to speak [λαλεῖν, *lalein*]”) is a more complex statement than the mere words suggest. Therefore, the statement (“[Women] are not allowed to speak [λαλεῖν, *lalein*]”) must be considered in light of the situation that Paul is actually addressing, as best as that context can be reconstructed.

When 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is read in light of this larger context, it becomes evident that 1 Cor 11:2–11 addresses an entirely different situation from 1 Cor 14:34–35. Unlike those who see a genuine contradiction between 1 Cor 11:2–11 and 1 Cor 14:34–35, scholars such as Thiselton, Witherington, and Garland understand 1 Cor 11:2–11 and 1 Cor 14:34–35 as fundamentally compatible. However, this compatibility can only be recognized once the context of each passage is illuminated. As Thiselton argues, 1 Cor 11:2–11 deals with the issue of a “woman’s praying (προσευχομένη, *proseuchomenē*) or using prophetic speech (ἡ προφητεουσα, *ē prophēteuoussa*)” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1155). In the context of this specific issue, Paul declares that is “quite permissible” for a woman “to speak” (λαλεῖν, *lalein*), namely, to pray or prophesy in public (so long as her head is covered; *1 Corinthians*, 665). However, when Paul says that it is *not* permissible for a woman “to speak” (λαλεῖν, *lalein*) in 1 Cor 14:34, he has a different type of speech in mind altogether.

When 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is analyzed in light of its surrounding context, it becomes clear that Paul is addressing the issue of “weighing prophecy” (Witherington, *Earliest Churches*, 102). What Witherington means by “weighing prophecy” is “the *activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public*” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1158; emphasis original). In 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, Paul is not banning the public speech of woman as such (the public, prophetic utterances of women); rather, he is dealing with the very specific issue of questioning prophetic utterances. Therefore Paul is not giving an unqualified, general prohibition against the public speech of women (compare 1 Cor 11:5) but is attempting to prevent speech that is potentially disruptive (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1156). Moreover, according to this perspective, Paul is trying to prevent wives from “cross-examining” their husband’s prophetic speech in public (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1156). Such cross-examination, if it is to be done, should be done at home (1 Cor 14:35).

1 Timothy 2:11–12. In their discussion of 1 Tim 2:11–12 both Towner and Winter appeal to the historical setting of this document in order to contextually explain the prohibition against female teachers. According to these scholars, 1 Tim 2:11–12 should be read in light of cultural trends concerning women in the Roman world. As Towner observes, “Recent assessments of epigraphic and literary evidence have documented the emergence of a ‘new Roman woman’ ” (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 190). The “new Roman woman” is contrasted with the “traditional Greek woman” (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 190). According to their analysis, the “new Roman woman” enjoys a significant level of freedom and participates in public life far more than the traditional Greek woman (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 190). This new level of freedom and participation in the public sphere for women in the Roman world influenced the role and status of women in the Christian communities as well (Winter, *Roman Wives*, 204). As Winter contends, “Limited though the evidence may be for Christian women, the filtering down of new roles for women enabled Christian women to contribute to a wider sphere of service” (Winter, *Roman Wives*, 204). Thus, as a result of “cultural shifts” in the Roman world in the first century, some wealthy Christian women were able to gain a noticeable amount of influence in the churches (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 191n2). Wealthy Roman (and, according to Towner and Winter, Christian) women were not necessarily relegated to the private sphere and played an increasingly important role in public life (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 191n2; Winter, *Roman Wives*, 204). First Timothy 2:11–12 must be read against the backdrop of these “cultural shifts.”

These scholars argue that, like 1 Cor 14:34–35, 1 Tim 2:11–12 addresses a particular historical situation in the life of a specific church, so the passage should not be understood as an unqualified prohibition against female leadership in general. In order to adequately understand 1 Timothy’s prohibition, then, two issues associated with these “cultural shifts” for women, which were plaguing the church at Ephesus, must be recognized. First, Towner claims that the author of 1 Timothy was concerned with the “outer adornment and apparel and arrogant demeanor” of certain women in the congregation (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 200). The adornment of these women, Towner argues, was associated with the transgression of sexual mores and the rejection of traditional family roles and structures such as



childbearing (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 220). Second, Towner posits a situation in which certain wealthy women were embracing and promulgating a “heretical teaching” (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 200). Thus, the prohibition of female teachers, according to Towner, is not a general prohibition, but is rather specific to this historical and social situation. Therefore, 1 Timothy 2:11–12 does not contradict Rom 16:1–7 or Acts 18:24–28 and does not represent a blanket statement made by Paul (Towner argues for Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy) applying to all women, everywhere. Instead, the specific situation, namely certain wealthy women transgressing traditional family roles and espousing false teaching, “led Paul to put a stop to the teaching activities of Christian women” (Towner, *Timothy and Titus*, 220). Witherington comes to a similar conclusion regarding the sociohistorical context of 1 Timothy. According to Witherington, 1 Tim 2:11–12 contains no “universal prohibition of women speaking in church” (Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Early Christianity*, 196). Witherington also detects evidence that the author of 1 Timothy was responding to a situation of “women being involved in false teaching and being led astray into apostasy” (Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Early Christianity*, 196). Such a view takes seriously the contextual nature of the New Testament letters.

Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, the evidence for (and against) female leadership in the New Testament church is complex and often ambiguous. Coming to a conclusion regarding the scope, specifics, and extent of the roles and functions available to women in the first-century church is extremely difficult and requires the careful exegesis of many complicated texts. Regardless of one’s position, it is important not to read texts such as 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12 in isolation and without careful attention to vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and literary, social, and historical context. The list of women in Roman 16 alone should be enough to caution readers of the New Testament against overly simplistic interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:11–12.

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ROBERT JONES³

6. Love for the Other and Ordered Differentiation in Evaluating “Prophecy” and “Tongues” (14:1–40)

The key to an accurate understanding of Paul’s arguments and declarations in this chapter depends on a full appreciation of two factors initially. (a) vv. 1–25 relate integrally to what Paul has said about *love* in 13:1–13; (b) vv. 26–40 reflect the concerns about *differentiation and ordering* which Paul has expounded in 12:4–31. The first section concerns respect for the needs of *others*; the second half explicates the differentiation and order which characterize the activity of God himself as one God, one Lord, and *one Spirit* (12:4–6).

(a) Each stage of argument in 14:1–25 focuses on the building up of the other. This not only reflects back on 13:1–13 but also on concern for “the brother or sister for whom Christ died” in 8:7–13, as Gardner has rightly stressed. Love of this kind tests what Gardner terms “The Gifts of God and the Authentication of a Christian.” Hence the stages of argument turn on: (i) vv. 1–5: the use of “spiritual gifts,” or perhaps in a worship context “the gifts of authentic utterance inspired by the Spirit” (τὰ πνευματικά, 14:1) as given for *the service of others*, not for self-affirmation (ἐαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ ... ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ, v. 4a and v. 4b). (ii) vv. 6–12: the profitless nature of *unintelligible noises* as far as a fellow Christian (“the other”) is concerned. Far from a coherent building up, a disintegrating barrier which makes one appear

³ Jones, R. (2016). [Women in Church Leadership](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



as an outsider or foreigner (βάρβαρος, v. 11) is set up, which jars like a discordant note (vv. 7, 8). (iii) vv. 13–19: Intelligible communication remains essential in the context of the worshiping community, which necessarily entails the use of the mind (τῷ πνεύματι ... καὶ τῷ νοῖ, v. 15). It is not a sign of love to exclude those who cannot share enough to say “Amen” to the utterance (v. 16), even if Paul himself knows what it is to allow his inner self to well up “in tongues” in private devotions (v. 18).

(iv) A fourth stage of argument, vv. 20–25, is sometimes placed with (b) vv. 25–40 in this chapter, but most interpreters, rightly, understand it as a corroboration and reinforcement of vv. 1–19. Paul takes up the emphasis on using the mind as a sign not only of concern for others in love (with 8:7–13 and 13:1–13), but also of personal maturity. This neatly places some at Corinth in a dilemma. If D. B. Martin is correct in perceiving “tongues” at least in part as a supposed “status indicator” at Corinth, how does this square with their simultaneous insistence that the rhetoric of polished speech (λόγος, or even speech καθ’ ὑπεροχὴν λόγου, 2:1) could or should be a sign of mature, sophisticated, “professional” leaders? Paul urges that they replace naïve passivity of the mind (μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε, v. 20a) with energetic thought on behalf of others. To be sure, this is not a use of the mind for competitive “cleverness” or “one upmanship” (τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, v. 20b), but for mature adulthood (τέλειοι γίνεσθε, v. 20c) which appreciates how self-indulgent uses of unintelligible noises make even believers (as well as any unbeliever present) feel as if they did not belong, or as if they stood under judgment. For “unintelligible speech” or “strange tongues” in the scriptures represent a sign of judgment upon Israel in exile for their unbelief (vv. 21 [citing Isa 28:11–12, LXX] and 22). Believers will experience a misplaced sense of “being foreign” when they should feel that they belong, while unbelievers will witness what appears to them to be bizarre religious phenomena, not a clear declaration of the gospel (vv. 23–24). They will never become “converted” that way (v. 25)!

(b) Paul summarizes the position about worship by insisting that the congregation cannot simply leave everything to supposed “inspiration” or to “spontaneity” alone. This leads simply to anarchy, whereas it is the nature of God, and of the Spirit of God, to bring “order” or “peace” out of chaos or “disorder” (ἀκαταστασίας, v. 33; κατὰ τάξιν, v. 40; cf. Gen 1:2, 3, 7, 14, 18, 26; see below; and 1 Cor 12:4–6; see above). *If worship is “ordered,” this allows for a more caring concern for others, even if, as in 8:7–11:1, self-constraint is the corollary of love for the vulnerable.* Further, if it is claimed that this worship is “spiritual,” i.e., *characterized by the presence, agency, and action of the Holy Spirit of God, God himself exercises his governance precisely through rational or coherent processes of timing and differentiation.*

Contrary to widespread popular uses of this chapter to assume an intimate connection between being inspired by the Holy Spirit and “spontaneity,” the chapter as a whole places the issue of concern for the other and communicative intelligibility at the center of the discussion, and perceives the Spirit of God as “allocating” both “allotted time” and “differentiation” (terms which are prominent in Karl Barth) as that which reflects God’s own mode of self-giving in freedom conditioned by covenantal concern for the other. Thus “order” is not, as most or many modern writers claim, a symptom of authoritarianism (whether or not such sections as vv. 33b–38 are deemed to be non-Pauline interpolations) but arise because, if the Spirit is genuinely inspiring the worship, patterns of worship will be characterized by the nature of God as one gives himself to the other in modes governed by temporal purposiveness, not by anarchy or by activities which minister largely to self-esteem.

This at once coheres with a reasonable (but not yet decisive) consensus reflected by Hill, Müller, Gillespie, and others that, in Hill’s words, “The proclamation of the prophet is *pastoral preaching* which, by its very nature, offers guidance and instruction to the community” (his italics). Gillespie traces Paul’s explicit argument in this chapter that to prophesy is (i) *to build up* (οἰκοδομέω, 14:4, 5, 17; also cf. 8:1, 10, and 10:23, of love for the other); (ii) *to exhort, plead with, or comfort* (παρακαλέω, 14:31, noun παράκλησις, 14:3; cf. 4:13, 16; 16:12, 15); and (iii) *to encourage or to console* (παραμυθέομαι, here as a noun παραμυθία, linked with παράκλησις, 14:3; cf. 1 Thess 2:11). Most writers agree that “building up” or “edification” constitutes the key theme, which is also linked with Christian prophecy. Here Vielhauer offers a perceptive and important comment in his special study of this subject. He argues that “building up” has negative and positive implications or nuances for Paul. On one side, it excludes a self-sufficient, indulgent, religious individualism and egoism which can lead to the disintegration of the community; on the other side, it entails helping the other person since thereby the whole community is built up as a cohesive and mutually supportive whole.⁵ Hence the verb is closely associated with gospel preaching itself, whether to unbelievers or to believers, placing them under the judgment, grace, promise, and direction of the cross anew.

On this basis the significance of the key contrast between prophecy and tongues in this chapter becomes transparent. Paul does not disparage the *private* use of tongues (14:5a). Indeed, he values such a gift for himself personally (14:18). However, in *public*, especially in corporate worship, five intelligible words carefully thought through to help others are worth more than tongues unlimited (14:19). So strong is Paul’s emphasis on the use of mental reflection and control that it is inconceivable (in our view) that most writers are correct to assume that prophecy is necessarily or uniformly



“spontaneous.” True, spontaneous prophecy may occur; but to insist that it is always or necessarily so is to fail to do justice to the text before us. Even Dunn repeats this popular assumption on the basis of 14:30: “It is a spontaneous utterance ... to be delivered as it is given (14:30).” However, to assume that because this *sometimes* may have occurred it constitutes a *necessary or even usual* characteristic of prophecy is a leap beyond logic and beyond exegesis. We argue this point in greater detail below (as we have already done under 12:8–10).

To define the nature of “tongues” with any degree of certainty is no more straightforward (see the detailed notes above under 12:10, 28, and 30 for full and extended discussion). In an illuminatingly frank and bold comment (since he openly states that he comes from a Pentecostalist tradition) Gordon Fee concedes in a recent work that not only is it unlikely that tongues constitute an earthly language, but more especially that whether today’s “charismatic phenomena” replicate what is described in these chapters is also “most probably irrelevant. There is simply no way to know.” It is widely agreed, however, that ch. 14 sets prophecy and tongues in contrast throughout “in antithetical parallelism,” e.g., “One who speaks in a tongue speaks ... to God (v. 2); one who prophesies speaks to people (v. 3); one who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but one who prophesies edifies the church (v. 4)...” The overall frame which we introduced at the beginning of our introduction to 14:1–40, however, must not drop from view. Sections (a) and (b) relate respectively to issues about *love for the other* (8:7–13; 13:1–13) and to the way in which the God of love who gives his Holy Spirit acts through *differentiation, temporality, and order* (cf. 12:4–31).

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a. Intelligible Utterance to Build the Whole Community (14:1–25)

(1) Pursue love, but be eager for gifts of the Spirit [for utterance], most particularly that you may prophesy. (2) For the person who speaks in a tongue does not communicate to human beings but speaks to God. For no one understands anything, but he or she utters mysteries in the Spirit. (3) However, when a person prophesies to other people, the speaker thereby builds them up, encourages them, and brings them comfort. (4) For the person



who speaks in a tongue “builds up” himself or herself; whereas the one who prophesies builds up the church community. (5) I take pleasure in all of you speaking in tongues, but I would rather that you prophesy. The person who prophesies is of greater importance than the one who speaks in tongues unless that person articulates the utterance intelligibly for the church community to receive this “building up.”

(6) Well now, dear fellow believers, suppose that when I come to you I come speaking in tongues. What shall I profit you unless I speak to you in terms either of a disclosure or of knowledge, or of prophetic speech or of teaching? (7) Similarly, with reference to an inanimate musical instrument: in the case of either a flute or a lyre, unless these yield distinct differences of pitch, how can what is produced by wind or by string be recognized? (8) Further, if the trumpet produces a sound which is ambivalent as a signal, who will prepare for battle? (9) Even so, if you yourselves do not produce through speaking in a tongue a message which is readily intelligible, how shall what is being said be comprehended? For you are speaking into empty air. (10, 11) It may be that there are varieties of languages within the world, and none fails to use sound. Yet it follows that if I do not know the force of the sound, I shall be an alien to the speaker, and the speaker will remain an alien to my eyes. (12) You yourselves are in this situation. Since you have a burning concern about the powers of the Spirit, direct this eagerness toward the building up of the church community, to excel in this.

(13, 14) Hence the person who prays in a tongue should pray that he or she may put what they have uttered into words. For if I pray in a tongue, my innermost spiritual being prays, but my mind produces no fruit from it. (15) So what follows? I will pray with my deepest spiritual being, but I shall also pray with my mind. I will sing praise with the depths of my being, but I will also sing praise with my mind. (16) Otherwise, if you bless God from the depths of your being only [or “in the Spirit”], how can the uninitiated person speak his or her “Amen” to your thanksgiving since he or she does not know what you are saying? (17) For you, on your side, may be giving thanks well enough; but the other, on his or her side, is not being built up. (18, 19) Thank God, I am more gifted in tongues than any of you, but all the same in the assembled congregation I would rather speak five intelligible words to communicate instruction to others than thousands upon thousands in a tongue.

(20) My fellow Christians, do not continue to be like little children born yesterday in how you think. On the contrary, be a child in matters of wickedness, but in matters of the mind be mature adults. (21) In the Law it is written: “By people of a foreign tongue and by alien lips shall I address this people, and not even then will they hear me, says the Lord.” (22) So then, tongues serve not as a sign for believers, but as a sign for judgment for unbelievers; while prophetic speech signals not people who do not believe but those who come to faith. (23) If, therefore, the whole church community comes together and everyone is speaking in tongues, and people who are uninitiated or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (24, 25) Suppose, by contrast, that everyone is using prophetic speech, and someone who is an unbeliever or an uninitiated person enters and undergoes conviction and judgment by all that is said. The secret depths of their very being become exposed, and thus they fall to their knees in obeisance and worship God, confessing, “God is indeed really among you.”

i. Self-Affirmation or Use of Gifts of Utterance for Others? (14:1–5)

1 The verb διώκετε means **pursue** here (NRSV) as in 1 Thess 5:15, as in the case of a hunter chasing after prey. The present tense, Allo argues, “Signifies the continuing of an action already begun.” REB, NJB, *make love your aim*, is less forceful and dynamic, while KJV/AV, NIV, *follow* or *follow after*, conveys less urgency. Similarly, ζηλοῦτε denotes cultivating *a stance of eagerness*. **Be eager for** permits a corporate concern for the well-being of *the community*, i.e., that these gifts may operate in the church, which is Paul’s horizon of concern. By contrast, NIV’s *eagerly desire* suggests a more individualist concern which Paul does not encourage, while NRSV’s *strive for* positively conflicts with Paul’s insistence that these are “gifts of grace” (as in 12:31, χαρίσματα) which *God chooses to give* or to withhold in his sovereign freedom to “order” the church as he wills (12:18). To read *strive for* can be pastorally misleading and theologically doubtful. Collins reserves *strive for* for διώκετε in v. 1a, which he views as the last clause of the previous unit (cf. v. 13), and *avidly desire* for ζηλοῦτε. But *striving for love* suggests an oxymoron not entirely consonant with the tone of 13:4–7. Smit’s rhetorical analysis retains v. 1a as part of the *argumentio* of ch. 14, of which vv. 1–5 constitute the *partitio*: zeal for love in relation to the gifts.

Competing translations of the particle δέ offer greater difficulty, since *context* has to determine whether it means *and* or *but*. Similarly, τὰ πνευματικά normally means *spiritual gifts* (i.e., gifts from, or characterized by, the Holy Spirit) but in this specific context it may well mean more specifically *spiritual utterances* or **gifts of the Spirit for utterance** within contexts of worship. Thus Gillespie plausibly observes, “The ‘greater gifts’ are now specified as ‘spiritual utterances’ (*ta pneumatika*), particularly prophesying.” This meaning seems to be required by the context, but the use of brackets may be necessary to indicate that this translation assumes a greater degree of interpretative judgment than the Greek alone in strict terms explicitly bears. However Conzelmann confirms this meaning: “The tenor is now



different: no longer a critique of ... ‘spiritual gifts’ in general.... Now it is only speaking with tongues and prophecy that are discussed as spiritual gifts.”¹⁴

Some commentators regard the force of δέ as resumptive. Hays observes: *and be eager for ...*” picks up the same verb (*zēloute*) used in 12:31a, now specifying more closely the proper aim of such desire.” However, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact, followed by modern writers from Heinrici onward, reject the resumptive *and* in favor of the adversative **but**, and are followed by many modern commentators. The interpretation depends on whether we presuppose that both the readers and Paul himself were aware of the potentially competitive and individualistic nature of concerns to display gifts of utterance, especially tongues. If so, Paul is likely to have felt the need to explain: **pursue love, but be eager for gifts of the Spirit for utterance**, because Paul is about to show that these gifts of utterance can *serve others in love*, and *no longer* remain a means of self-affirmation and cause of disruption.

The last clause of v. 1 begins this demonstration or argument. If the readers will pay particular attention (μᾶλλον) to the activity of **prophesying** (in contrast to speaking with tongues, v. 2), this will serve the good of others, since Paul will show that the aim and effect of authentic prophesying is (i) to build up the whole community (vv. 4, 5, 17; cf. 8:1, 10; 10:23); (ii) to exhort or to comfort (vv. 3 and 31; cf. 4:13, 16; 16:12, 15); and (iii) to console or to encourage (v. 3; cf. 1 Thess 2:11; see introduction to 14:1–40, above). We noted above Vielhauer’s contrast between *building up* the community into a cohesive, dynamic whole, and the self-sufficient indulgent religiosity which provides mainly individual satisfaction. In these verses Paul insists that **to prophesy** is to perform intelligible, articulate, communicative acts of speech which have a positive effect on others and, in turn, on the whole community.

We shall argue (with Hill, Müller, and Gillespie, as these verses proceed) that here prophecy amounts to healthy preaching, proclamation, or teaching which is pastorally applied for the appropriation of gospel truth and gospel promise, in their own context of situation, to help others. Indeed, Sandnes argues that Paul understands his own commission to preach the apostolic gospel to the Gentiles in prophetic terms. Gal 1:15–16, e.g., which is widely agreed to reflect Jeremiah’s call “from before birth” to prophetic witness (cf. Jer 1:5), stands in continuity with 1 Cor 2:1–16, 2 Cor 4:6, Rom 1:1–5, and Rom 10:14–18 in pointing to the prophetic character of Paul’s own apostolic commission to proclaim the gospel of Christ in intelligible communicative action. Sandnes points out that in postcanonical Judaism the term *prophet* denoted a wide range of leadership activities: the famous hymn in honor of leaders which begins “let us now sing the praises of famous men ...” (Sir 44:1) includes Moses, Nathan, Elijah, Zerubbabel, and others who by their intelligible communicative action lead the people to give praise to God for his saving acts (Sirach 44–50). Paul himself, Sandnes insists, stands in this prophetic tradition. Hence the exhortation μμηταί μου γίνεσθε looks back to apostolic lifestyle in 4:16, and in 11:1 it provides the transition from concern for the other in the issue of food offered to idols (8:1–11:1) to parallel concern for the welfare of the other in the context of worship (11:1–14:40). Prophets, above all, *build up* the community (8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4, 17).

2 Although λαλέω and ἀκούω are regularly translated broadly to mean respectively *to speak* and *to hear*, the issue in these verses clearly turns on intelligible communication or effective communicative action between speakers and listeners. Hence NRSV, REB, NIV, NJB, and KJV/AV (in agreement with BAGD) correctly translate οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει as **no one understands**.... It would even be legitimate to follow BAGD, section 3, and translate *no one learns*, which would be more forceful and appropriate although perhaps overly specific for the Greek. Calvin uses the analogy of preaching to empty air: “He preaches to himself and to the walls.”²³ Paul will expound the central theme that the church is built and sustained through the communicative word of the gospel of the cross and resurrection and its many entailments, promises and directives. By contrast, ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ (i.e., to the fragile, vulnerable fellow human beings who need to be built up and encouraged) ἀλλὰ θεῷ. **To speak in a tongue** in this chapter almost always denotes an upwelling of praise or prayer or praising, joyful acclamation **to God** (see above on 12:10 for an extensive discussion; also 14:14–16, 28). We may recall Theissen’s comparison with the “Abba” cry of Rom 8:26–27, which “permits the conjecture that unconscious contents break through in ecstasy,” even if a measure of “social learning” through environmental factors in a congregation cannot be excluded.

The nature of the unintelligibility and of the related term μυστήρια, here translated **mysteries** (with NRSV, REB, NIV, KJV/AV; cf. NJB, *the meaning is hidden*), remains controversial. Elsewhere Paul often uses this Greek word to denote what was once hidden but has now been disclosed in the era of eschatological fulfillment (cf. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 15:51). However, every writer uses terminology in context-dependent ways that may modify a more usual meaning, and Paul’s usual meaning cannot make sense here without undermining his own argument. Dautzenberg needlessly complicates the issue by arguing that since this utterance **to God** is **in the Spirit** the content hardly differs from that of prophecy, except for its status as the eschatological language of angels. However, if prophecy entails building, encouragement, promise, or a declaration of the deeds of God in a pastoral context, it seems inappropriate to think of this as “spoken back to God” in these verses, if at all.²⁶ It is highly significant that Gordon Fee, who acknowledges a Pentecostalist background of personal spirituality, agrees that the utterance not only “lies outside the understanding” but also



constitutes “communing with God” in contrast to the notion “quite common in Pentecostal groups” of referring “to a ‘message in tongues’ [for which] there seems to be no evidence in Paul.” In a more recent work Fee reasserts: “At no point in 1 Corinthians 14 does Paul suggest that tongues is speech directed toward people; three times he indicates that it is speech directed toward God (14:2, 14–16, 28).”

In spite of Gundry’s arguments about the regular use of γλωσσαι to denote communicative languages which are not necessarily linked with exalted or ecstatic states of consciousness, “It is highly unlikely that tongues signify known languages in these contexts [i.e., 13:1 or 14:2].” Without any contextual indicator, γλωσσαι may denote simply an organ of speech. However, the context of chs. 12–14 provides “antithetical parallelism” between tongues and prophecy in which “the most obvious characteristic of tongues is its unintelligibility,” which becomes elaborated in the analogy of reverberating musical instruments as against those with differential pitch, rhythm, and tempo (vv. 7–8). Although Chrysostom interprets **mysteries** more positively, Calvin more convincingly perceives the term to denote *that which is* “unintelligible, baffling, enigmatic, . . . as if Paul had written, ‘Nobody understands a word he says.’” Some modern commentators understand πνεύματι to refer to *the human spirit*, largely on the basis of the occurrence of this meaning in vv. 14 and 32. Many commentators before the 1950s were unduly influenced by a view of human personhood dominated by idealist or Cartesian dualism, and πνεύμα as human spirit plays a very minor role in Paul. Almost always it denotes the Holy **Spirit**, except in those specific contexts (14:14 and 32) where semantic contrasts clearly indicate otherwise. As in 15:44, to confuse human “spirituality,” let alone “immateriality,” with *that which is* characterized by the agency of the Spirit of God is to invite serious misunderstanding of Paul’s theology. NRSV, REB, and NJB (against NIV, AV/KJV) rightly translate **the Spirit**.

3 The Greek participle with the definite article ὁ δὲ προφητεύων may be translated *the person who prophesies*, which would preserve the parallel with **the person who speaks in a tongue** (v. 2a). However, Paul is setting in contrast the role of one who speaks in tongues with the effects of prophesying as a dynamic communicative activity, and this invites an emphasis on the *action* in question rather than on the status or role of any specific *person*, in accordance with Paul’s concerns and his use of the verb. The use of the definite article with the present participle may convey either habituation (*the person who prophesies*; cf. NRSV, NIV, NJB) or a temporal-conditional contingent clause (*when or if a person prophesies*, as REB). The latter also paves the way more readily for the proleptic accusatives οἰκοδομήν, παράκλησιν, and παραμυθίαν as reflected in the Vulgate construction *ad aedificationem*. “‘What is *in effect*’ is the meaning” (Robertson and Plummer’s italics). Our use of **thereby** functions to make this point. Other exegetical issues in v. 3 are covered in the following note, especially under b1, 2, and 3. Meanwhile, “the noun οἰκοδομή functions as a *Leitmotif* in what follows and in v. 26.”

PROPHECY: A SECOND NOTE IN THE CONTEXT OF CHAPTER 14

In “Prophecy: A First Note” under 12:10 we sketched broad differences of interpretative approaches and took the discussion as far as 12:10 allowed without the benefit of engaging with Paul’s major concerns in 14:1–25 (cf. also vv. 29–35). This cleared the ground and illuminated a number of issues. **Prophesying** plays its part, we noted, among the variety of gifts of the Holy Spirit apportioned out by God *for the corporate benefit of the whole community and beyond*. We also distinguished presuppositions or preunderstandings which certain interpreters bring to the text sometimes as firm assumptions, and sometimes as heuristic tools.

(1) Seven Distinctions Which Shape Interpretative Frames of Reference

The seven distinctions made in our first note remain relevant to this second stage of discussion and therefore need to be recapitulated in summary: (i) the use or overuse of supposed parallels from *Hellenistic religions* (Reitzenstein; critically by Fascher and Crone; sharply criticized by Boring and especially Forbes); (ii) appeals to *revelation-heavenly-mystery discourse in Jewish apocalyptic* (Dautzenberg; criticized by Grudem and decisively modified by Ellis and Aune); (iii) links between *apocalyptic discourse and scriptural exposition* (Ellis, Cothenet; partly criticized by Forbes) or between apocalyptic and verdictive *judgment pronouncements* (Müller); (iv) the convincing and close association between **prophesying and pastoral preaching** (Hill) or *pastoral and kerygmatic preaching* (Sandnes, Vielhauer, Gillespie); (v) more speculative claims about *freedom and authority* in prophecy (Wire); (vi) the compatibility between levels of inspiration, authority, and necessary *testing for fallibility* (Grudem); and (vii) the limitations of any study which failed to engage seriously with the *goals of prophesying as expressed in 14:1–25*.

(2) Building Up, Encouraging, and Bringing Comfort

(a) *Building up* (noun, οἰκοδομή, 14:3, 5, 12, 26; cf. 3:9; verb οἰκοδομέω, 14:4, 17; also 8:1; 10:1, 23, ἐποικοδομέω, 3:10, 12, 14). In Paul but outside 1 Corinthians, cf. Rom 14:19; 15:2, 20; 2 Cor 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Gal 2:18; 1 Thess 5:11 (Eph 4:12, 16, 29). We consistently urge that 8:1–13 and 13:1–13 remain fundamental for understanding 12:1–14:40, and under 8:1 we noted Kitzberger’s central semantic contrast between the solidity and ordered permanence of **building up** by ἀγάπη, and the illusory and superficial hollowness of φυσίω, *to inflate* through γνῶσις without love. The major study of Vielhauer briefly occupied our attention under 14:1, where we noted his convincing contrast between



building up as a cohesive activity for the benefit of others and a negative sense of affirming mere self-esteem, which we consider further under 14:4. Vielhauer and more recently Sandnes further associate the commission to **build up** with Paul's own personal apostolic commission with which Paul explicitly compares Jeremiah's prophetic call to **build up** (Gal 1:15–16; Jer 1:5, "before birth"; Jer 1:10, "to build and to plant"; cf. 1 Cor 3:6, 10, "I planted... I laid a foundation like a skilled master builder ..."). Citing further arguments to this effect from Schütz, Gillespie concludes: "Essential is the notion that *oikodomeu* and the proclamation of the gospel are both *functionally* and *materially* related" (his italics). In 14:26 "**prophesying**, as a cultic event, is subject to this norm."

(b) *Encouraging or exhorting/challenging* (παράκλησις). It is essential to recover the multiform character of παράκλησις if we are to understand the nature of prophecy and prophetic preaching in Pauline theology. It is not the bland communication of information as such, but a varied range of illocutionary speech-acts which plead, exhort, encourage, challenge, brace, console, or provide comfort on the basis of "institutional facts" (in the sense used by philosophers of language), e.g., covenant promises mediated by human agents called and gifted by God for this task through the Holy Spirit. Ulrich Müller rightly understands it as *a correlate of gospel preaching in judgment and grace*, just as Grabner-Haider rightly calls attention to *its active role as exhortation*. On the other hand, those who regard "prophecy" as a rare phenomenon in the churches largely perhaps restricted to the NT era and Pentecostal traditions in the modern era might note that the verb and noun occur some 109 times: "On the basis of statistics alone παρακαλέω/παράκλησις are among the most important terms for speaking and influencing in the NT." Although not every example of *paraklēsis* is **prophesying**, sufficient functional overlap occurs to warrant Fitzmyer's comment that in the gifts listed in Rom 12:6 "the first gift [προφητεία] is inspired Christian preaching, as in 1 Cor 12:10, 28; 13:2; 14:1, 3–6, 24, 39; 1 Tim 4:14.... It denotes one who speaks in God's name and probes the secrets of hearts (1 Cor 14:24–25)."

The pastoral dimension is underlined not only by the contextual particularity which distinguishes **prophesying** from *teaching* (which may be more doctrinal or general), but the careful arguments put forward by Bjerkelund that παρακαλέω frequently rests on a *personal relationship* between the speaker and addressees (see under 1:10). The everyday sense of being a "helper" through this activity picks up the overtones of "helping the other" from συμφέρει in 6:12; 10:23 and from concern to sustain the other in 8:7–13. Sometimes, however, it requires honest exposure, challenge, or bracing exhortation "to help" in long-term rather than short-term ways. When the source of address is the Holy Spirit, judgment may become an avenue for the appropriation of grace. Hence the varied nuances of **encouragement** and *exhortation* or *challenge* are not in the least contradictory. The opposite of love is not correction but indifference. "Paul's use of *parakalein* and *oikodomein* in 1 Thess 5:11 suggests that exhortation connotes a sense parallel with gospel proclamation. Evidence of this is provided by 1 Thess 2:2–3, where Paul reminds the community of his initial gospel preaching." Gillespie clearly shows that the term includes gospel preaching, ethical instruction, and applied theology in Paul's letters.⁴⁷

(c) *Bringing comfort* (παραμυθία). The noun in this form occurs only here in the NT (and in variant form in Phil 2:1), but the verbal form appears in 1 Thess 2:11 and 5:14 (also of **comforting** the bereaved sisters of Lazarus in John 11:19, 31). **Comfort** is adopted by NIV and KJV/AV (*consolation*, NRSV); *encourage*, REB; *reassurance*, NJB. The six NT uses of the cognate forms suggest the bracing, strengthening, supportive activity of the older English which reflects the Latin components *com-fort*. Malherbe identifies the term closely with the attitude and activity of *pastoral care*. He addresses in particular 1 Thess 5:14–15 in the light of concern for the weak in the better moral philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world of the day. Seneca, Plutarch, and Philodemus, e.g., caution that while exhortation and persuasion would not be swept aside, sensitivity to the variety of individual personal circumstances for which support is required must be addressed by a close personal understanding of these varied and specific situations. The everyday life of the church at Thessalonica, Malherbe concludes, "required comfort ... from the earliest days of the church's existence," and the complementary activities of warning and comforting form part of the pastoral process of "nurturing communal relationships."⁵⁰ "Paul always παραμυθεῖσθαι or its cognates in conjunction with some form of παράκλησις (5:14; 1 Cor 14:3; Phil 2:1)," and this gives his pastoral preaching and pastoral care a distinctive touch not exhausted by either term alone, although the dual emphasis also occurs in moral philosophy in the Graeco-Roman world.

Such a pastoral concern brings together the OT tradition of prophetic contextual application to particular circumstances and claims by Hill and others that **prophesying** has *pastoral preaching* at its center. "Preaching," however, is to be understood not as a flat homily of information or instruction alone, but as a multioperational speech-action of **building up**, **encouraging** and *challenging*, and **bringing comfort** alongside *exhortation*. Indeed, the opening of what is probably the most outstanding "model" pastoral sermon in the NT (Heb 1:1–4) brings **encouragement** and **comfort** to its addressees by performing multiple acts of acclamation, biblical exposition, promise, doctrinal confession or creedal affirmation, and joyful celebration all through the same multilayered language. As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, " 'One who prophesies speaks ... encouragement to people' (1 Cor 14:3)."



(3) Creative Reinterpretation of Scripture?

Earle Ellis helpfully finds continuities between **prophesying** in the Pauline churches and the OT and Judaism rather than in hellenistic backgrounds. He argues that “the understanding of παράκλησις as the specific ministry of a prophet is supported in the Pauline literature by 1 Cor 14:2, 3,” citing Stählin for further support. However, since scripture remains the definitive source of παράκλησις (cf. Rom 15:4–5), Ellis urges that “the interpretation of Scripture, usually in the synagogues, is a key feature of the missions of Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, as well as of Peter and other Christian leaders [i.e., in Acts].” “The interpretation of Scripture as an activity of a prophet was not unknown in the first century since it was explicitly ascribed to Daniel (9:2, 24).” As the argument proceeds, however, Ellis is led toward an increasing overlap with the gift of the ministry of teaching. This invites a speculative, perhaps even misleading, turn. For Ellis finds the most important difference between prophet and teacher in that this can be seen “only by the manner in which it [the teaching] is given or by the recognized status as ‘prophet’ of the one who is teaching.”⁵⁷ This may be found, in Ellis’s view, largely by appealing to what he seeks to identify as characterizing “pneumatics.” This not only invites the danger of circular arguments by “reading in” selective evidence (e.g., in “the Angelic ‘Spirits’ of the Prophets”), but rests on even more ambivalent assumptions about “mysteries” and creative reinterpretation on analogy with the hermeneutics of Qumran.

Christopher Forbes offers a careful critique of some of these assumptions, alongside that of a related approach adopted by E. Cothenet. Cothenet helpfully associates the role of expounding scripture within the context of the believing community at worship. However, Forbes convincingly argues that nowhere can it be demonstrated that either didactic of “free” exposition of scripture “was a defining characteristic” of prophesying for Paul. We are on safer ground to remind ourselves, following Aune, that “the early Christian application of the designation prophētēs ... was originally determined by the prevalent conception of the prophetic role in the OT. In early Judaism the term ‘prophet’ (*nabi*’ or *prophētēs*) was rarely applied to those who were not OT prophets or eschatological prophets.” Whether or not we subscribe to the older maxim that the major prophets were reformers, not innovators, their central theme of faithfulness to the covenant God of Israel presupposed a certain continuity of tradition in which the concept of being faithful depended. Hence Gillespie is correct to relate Pauline prophecy to a continuity of gospel promise, and even to a tradition.⁶² In this sense the role of scripture and a sense of the coherence of the work of God’s Spirit as one who remains faithful to his promise can never be far away. This would have remained part of the bedrock against which claims to prophecy were “tested” (14:29b; cf. 14:36–38; 1 Thess 5:20–21, δοκιμάζετε). Cothenet’s chosen title for his essay “charismatic exegesis” (comme exégètes charismatiques de l’écriture”) does not entirely do justice to what he proposes. If what is at issue remains the prophetic gift of the Spirit for the interpretation of scripture, this coheres entirely with our own views.

(4) “Spontaneous” or Also Involving Rational Reflection? Pastoral Preaching?

Dunn, Turner, and Forbes remain among the many who claim, or who merely assume, that Pauline prophecy was “spontaneous.” Max Turner writes, “For Paul prophecy is the reception and subsequent communication of spontaneous, divinely given *apokalupsis*.” Dunn asserts, “For Paul prophecy is a word of revelation. It does not denote a previously prepared sermon.... It is a spontaneous utterance ... (14:30).” Dunn’s main grounds for this are that prophecy cannot be summoned to order, and that in v. 30 the first prophet is to stop if another received “a revelation.” Forbes declares that “according to Luke and Paul, Christian prophecy was the reception and immediately public declaration of spontaneous, (usually) verbal, revelation....” It is hereby to be distinguished from preaching, in Forbes’s view, for preaching is not “a *charisma*,” whereas in prophecy “revelation is normally spontaneous.” These arguments, however, invite serious question, under the following subheadings.

(i) We have already alluded to the problem that it is utterly impossible to regard all “spiritual gifts” *en bloc* as “spontaneous.” We argued under 12:8–10 and 28–30 that these could include an ability to lead the church with strategic, statesmanlike vision (κυβερνήσεις; see under 12:28); to provide administrative support skills (ἀντιλήμψεις, v. 28) which entail organization; to exercise a sustained, buoyant, optimistic, pioneering stance of trustful faith (πίστις, under v. 9); to provide a reflective ministry of teaching (διδάσκαλοι, under v. 29, linked closely with prophecy); commission to sustained apostolic witness on the basis of past and present identification with the raised Christ (ἀποστόλους, v. 29; cf. 9:1); to share in healing either by miracle or by medical skills (plural χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, under 12:9); or to receive a sustained, settled χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ to live the celibate life without frustration (7:7). To claim that to be “gifted” to be a *teacher* as a *charisma* cannot involve sustained reflection and preparation is farfetched. Yet this “gift” appears in the same lists and terms as προφήται. It also goes against the grain of all that Paul says about critical testing to imagine that διακρίσεις πνευμάτων (12:10) is also “spontaneous.”

(ii) Too much influence has been exercised by form-critical identifications of “prophecies” within the NT itself. Here, as Müller argues, the influence of Reitzenstein and those who appeal to hellenistic sources has not yet been entirely dissipated. Oracular forms are only one possible form of prophecy, although Aune’s major study has the unfortunate



effect of identifying numerous fragmentary oracular *forms* as models or paradigm cases of prophetic *functions*. However, the key writer here is David Hill, who almost alone puts the issue into due perspective. He fully accepts that *at Corinth itself* prophesying may have been “only a series of short ejaculatory words of revelation unconnected with one another.” *Yet Paul wishes to correct this*. By restricting prophesying to “two or three,” he not only urges a coherent ordering which better reflects the nature of God himself as Spirit, but thereby achieves a “*greater coherence of message*.” Now, in the light of Paul’s reordering of worship, παράκλησις (which **builds up, encourages or exhorts**, and **brings comfort** (v. 3) “is expressed in sustained utterance,” or of what Hill calls pastoral preaching. “Oracular,” we noted, should be explicated in terms of a sufficiently sophisticated theory of speech-acts which distinguishes declarative, verdictive, directive, and other forms of illocution which have nothing to do with the presence or absence of prior preparation or reflection. This “oracular” argument rests upon a category mistake.

(iii) The argument based on an appeal to v. 30 rests on the assumption about exalted states of mind which Müller exposes as without secure evidence. The first prophesying must stop if or when a second person receives a “revelation” (ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλοῳ ἀποκαλυφθῆῖ καθημένῳ, v. 30). Yet what is at issue in this “disclosure” other than the *insight* of another, given by God, that the first speaker has begun to indulge in *self-deception, distraction, or sheer error, or a fertile integration* with resources of wisdom or scriptural knowledge which enables the second speaker *to take the theme forward* more imaginatively, accurately, or deeply than the first?

(iv) The assumption that the Spirit himself wearies of the first subject and “falls upon” the second for a fresh vision is more reminiscent of the period *before* the canonical prophets, when the purposive unitary framework within which God could and did still surprise had not yet been fully grasped. Hence “prophecy” in the ninth century BC showed “charismatic” signs absent from Amos, Hosea, or Jeremiah. To restrict “revelation” to a kind of *Deus ex machina* worldview is to impose notions which owe more to the struggle between theology and secular modernity than they do to Paul himself. Paul does not specify whether the revelation in v. 30 entails reflective or critical processes, but his reference to “judging” prophecies suggests that a dimension of critical reflection is highly probable. Nothing remains of the “spontaneity” argument except assumption and conjecture. It is reasonable to infer that both spontaneity and critical reflection may operate at different times in God’s providence. A more sophisticated theory of knowledge might suggest that “insight” given by the Spirit of God has little to do with issues of temporal duration.

(5) Is Prophesying Limited to Addressing Fellow Believers or May It Also Entail a Wider Audience?

C. M. Robeck insists that prophecy is addressed strictly to the believing community, and must not be confused with kerygma or gospel preaching. However, this overlooks several points.

(i) Müller perceives the prophetic pronouncements of judgment and grace to combine the promise of salvation with pastoral exhortation, forming inseparable aspects of a whole. If the church and the world both stand under the judgment of the cross with the possibility of the grace of transformation, prophetic declaration, prophetic announcement, prophetic verdict, and prophetic exhortation combine to bring about appropriation, acceptance of judgment, and change in this *Bussrede*.

(ii) Further 14:24–25 explicitly extends to unbelievers the power of the prophetic word to plumb the secrets of the heart, to expose evil or self-centeredness, and to generate belief through the Spirit’s gift. Hill observes, “By including, intentionally, outsiders and non-believers in this discussion, Paul demonstrates his desire to affirm the missionary function of the word, even of the inspired prophetic word spoken in worship. According to 14:24f the effects of prophesying . . . on an unbeliever who happens to visit a service of worship will be to bring about conviction, conversion and acknowledgment of the divine presence in the midst of the assembled congregation. . . . The secrets of his heart are disclosed.” (See on 14:24–25.) Since for Paul, no less than for modern systematic theology, Christ himself is God’s prophetic word in a primary sense (cf. 1:18–25), the church and the world alike can but stand under the judgment and grace of that word. Believers do not cease to need the gospel word; indeed, this epistle preaches the cross as the criterion for “spirituality” without which a person is not “of the Spirit.”

(iii) Finally, we return to Paul’s own prophetic call and consciousness. We have no need to recapitulate the arguments of Vielhauer and of Sandnes. Paul might have been surprised and disconcerted to learn that a number of studies identify only small segments and fragments of his utterances, pronouncements, pleas, arguments, and requests as “prophetic.” As in 14:3, the prophetic task is **to build**, **to encourage/challenge/exhort**, and **to bring comfort**. This does *not* logically entail the conclusion that wherever these three occur, the utterance is prophetic; but it invites caution over narrowing down the phenomenon to categories which match prior assumptions about what the modern world, or the Greek world, might expect. It would be like excluding Amos for his supposed “ordinariness,” and including only “oracles” in the form נאם יהוה (Heb. *n’um Yahweh*)

In summary, *prophesying* in Paul’s theology and in his argument in this chapter *is the performing of intelligible, articulate, communicative speech-acts, the operative currency of which depends on the active agency of the Holy Spirit mediated through human minds and lives to build up, to encourage, to judge, to exhort, and to comfort others in the*



context of interpersonal relations. Such a definition is not comprehensive. It allows for short utterances or, in accordance with Paul's own wishes, for longer stretches of speech to which the nearest modern parallel is probably that of an informed pastoral sermon which proclaims grace and judgment, or requires change of life, but which also remains open to question and correction by others. We may note that Zwingli (1484–1531) and Bullinger (1504–75) used the term "prophesying" loosely in this way, although with a greater emphasis on the place of "Bible readings" as generating the "prophesying." However, just as many unduly restrict prophecy to the "spontaneous," we should avoid the converse mistake of insisting that prophecy could not in any circumstance take the more "oracular" form often identified as such today. In the end our view will be determined by a dialogue between careful exegesis and a theology of the nature of God and of God's ways of action in the world.

4 Since edification or **building up** (οικοδομέω) remains a central issue, Paul applies the term alike to the individualism of the use of tongues and the community effects of prophecy as a fundamental contrast. We have placed the first use of **builds up** (v. 4) in quotation marks first to indicate that Paul takes it up as a catchword for the dialogue, and second because whether this first use is positive (i.e., *edifies* the self) or negative (i.e., ministers to *self-esteem* or *self-affirmation*) remains acutely controversial. Against a pejorative view Fee insists that "Paul intended no such thing. The edifying is not self-centeredness, but the personal edifying of the believer that comes through private prayer and praise." Fee's view is anticipated by Chrysostom, Myer, and others.⁷⁸ Conzelmann and Senft adopt a middle view that, whether or not the individual is edified, Paul attacks a concern for the individual in contrast to the wider whole of the church community (ἐκκλησίαν, in the anarthrous form). P. Vielhauer, however, followed largely by Schrage, makes a strong case for Paul's deliberately using οικοδομέω as a double wordplay which may mean *self-sufficiency* or *self-affirmation* in some contexts and genuine **building up** of other people in other contexts. The former use, he argues, is firmly egoist and self-indulgent. Schrage links with this 10:23–24 and Paul's contrast between seeking good for the self and good for "the other," and, in more general terms, the direction of argument is supported by Hill, Cullmann, and Maly. Moreover, if Chrysostom is positive, Theodore of Mopsuestia is distinctly negative in tone.⁸²

The strength of Vielhauer's argument lies in his identifying οικοδομέω with the apostolic task of building up by proclaiming the cross and resurrection and its practical implications to others. It is not mere "spirituality," but a Christlike, cruciform concern for others which entails costly action. In the picture or model (*das Bild*) of building "we have to think of the love of Christ who must win the real wholeness of the church community." Nevertheless, we cannot wholly dismiss Fee's appeal to the edifying effects of praise and prayer, especially since Paul never denies that **speaking in a tongue** (some late MSS read the plural *tongues* here) comes as a gift from the Holy Spirit, even if some argue that no one can profit from what they cannot understand. The best explanation is that while the positive evaluation adopted by Fee may apply to tongues *specifically used in private*, the *public* use of tongues becomes so bound up with perceived status and self-affirmation that *in public* (but not in private) the negative effects come to outweigh the otherwise positive. However, a firm exegetical judgment remains provisional on how we understand this chapter as a whole, including several difficult verses within it.

Both aspects must be kept in view: **speaking in a tongue** may well reflect an authentic welling up of otherwise inexpressible praise to God (cf. v. 2a); but this activity was probably also construed at Corinth (but not by Paul) as "the ultimate sign of their [the speakers'] spiritual power and maturity," which promoted a negative side-effect for the speakers themselves. "Esoteric speech ... is usually considered a high status activity *except* in western, rationalist societies where tongue-speaking is taken as evidence of ignorance, lowly origins, and a susceptibility to 'enthusiasm.'" Horrell expresses cautious support for this view.⁸⁷ Ronald Knox points out that if Paul does conceive of a hierarchy of gifts "it is not altogether the hierarchy which the Corinthians would have expected: the apostles come first, then the prophets, then (without any claim to miraculous powers) those engaged in teaching." Healing and tongues are mentioned "in the same breath ... with works of mercy and church finance" (12:28–30).

Yet the more positive aspect of tongues used in private devotion should not be overlooked. Frank D. Macchia writes from a Pentecostal perspective when he asks: "Could it be that prayer as a rational, articulated response to God does not exhaust the human response ...? Poetry, song, dance and silence have always been offered as examples of in-depth responses to God... Glossolalia is certainly one such response to God." However, Macchia recognizes that a christologically oriented experience of "the mystery and freedom of our own beings *coram Deo*" differs in kind from "an empty and self-centered emotional euphoria." If the latter was sought at Corinth, Vielhauer's interpretation is valid. Yet glossolalia, presumably as Paul practiced it in private, "is to be understood Christologically. Hence, the cross becomes the path to glory: glossolalia as groaning for the bound creation becomes the path to glossolalia as praise."⁹² We shall argue that it is this experience which genuinely constitutes the *charisma* of tongues; while the further step of articulating the content of such a mysterious experience in communicative speech constitutes a further, distinct gift which may or may not be added to, for use in edifying others in public.



5 The translation of θέλω ... is notoriously difficult. KJV/AV, *I would that ... but rather ...* becomes *I would like ... but even more* (NRSV); *I would like ... but I would rather ...* (NIV); *while I should like ... I would much rather ...* (NJB); and perhaps best of these five main examples: *I am happy for ... but happier still for ...* (REB). Many commentators regard the θέλω clause as conciliatory or (with NJB) as concessive. Thus Conzelmann comments, “He allows them their speaking in tongues,” and in a note compares v. 18 and θέλω in 7:7; while Héring goes further: “*thelō* does not express an order, but a concession in the form of a wish unlikely to be fulfilled (cf. 7:7).” Collins translates the verb *I wish*, but takes the point to be that Paul does not “disdain” the gift; while Bruce comments: “He goes as far as he can with those whom he criticizes before interposing a *caveat*.” He then endorses Henry Chadwick’s comment “The entire drift of the argument ... is such as to pour a douche of ice-cold water over the whole practice.” Such an interpretation of θέλω ... μάλλον is rejected by Fee, who argues that θέλω means *I wish*, while Kling calls it “a hearty wish and not an unworthy concession.”

The use of θέλω to mean simply the permissive *I am willing* does not do justice to the force of the verb, as Schrage confirms. Even in the classical era the verb “implying purpose or design” stands in contrast to the less purposive βούλομαι, although usually in the form ἐθέλω. The force may be softened, however, when, as here, issues of comparative preference shape the semantic domain. Moreover, “the change from infinitive [θέλω δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις] to ἵνα [μάλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε] is perhaps meant to make the wish more intense,” and its conjunction with μάλλον δέ makes this intensity overwhelming. Thus Kistemaker understands *wish* to govern the whole, but mainly the fulfillment of Num 11:29 when Moses deliberately rejects the individualism and elitism of any exclusive bestowal of the Spirit, expressing the self-effacing wish that “all the LORD’s people should be prophets,” far from expressing any competitive jealousy that Eldad and Medad were prophesying “in the camp.”

Kistemaker has surely identified the source in the OT which lies behind Paul’s formulation of his argument and his use of θέλω. *Since he himself uses tongues in private (v. 18, unless this is a quoted slogan), Paul no more wishes to monopolize this gift than he wishes any elitist monopoly of anything at Corinth.* Nevertheless, he clearly states in 12:29–30 that **all** (v. 29, μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; ...; v. 30, μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; cf. 14:5, πάντας ὑμᾶς) will not be *apostles* or **speakers in tongues**. The solution to the supposed enigma lies in the observation of BAGD that in first-century *koinē* Greek, among the various constructions which modify the force of θέλω when it occurs with the infinitive, it may denote **I take pleasure in**, as in Mark 12:38, “the scribes **take pleasure in** walking up and down in long robes” (not *wish*). This comes close to REB, *I am happy for ...*, which I had proposed in a first draft before consulting REB. However, *to be happy for* seems to retain the permissive force which Fee attacks and which does appear to underplay the verb. Paul does not, I conclude partly on the basis of 12:29–30, *wish* that every member of the church at Corinth may speak with tongues; it is the Holy Spirit alone who wills how his gifts are apportioned, and egalitarianism is as much an undifferentiated dullness as arbitrary hierarchy ministers to authoritarianism and elitism. Paul **takes pleasure in** the sense of intimacy, liberation, and prayerful doxology that those who speak in tongues enjoy. However, their pleasure is very solemnly and seriously constrained by two things: first, that this gift is used only *privately*; second, that proclaiming the gospel of Christ, or **prophesying** for the building up of *others*, holds priority and privilege as an “apostolic” or Christlike, cruciform mode of ministry. Calvin makes this two-sided point. Paul gives “approval to tongues” in principle, but the way in which the gift is used at Corinth makes it “valueless and to some extent harmful”; hence the approval is conditional upon “correcting this fault.”

The comparative force of μάλλον is crucial for the argument. Paul’s pleasure in, and preference for, the use of the gift of **prophesying** (see Note on Prophecy, above) is expressed in this word which denotes both *to a greater degree* (as in Phil 1:12) and also a preferential **rather** (as in 1 Cor 7:21) in the dual sense of *more* and *instead of* (as in Matt 10:6), where the latter is frequently marked by μάλλον δέ (as here). This is strengthened by the following description of **the person who prophesies as greater** (NRSV, NIV; μείζων), which NJB rightly contextualizes as denoting here not greater in status but, in accordance with the logic of Paul’s argument, **of greater importance than the one** (Greek singular) **who speaks in tongues**.

THE “INTERPRETATION” OR “ARTICULATION” OF GLOSSOLALIA?

We have not yet exhausted the issues of controversy in v. 5. Substantial issues hang on how we understand the clause εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη in this context of argument. NRSV’s *unless someone interprets* is, in our view, disastrously misleading. *The Greek does not mention any agent other than the one who speaks in tongues, who remains the subject of the verb. The insertion of someone rests on a particular understanding of ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν* (12:10; see above on this verse) and the significance of ἄλλω δέ in conjunction with this phrase in 12:10, as if a special agent was “an interpreter” who “interpreted” tongues. However, as I argued in 1979, frequent occurrences of ἐρμηνεύω and διερμηνεύω can be found in which these verbs mean not *to interpret* but **to put into words**, i.e., *to render in articulate intelligible speech*, what is difficult to express. I argued that 14:13 similarly refers to the person who speaks in tongues: “He who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to produce articular speech.”



An illuminating parallel occurs when Josephus is trying to convey to his Roman or Graeco-Roman readers the wonders of Herod's palace. These are "beyond words" (παντὸς λόγου κρείσσων, Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.176). The walls, towers, and banqueting hall defy description (ἀδιήγητος, 5.178). When he moves on to the cloisters, gardens, and lavish decorations he exclaims: ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὐθ' ἔρμηνεύσαι δυνατὸν ξίως τὰ βασιλεια (5.182: it is impossible **to put it into words** adequately!). Here *to interpret* or *to translate* simply does not fit. Similarly, when he reflects on Moses' request that Aaron should be his "mouth" (στόμα), Philo observes that what Moses required was someone who could **put into words** of intelligible, articulate communication what Moses felt himself unable to express adequately. Aaron's role is *to produce articulate speech* (ἐρμηνεύω, *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat*, 15), with a view to **putting into words** (πρὸς ἐρμηνείαν, loc. cit. 39) what Moses found overwhelming or difficult. For Aaron to be his "mouth" (στόμα) is also to be his "mouthpiece" (ἐρμηνέα, loc. cit. 39). The evidence for humans' becoming capable of reasoning, Philo urges, can be found in their use of syntax of nouns and verbs **to put things into words** that are intelligible and articulate (ἐρμηνεύς εἶνθαι, Philo, *Legum Allegoriae* 1.10). What is at issue is the intelligible expression of ideas (*Leg. Alleg.* 1.74). Philo is all too familiar with "writer's block": thoughts start to flow, but then one cannot get hold of the next idea to put it into words (*De Migratione Abrahami* 21, 35).

Why do we need to appeal to those other and different uses of ἐρμηνεύω and its compound form διερμηνεύω, which denote *translation* or *interpretation* when the meaning identified here utterly coheres with Paul's argument? There is no "interpreter" standing by. Paul declares that **the person who prophesies is of greater importance than the one who speaks in tongues unless** some specific condition is fulfilled: the tongue speaker who is overwhelmed with the presence and love of God to the extent that praise and prayer flow forth in inarticulate sounds uttered by the tongue (γλῶσσα) finds that, after all, he or she can **put into words** the ground of praise, prayer, joy, or longing, and thereby **the church community** as a whole can similarly **receive** (λάβῃ) this public ministry of **building up** (ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομῆν λάβῃ).

This understanding of these verses has recently been attacked by Christopher Forbes. Forbes concedes that the meaning **to put into words** occurs in "a reasonable number of cases," and indeed the 1979 article cites numerous examples where *translate* will not fit, and where *interpret* misses the point. Yet in a way reminiscent of approaches before the 1961 work of James Barr, Forbes appeals to Dunn's view that "to explain," "to translate," or "to interpret" is "the basic meaning of the word." He then argues that even if, as I claim, up to three-quarters of the uses of διερμηνεύω in Philo mean **to put into words**, if we survey uses of ἐρμηνεύω without the διά prefix, the proportion is reversed. However, (i) Paul shows that he is using ἐρμηνεύω with a nuance that is synonymous with διερμηνεύω in these verses (cf. 14:5, 13, 27, 28, διερμηνεύω and διερμηνευτής); and (ii) it is only necessary for our argument to conclude that both English meanings may in principle apply, and that contextual considerations in the light of the Corinthian situation and Paul's argument become decisive for a judgment between them.

On the exegetical issues Forbes acknowledges that we cannot allow the controversial interpretations of Acts 2 to determine our interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12–14. Quite apart from issues about the perspectives of Luke and Paul, since virtually all the diaspora Jews present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost would know Greek renders problematic what kind of "translation" is at issue, and in any case it is presented not as miraculous *speech* (*the speakers were perceived to be under the influence of alcohol*) but as miraculous *hearing* or *understanding*. However, he fails to address the issue of how speaking in tongues relates to "translation" if it is addressed to God as praise and prayer, and not as a "message" to be decoded and transmitted. He also fails to explain why such a precious gift of "translation" did not play a wider role among those wrestling with missionary proclamation to other cultures, or (if we are permitted to cite claims made in our own era) the gift of tongues (if it *were* to involve "translation") is withheld from seminary students learning Greek. The traditional understanding, represented in extreme form in NRSV's *unless someone interprets*, imposes onto the epistle an ecclesial tradition of assumptions which does not allow Paul to speak for himself. The very insertion of *someone* into the Greek indicates the lengths to which some will go to sustain a specific interpretative tradition.

On *speaking in tongues* as a welling up of pre-conscious yearnings of praise, glory, joy or longing, see Notes in detail above under 12:10, with particular reference to the work of Stendahl and Theissen. This experience of release and liberation is valued by Paul as a gift of the Spirit. However, its association with the transmission of encoded messages is at the very least not demanded by the text. The one point which Forbes makes with validity in this section of an otherwise helpful study is that it is possible to combine the meaning proposed here with the lexicographical sense of *explaining*. For, as long as we note that most typically tongues are addressed to God, the REB rendering *unless indeed he can explain its meaning, and so help to build up the community* retains close affinities with our own proposals. The use of *interprets*, by contrast (NIV, NJB, KJV/AV), generates a signal which has become tied in modern thought to the overly specific exegesis which seduces the NRSV. We may conclude these reflections by noting that recently Gordon Fee, writing from an explicitly Pentecostal perspective, openly and courageously acknowledges that whether "tongues" constitute an actual earthly language "is a moot point, but the overall evidence suggests no," and that whether today's



“charismatic phenomena” replicate those of the Pauline churches is also “moot and probably irrelevant. There is simply no way to know.” Certainly, he concludes, tongues are directed to God, and Paul holds their private use in high regard.¹⁰⁹ In our earlier Note we allude to some movement of emphasis among certain Pentecostal writers themselves, not least on “Pentecostal hermeneutics.”

ii. The Uselessness of Unintelligible Noise: Four Examples (14:6–12)

Paul now introduces a series of examples to substantiate his theme. As we have noted above, Margaret Mitchell notes the regularity with which Paul appeals to “what profits” (cf. 13:3 in this main section) as part of a strategy of deliberative rhetoric, and this coheres, as she also observes, with the use of examples drawn from personal behavior and from life (cf. 11:1). While attention to rhetoric has become fashionable, relatively few writers have taken up H. M. Gale’s neglected work on Paul’s use of analogy.¹¹¹ Paul uses many more analogies, models, and illustrative or creative pictures than those who portray him as a more abstract thinker recognize. Here he instantiates his argument by a picture of his arrival at Corinth, only to utter inarticulate noises; and a second picture of a melody in which varied pitch becomes confused and hence unrecognized, and a bugle sound where rhythm and/or pitch is so unintelligible as a signal that it cannot promote appropriate action. A fourth example is the experience of language barriers.

6 The translation of *vñv dé* as **Well now** reflects Héring’s careful comment that the phrase is neither adversative nor used in a conclusive sense but to mean “ ‘well now’, i.e., ‘let us look at the facts and take a concrete example.’ ” Paul’s examples are entirely hypothetical scenarios which remain unfulfilled: *ἐὰν ἔλθω* is an example of the aorist subjunctive used as “third class condition, supposable case.” This is well captured by REB’s *Suppose, my friends, that when I come to you ...*, which we have adopted on grounds of grammar, syntax, and meaning. **In terms of** conveys the adverbial mode denoted by *ἐν*: “The *ἐν* expresses the form in which the *λαλεῖν* takes place.” **What shall I profit you** (*τί ὑμῶς ὠφελήσω*) takes a double accusative, which is by no means rare. *ἀποκάλυψις* has already been discussed with reference to the **disclosure** or *revealing* of the Lord at the last day (see under 1:7). Although in politics and in the media the term which most closely reflects the Greek, namely *unveiling*, has once again come into vogue, this use is more usually applied to announcements of governmental, political, or commercial strategy. Conversely, we have avoided *revelation* because it now carries a dead weight of theological and philosophical controversy. **Disclosure** seems to combine the force and relative innocence which the word would carry at Corinth, leaving entirely open whether it also carries some “technical” sense in the context of worship, which remains open to question (see below on 14:26; 14:30). 14:26 is the only other occurrence of the noun in our epistle together with 1:7 and 14:6 (the verb occurs at 2:10, 13 and 14:30).

We have already discussed the force of *γνῶσις* extensively (see under 1:5; 8:1, 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8). These nine occurrences, together with six in 2 Corinthians (2:14; 4:6; 6:6; 8:7; 10:5; 11:6) compare with only three in Romans, one in Philippians, none in Galatians, and one in Colossians, i.e., this term mattered greatly at Corinth. Hence Paul’s insistence that inarticulate sounds could not convey *γνῶσις* would have been especially sharp and poignant to these addressees. In this context the term denotes *cognitive knowledge*, so prized in 8:1–11 by “the strong” at Corinth, and REB’s looser *enlightenment* conveys the cultural flavor. On **prophetic speech** or *prophecy* see the Extended Note above at 14:3. The inclusion of **teaching** (*διδασχί*) confirms the point that one spiritual gift cannot be permitted to militate against others which are “for the common good” (12:7–11; see on 28–30, where **teachers** [v. 28] follow *apostles* and *prophets*). Paul’s first example (a supposed visit for a purpose) now leads to a second.

7 We follow BAGD, BDF, Jeremias, Héring, and Fee (against Weiss, Edwards, Allo, and several others) in understanding *ὁμῶς* (which in non-Pauline texts means *nevertheless* or *all the same*) to represent *ὁμῶς*, **similarly**. BDF point out that Paul uses this word only twice (here and in Gal 3:15) where *οὕτως* also follows suggesting “the earlier *ὁμῶς* ‘equally,’ and it is therefore to be translated ... ‘likewise.’ ” As Héring reminds us, accents would occur neither in Pauline texts nor in such early uncials as \mathfrak{B}^{46} and A, and even if *ὁμῶς* is of an earlier date, the consistency of the two rare uses in Paul suggest that his employment of the adverb remains distinctive, equivalent to *ὁμοίως*.

The syntax is ambivalent. *διδόντα ... πῶς* is usually understood as a nominative active present participle governing not only *φωνήν* but also leading to the *πῶς* clause. However, Paul’s deliberative style of rhetoric in these verses may permit us to regard it as functioning perhaps as an accusative of reference in apposition to *τὰ ἄψυχα*, as our translation may suggest. This allows us to understand *πῶς* as introducing a rhetorical question, which sustains the incisive rhetorical style better than a statement. The privative form *ἄψυχα* occurs only here in the NT, but regularly means inanimate in old literature and by its negation of *ψυχή*, life. Although *αὐλός* strictly denotes flute (as in LXX) and *κιθάρα* means either lyre or early harp (as in Philo, Josephus, and Rev 5:8; 14:2), the point here is that the principle applies equally in the case of wind instruments and stringed instruments. Collins’s elaborate theory that Paul may use “*lifeless*” (cf. *inanimate*) to denote synagogue instruments not in current use is too narrow and too speculative, and bypasses the more usual meaning of the word. It serves to offer a contrast with the two examples of interpersonal communication.



J. D. Moores pays particular attention to these verses (14:7–8) as a classic discussion of “the different ways in which semiosis comes to misfire.” He observes, “It is remarkable that Paul thinks of musical sound in connection with meaning at all.”¹²¹ In the first parallel (v. 7) semiosis is envisaged in terms of “recognition,” but this depends on the principle of “difference” (διαστολή), as Ferdinand de Saussure would enunciate it in his *Course in General Linguistics* first published in 1913: “The semantic scope of γινῶσκω, moreover, allows for a reading that would find him [Paul] envisaging semiosis as recognition.” Moores rightly perceives that most English VSS miss the point by translating the Greek simply as *know what is being played* (NRSV, NIV, KJV/AV, Fee; as against **recognized** in NJB and Knox). διαστολή regularly means **difference** or *distinction* in LXX, Philo, and other writers including the papyri, and the nuance of *differential* (which then enters legal and accounting records) permits BAGD to translate “clear distinction” in this verse, and to provide grounds for our intensive **distinct differences**. **Difference** (French *différence*) has become a technical term in semiotics from Saussure to J. Derrida, and makes precisely Paul’s point, as Moores notes, “remarkably.”

Robertson and Plummer miss and distort Paul’s meaning when they attribute “difference” as that of different melodies “to guide people to be joyous, sorrowful, or devout” respectively at festivals, funerals, and worship. Even Fee’s comment about failure to produce “a pleasing melody” misses the heart of the issue.¹²⁵ The point is not that notes are produced badly or inappropriately, but that untuned strings or overblown wind produces mere noise where there is no “difference” in Saussure’s sense of linguistic or semiotic “difference” as the very basis of conveying *anything* articulate or communicable. Prior to Saussure’s work, Meyer’s commentary perceives this point. Φωνή, he argues, is regularly used of the “voice” of musical instruments (e.g., Sir 1:16; 1 Macc 5:31; Plato, *Timaeus* 47C; *Politica* 3.397A, μουσική φωνή) but an instrumental “voice” without *intervals* (*ex intervallis sonorum*, Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.18.41) is mere *noise* or mere *sound* (unmodulated φωνή, which is not actual “music” at all), and it cannot be “**recognized**.” Hence Meyer concludes that “the analogy in v. 7 would be unsuitable, if Paul had been thinking of *foreign languages*, since there would not have lacked the διαστολή of the sounds.... It is its *distinctness* [in the sense of Saussure’s “difference”] ... in virtue of which it expresses a melody.” Edwards rightly concludes: “διαστολήν ... used as synonymous with διάστημα, a musical ‘interval’ ... the difference in pitch between two sounds.”

8 Paul now provides a third example. Again, the issue is not that the **sound of the trumpet** (REB, NJB) or the *bugle* (NRSV; σάλπιγξ) is simply unclear (ἄδηλον) in the sense of being faint or below high performance, but that *without differentiations of pitch, rhythm, or length of note* the sound is mere noise rather than a **communicative signal to prepare for battle**. Our translation of ἄδηλον ... φωνήν as **a sound which is ambivalent as a signal** is an accurate translation based on lexicographical research, not a paraphrase or gloss. For Grimm-Thayer’s 4th ed.’s rendering of ἄδηλος as *obscure* (also *indistinct*) reflects the alpha-privative of δηλος, *clear, evident*, which in turn belongs to the cognate verb δηλόω, which means not only *to make manifest*, but also, more frequently, as in 1 Cor 1:11, “*to give one to understand, to indicate, signify*” (cf. Col 1:8; Heb 12:27; 2 Pet 1:14), or *to point to* (1 Pet 1:11), i.e., *to serve as a communicative act or signal*.

That the precise force of ἄδηλος depends largely on contextual considerations also is evident from Moulton-Milligan’s restriction of the adjectival form to only two occurrences in the papyri, while they cite the positive adjectival form δηλος as relating primarily, or most often, to clear communication, e.g., of the intention or scope of laws (*Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 8:1101), although again “the word is by no means common.” On the other hand, the verb form δηλόω is indeed common in the papyri, and regularly means *to communicate clearly* or *to convey an intelligible, articulate message* (*P. Oxy.* 2:237:6, AD 186; 10:1293, AD 117–38). The meaning “let me know” (i.e., “send a signal”) is “typical of a great many occurrences.” Whether in personal, social, institutional (as in 14:8), or legal communications, “it is largely used ... to denote ‘informing.’” Hence BAGD’s translation of this verse as *give out an indistinct sound* reflects only part of the semantic range of the word group, although this is followed by most English VSS (NRSV, *distinct*; REB, NIV, *clear*). On the other hand, NJB has utterly rightly and properly *a call which is unrecognizable*. Louw and Nida also consider both meanings of δηλόω and categorize ἄδηλος as either *not evident* or as *unmarked and unperceived by any of the senses*. (They compare “unmarked graves,” Luke 11:44, as those which convey no **signal** of their existence.)

The apodosis of the conditional clause, expressed as a question, τίς παρασκευάζεται εἰς πόλεμον; reinforces the point that intelligible Christian utterance has operative currency which changes attitudes and conduct on the part of others (as well as that of the speaker). Again this highlights the “profitless” nature of tongues *in public* when the concern embraces effects upon *others*. What the trumpeter does when “off-duty” is another matter. Moores relates this to semiotic impacts on “dispositions” to respond.

9 The key word is εὐσημος, **readily intelligible**. Our translation is supported by BAGD, who propose *easily recognizable* or *clear* as the routine meaning but recognize that 14:9 denotes **intelligible speech**. The compound adjective εὖ, *well*, **readily**, with σημα, *sign*, which belongs to the word group σημαίνω, *to communicate, to signify*, and



σημεῖον, *sign, distinguishing mark* (by which something is known), σημειῶν, *to mark, to note down*, vividly uses what semanticists call a “transparent” term to indicate the communicative or *semiotic* principle. Communicative acts of speech entail a transactive engagement between speaker, writer or “sender,” and addressee, hearer, or “receiver.” If the receiver cannot comprehend (γινώσκω) the content of what is being said (τὸ λαλούμενον), communication does not occur. Paul incisively sums up modern communicative and hermeneutical theory in a terse, succinct aphorism, ahead of his time. In such a case, the sender is merely **speaking into empty air** (εἰς ἄερα). The speech-event is fruitless and pointless, except as self-affirmation or as a benefit to the speaker at the expense of generating negative effects for others (vv. 4a and 11). Fee compares the idiom to “talking to the wind.”¹³⁹ To be **comprehended** or *recognized* and *understood*, “vocables [must be] ordered, articulate, and conformed to usage. Now this is what the Corinthian Glossolalia was *not*” (Findlay’s italics).

10–11 Paul now reaches his fourth example, drawn from the communication barrier which exists where, even when an intelligible language *is* used, if the speaker’s and addressee’s languages are not known to each other, each will effectively remain **an alien** (βάρβαρος) to the other. A long tradition of modern commentators from Meyer to Conzelmann, Fee, and Wolff suggest that Paul uses γένη φωνῶν rather than γλῶσσα to denote foreign languages, in order to avoid confusion with the “tongues” of glossolalia. This experience of being and feeling **alien** or *foreign* (neither is one understood nor does one understand the language around one) is a common theme in several writers. Heinrici cites Ovid’s complaint, “*barbarus hic ergo sum, quia non intelligor ulli ... der Fremdheit und Roheit...*” Paul develops this into a major point when he expounds and applies the experience of “not belonging” to which Isa 28:11–12 witnesses as a sign of judgment when he argues in 14:21–22 that this experience should not be illegitimately imposed upon believers who *do* belong and *should feel* “at home” in the worship of the Christian community.

In v. 10 ἄφωνος may mean “without language” (with Conzelmann) in purely lexicographical terms, but this misses the sharp focus of the argument. However, the most probable force in the syntax and grammar is to understand the aorist optative of τυγχάνω in a conditional protasis as **it may be**, carrying the force of rhetorical anticipation of a defense of “foreign” (i.e., unintelligible) speech: *even if it happens that*. Paul further grants that every language uses **sound**, i.e., *makes a noise*. However, *this is no defense of making unintelligible noises in corporate worship*. For the example proves the opposite: when people find themselves amid a babel of unintelligible sound, what strikes them is both their own feeling of **being an alien**, where they do not feel “comfortable” or “at home,” and indeed fellow believers seem somehow **alien** to them when in fact they are brothers and sisters in the Lord. A built-in “wrongness” characterizes the whole situation in both subjective terms (perceptions and feelings) and objective reality (artificial barriers have been unwittingly set up). Paul will press the point with biblical warrant in vv. 21–22. There may even be a further nuance of the irritating effect of “foreign” speech in the very word βάρ-βάρ, as in Eng. “*Blah-blah-blah*.”

12 The syntax of οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς has been construed in more than one way, but most amount to Fee’s rendering “So it is with you.” Meyer sees the ὑμεῖς as related more closely to the disasters of the previous examples than to the eagerness for spiritual experiences, i.e., you are in this absurd situation, so take fresh stock and reorder your priorities. Most relate it to the following clauses. Hence we adopt a translation which leaves open both possibilities, as well as the emphatic nominative οὕτως, **you yourselves**. Since οὕτως conveys the sense of *thus, so*, usually referring to what precedes (but occasionally to what follows), **in this situation** serves to link “this-ly,” “in this manner” most closely with all the examples that precede, but not exclusively so. It provides a further link, even if a weaker one, with what follows.

ζηλώω regularly means *to be eager for* (as in our translation of its second occurrence in this verse), but also to be deeply **concerned about** when the object is personal or has close personal associations. As we noted above, in LXX it translates Heb. קִנְנָה (*qinnē*), *to burn with zeal, to become heated* (see above on 13:4 and 14:1). Here in the first clause a **burning concern** probably best conveys the force of the Greek. A more serious problem is that whereas it normally governs an accusative, in this verse it is followed by the genitive πνευμάτων, *spirits* (not even πνευματικῶν, *spiritual things*). It is unlikely that even the Corinthians sought inspiration from a plurality of spirits; rather, they sought a plurality of manifestations (as many as possible) from God’s Holy Spirit. Conzelmann rightly perceives this as a concern about *phenomena*. We try to convey the mood and content by translating neither *gifts of the Spirit* (REB) nor *spiritual gifts* (NRSV, NIV), since these routine or regular phrases do not signal the strange and unexpected plural of πνεῦμα, but (following NJB’s *spiritual powers*), **powers of the Spirit**. It is best to retain **Spirit** wherever possible, since Paul never speaks of “spirituality” in the sense widely used today without implicitly alluding to the Holy Spirit as what makes “spirituality” *spiritual*. It is not a disposition of the human mind or heart, but, as Paul and the Corinthian Christians would agree together, a formation, gift, or phenomenon which reflects the agency, operation, and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Where Paul diverges from the Corinthians is in his insistence that since the Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ, and since Christ gave himself *for others*, any claims about “spirituality” or **powers of the Spirit** become problematic if they have more to do with self-enhancement than with the welfare and benefit of others. Hence all this **burning concern**



about **powers of the Spirit** must be redirected into a more Christlike **eagerness** for the **building up** (on οικοδομή see above, e.g., 8:1; 14:4) of the **church community** as a corporate whole (cf. the body-of-Christ language in 12:12–30, esp. 12:27). The four examples of 14:6–11 have been sharpened into an incisive and irrefutable application in v. 12.

iii. Communicative Intelligibility and the Use of the Mind in the Context of Public Worship (14:13–19)

13–14 Collins rightly stresses the strong force of διό, *wherefore*, or **hence**, as gathering up the point of the previous examples about intelligible communication. In order to avoid repetition, on διερμηνεύω meaning **to put into words** see above in 14:5. In spite of the insistence of many on trying to force τις, *someone*, into the text at 14:5 (e.g., Héring, against the proper judgment of Heinrici and others that no second party is involved), *all the main English VSS appear to ascribe the act of putting into words*, or in most VSS *interpreting* (AV/KJV, NRSV, REB, NJB), *to the one who prays in a tongue*. Here Paul uses the singular γλώσση, but he seems to oscillate between singular and plural without any clear difference of nuance. (We normally reproduce in translation the number used in the Greek.) **Should pray** is the idiomatic way of conveying the force of the Greek third person present imperative προσευχέσθω. This verse reinforces that even when this is (mis)understood as assuming some second act by an “interpreter” of tongues, this is not a “message to the congregation” but an act of **praying** to God. The present subjunctive after ἵνα “often serves as a periphrasis for the infinitive” but may perhaps include a hint of a possible potential on the part of the subject or agent of the verb.

“TONGUES” AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE

Our main treatment of “Species of Tongues and Their Intelligible Articulation” (970–88) offered a discussion under five subheadings in which we considered: (1) tongues as angelic speech; (2) tongues as miraculous power to speak other languages; (3) tongues as liturgical or archaic phrases; (4) tongues as “ecstatic” speech, and (5) tongues as the language of the pre-conscious released in “sighs too deep for words” from the heart. The argument of 14:1–25, however, addresses further considerations which supplement an evaluation of (2) and (5).

Whatever conclusion is proposed about the precise phenomenology of speaking in tongues (and Fee reminds us that this can never be more than speculative, without confirmation or direct evidence), v. 14 appears to endorse the arguments of G. Theissen and K. Stendahl that these utterances well up, in experiences of wonder and praise as the Holy Spirit releases inhibitions and censors, in ways which reflect pre-conscious, pre-cognitive yearnings, sighings, or “building up” which evade cognitive objectification and formulation. This understanding is not incompatible with Käsemann’s view that these “ejaculations of prayer are interpreted, at least by the Pauline congregation [i.e., not necessarily by Paul], as speaking with heavenly tongues.”¹⁵⁴ All three writers, together with the Pentecostal writer F. D. Macchia, associate the experience with the intercession prompted by the Holy Spirit “with sighs too deep for words” (στεναγμοὶ ἀλάλητοι) in Rom 8:26–27. Like the acclamatory cry “*Abba*,” this results from a co-witnessing with the Spirit (συμμαρτυρεῖν τῷ πνεύματι, Rom 8:15–16) Käsemann insists that, like the ἄρρητα ῥήματα of 2 Cor 12:4, these are “wordless” not in the sense of “unspoken” but “unspeakable; they are not directly reproducible and shroud mysteries in heavenly language.”

The cumulative effect of Paul’s four examples of a communicative barrier in vv. 6–11 seem to confirm the implausibility of the notion that speaking in tongues takes the form of a foreign language which an “interpreter of tongues” can translate. The first example (v. 6) not only suggests even a lack of potential communicative content, but also the Greek syntax (see exegesis above) is explicated in terms of the second example (v. 7) in which musical instruments produce *noise* rather than *notes of a given pitch*. It is not that there is a melody which cannot (yet) be recognized; there is an absence of the very intervals between the pitch of notes (see exegesis above) which *constitutes* them as “*music*” rather than raw sound. Paul anticipates modern language theory that communication presupposes “*difference*” (from Saussure) onward). The third example (v. 8) underlines and develops the point: it is *not* that an unknown system generates a signal not yet understood, but that nothing counts as a *signal* in principle. The fourth example (vv. 9–11) comes nearest to suggesting *xenolalia*, but the point of it rests in *inarticulate expression* which does *not* constitute a *communicative act*. Indeed, it has the effect of making Christians within the family feel *alien* within their home, like “outsiders.”

Paul neither criticizes nor questions the authenticity of speaking in tongues (especially in the sense of v. 5 above and vv. 18–19). However, he requests *either* of *two* conditions: *either* (a) “private” use (see exegesis of vv. 16–23), i.e., outside the context of public worship; *or* (b) effective prayer that the speaker will be able to express in articulate communicative speech the wondrous perception of God or the gospel which is otherwise “too deep for words.” *No “second” agent* is envisaged; *a second “gift” is indeed needed*, i.e., the gift of being able *to put it into words*.

The first part of Käsemann’s claim seems to cohere with 14:13. However, neither Rom 8:15–16, 26–27 nor 1 Cor 14:5, 13 explicitly describes “a heavenly language”; only that a genuine insight which generates praise exceeds cognitive or conceptual expression. The tongue-speaker may need to step back and reflect, and with the Spirit’s grace could benefit the whole community by findings words which, even if they remain inadequate, at least allow the *corporate* expression



of praise which the insight or experience generates, since this fulfills the purpose of a corporate “coming together” for *common* worship (κοινωνία). Käsemann is on stronger ground when he argues that “the context of glossolalic prayer” precisely explains the specific sense in which believers “do not know” how to pray in Romans 8. The urge, yearning, and direction is there, but as yet it cannot be formulated cognitively. This, we conclude, is why some have the gift of tongues (which liberate and release innermost sighs to God), and others have a *further* gift of enabling which allows them to reflect and to put the content of the experience which had generated the inarticulate sign of the Spirit at work into an articulate communicative signal from which all could benefit. Presumably only those who were not content to use tongues only in private were those whom Paul specifically enjoined to pray for this further gift, or otherwise to remain self-disciplined in public worship. Either course of action would help others, but not the current practice which Paul addresses. Thus the theme of *the regulation of worship* begins to emerge from here on.

The history of Western philosophical and Christian theological tradition makes it misleading to translate τὸ πνεῦμα μου as *my spirit*, although in abstraction from cultural traditions this reflects Paul’s choice of expression. As Robert Jewett points out, already in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and in Galatians Paul had opposed νοῦς/νοουθετέω terminology, i.e., terms to do *with the use of the mind* in a polemical context where he felt impelled to rectify a lack of common sense brought about by “pneumatic enthusiasts.” A lack of cognitive reflection had led to “the enthusiasts’ claim that the parousia had already come”; this had shaken them from a right mind (ἀπὸ τοῦ νοός, 2 Thess 2:2). 1 Thess 5:14 is linked with this theme, while excesses of zeal or antinomianism among the Galatians led Paul to address them as ἀνόητοι, *not using their minds* (Gal 3:1). In such contexts τὸ πνεῦμα, *spirit*, does service as standing in semantic opposition to νοῦς, *mind*. Nevertheless, today it is agreed widely, perhaps almost universally, that τὸ πνεῦμα in the major Paul epistles carries a largely negative role of being distinguished from some “other” when it is used as a human capacity. Paul prefers to reserve τὸ πνεῦμα for the Spirit of God, and to use πνευματικός for that which appertains to the Holy Spirit. Even 1 Cor 2:11 serves to distinguish an immanent Stoic view of “spirit” from the transcendent Holy Spirit who proceeds ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, *from God*.

As Jewett demonstrates, in its strictly human sense, the history of research into the meaning of the human spirit in Paul has become entangled in philosophical idealism, which has elevated it as a “point of contact” with God’s Spirit in un-Pauline ways and with existentialist approaches which have imported an alien individualism into Paul. We need a term which is readily recognized to denote a sphere or mode of human personhood which may be associated with the deepest work and activity of God as Holy Spirit but also stands in contrast to *mind*. In an earlier draft I translated *heart*, but since Paul does use καρδιά elsewhere, and not here, this seems overly bold, although it conveys the mood and the issue. All in all, the best compromise may be **my innermost spiritual being**. This risks a misunderstanding in the direction of Plato or of Idealist or Cartesian dualism, but takes up Paul’s word and seeks to protect it with appropriately qualifying indicators of Paul’s meaning.

Paul’s use of ἄκαρπος precisely clinches his point. However, many translations spoil it with such renderings as *my mind is barren* (REB), *my mind is unfruitful* (NIV) or *my mind derives no fruit from it* (NJB). As Käsemann insists, Paul’s point is *not* that the *tongue-speaker* misses out, but that the *church community* misses out. Of the major translations NRSV’s *my mind is unproductive* is best at this point since *produce* can serve others. The same might be said of Collins’s translation *useless*. However, it may perhaps still more clearly convey Paul’s logic to translate **but my mind produces no fruit from it**, i.e., means by which to benefit others. Käsemann concludes concerning Paul’s correction of the individualism that marked assumptions about tongues at Corinth, “It is impossible to demythologize the *theologia gloriae* [of Corinth] into the *theologia viatorum* [of Paul] more thoroughly.”

15 Paul argues equally against uncritical “enthusiasm,” uncritical “renewal” traditions, or uncritical mysticism on one side and against gnostics, theological theorists, or any who seek to intellectualize Christian faith into a mere belief system on the other. Christians are confronted *not by an either ... or ... but by a both ... and—my deepest spiritual being* (τῷ πνεύματι, repeated twice, taking up its further use in v. 14) **but also** (προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ ...) **my mind** (τῷ νοῦ). The connecting phrase τί οὖν ἐστίν; links the logic with the previous verse, almost certainly with the sense of **So what follows?** (Cf. Conzelmann, *What is the conclusion from this?*) Strictly, however, the Greek allows a less specifically consequential force, i.e., *what does this amount to?* REB’s and NJB’s *What then?* seems too abrupt; while NRSV’s and NIV’s *What should I do then?* tends to go beyond the Greek in attempting to explicate one aspect of the question.

For the translation of πνεῦμα as **my deepest spiritual being** see on v. 14. We have replaced **innermost** (v. 14) with **deepest** (v. 15a) and **depths** (v. 15b) to try to avoid any hint of Platonic or Cartesian dualisms, while retaining **spiritual** in two of the three instances to retain the resonance with πνεῦμα. However, any translation is likely either to leave the meaning unprotected against the assumptions of Western modernity (*my spirit*) or to reflect interpretative judgments about Paul’s precise meaning (e.g., BAGD, “*sing praise in spiritual ecstasy and in full possession of one’s mental faculties*”). We might have been content with BAGD, were it not for those research articles which explicitly, and with



some force, attack the use of the term *ecstasy* in these contexts, partly on the basis of overly hasty associations with Greek religions. Aune usefully explores in what sense we might speak of “altered states of consciousness” rather than the crude, overly broad, and more questionable *ecstasy*, or the bare alternative *ecstatic versus nonecstatic*. However, he here discusses “ancient prophecy” in relation to “vision trance” or “possession trance” as modes of oracular speech, and leaves us with an open question about whether the terms used in social anthropology can assist us. Certainly there is no evidence whatever, as we have regularly urged, that Paul alludes primarily, if at all, to “oracular” speech, and this would be inapplicable to the present passage, which concerns prayer and praise.¹⁶⁹ Arguments about “ecstasy” and “trance” do not take us forward constructively, but may serve to make a negative point. Thus T. Callan argues that Paul’s prophetic speech does not involve trance, whereas tongues do, since 1 Corinthians 14 turns on communicative intelligibility. On the other hand, Engelsen’s argument that since prophecy and tongues are both subject to conscious controls “one is not more ecstatic than the other” rests on a circular definition of ecstasy.¹⁷¹ It is best to follow Lange here, whose reference to “inarticulate sound” (v. 15, *in unartikulierten Laute*; cf. vv. 7 and 8) coheres with our view above.

If we are to venture into modern theories, the well-established phenomenon in psychological observation of the distinction between alpha and beta brain waves seems to apply most clearly, since any *critical reflection* at once raises our consciousness from an alpha state. Anyone who suffers from sleepless nights when “churning” problems and who uses some technique for “relaxation” (i.e., reducing beta waves to alpha waves) will know this from experience. Yet even here this offers no more than a hypothetical scenario for first-century Corinth and Paul. As Forbes observes, in 14:13–15 “the speaker in a tongue is, like the listener, unaware of the sense of his or her own utterance. Equally clearly, in Paul’s view such utterance is and ought to be under conscious control.”

A disastrous move, however, is to confuse πνεῦμα as a noncognitive or “spiritual” human capacity with *Spirit* as the Holy Spirit of God. There are at least two different reasons. First, Pauline specialists generally agree that Platonic or Idealist notions of the human spirit as a point of “divine contact” are alien to Paul and plainly alien to the explicit thrust of 1 Cor 2:10–12. Second, to read this into 14:15 is to fall into the very trap to which the Corinthians and many today fall prey, namely, of associating the operation of the Holy Spirit more closely with noncognitive “spontaneous” phenomena than with a self-critical reflection upon the word of God as that which addresses the understanding and thereby transforms the heart (cf. 14:23–25). Contrary to his usually more judicious assessments Fee repeats this disastrous confusion explicitly in his commentary and in his two more recent volumes: “my S/spirit prays.” A third factor is noted by Héring and Barrett. Barrett writes that he might have been sympathetic with this understanding, but for the fact that in v. 14 Paul uses the phrase **my spirit, my innermost spiritual being** (τὸ πνεῦμά μου, v. 14), thereby disengaging the term from *Spirit of God*: “To describe the Holy Spirit as in any sense *mine* is intolerable, and certainly not Pauline” (his italics): it denotes “part of my psychological make-up.” Héring is equally emphatic.¹⁷⁶

Paul declares that being “spiritual,” i.e., of the Holy Spirit, occurs “when the Holy Spirit controls both the spirit and the mind.” If only the mind is active, everything remains at a theoretical level; if only the heart is active, the door lies open to self-deception and credulity. If both are open to the Holy Spirit, the result can build up the community and bear the fruit (v. 14a) of love for the other. Is it too speculative to see in ψαλῶ (contracted future of ψάλλω) the combination of words and melody that express respectively the praise of mind and heart as a unity? It is easy to imagine Paul encouraging the church today to combine melody that expresses the praise of the heart with words that genuinely reflect an intelligent expression of gospel truth.¹⁷⁹ Robertson and Plummer observe: “It is possible that the ecstatic utterances [or however we understand the term] sometimes took the form of an inarticulate chant, songs without intelligible words or definite melody.” The same A. T. Robertson comments elsewhere, “Solos that people do not understand lose more than half their value in church worship.”¹⁸¹ The concern of the Reformers for public intelligibility in worship reflects Paul’s stance, and led to their addressing both traditionalists committed to Latin and enthusiasts committed to individual autonomy of expression.

16 The aorist subjunctive εὐλογήσης is read by B⁴⁶, F, G, K, and L, with Textus Receptus (cf. KJV/AV, *when thou shalt bless*) as against the widespread reading of the present subjunctive εὐλογῆς. As Fee observes, however, changes to the aorist in such constructions do occur, and the present is virtually certain. The UBS 3rd and 4th ed. *Greek New Testaments* adopt the present without serious question.

The syntax and especially the vocabulary have invited controversy. ἐπεὶ ἐὰν εὐλογῆς, **Otherwise, if you bless God**, is straightforward since ἐπεὶ takes some such meaning as *in that case* or more explicitly **otherwise** before questions implying a negative (as NJB, NRSV, and Weiss). Similarly, while εὐλογέω is seldom used in a religious sense in secular Greek, in the NT it regularly reflects the LXX usage, which in turn translate Heb. בָּרַךְ (*barak*), **to bless** (in contexts of worship) **God**. Blessing God is virtually synonymous with offering a **thanksgiving** in this context, even if theologically **blessing God** may include both *praise* and **thanksgiving**, which are not identical in other contexts.

Controversy continues to bedevil Paul’s use of πνεῦμα when it probably refers to the human capacity or disposition that stands in contrast to cognitive apprehension. On the translation **the depths of our being**, see above (under vv. 14



and 15). Since it stands implicitly in contrast to the mind (explicitly later in the verse), the addition of **only** is required to explicate the force of the term πνεῦμα here. However, it is just possible that Paul is now taking up terminology drawn from Corinth about “uttering blessings in the Spirit.” πνεῦμα might therefore denote the Spirit of God if, and only if, Paul draws the term from Corinth, i.e., it is placed in quotation marks. We use square brackets to indicate that this cannot be excluded but is improbable.

The most controversial discussion arises over the meaning of ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου, which we have translated in broad and open-ended terms as **the uninitiated person** (with NJB and Héring; cf. NRSV, *anyone in the position of an outsider* [Collins broadly similarly]; REB, *an ordinary person*; KJV/AV, *he that occupieth the room of the unlearned*; J. B. Phillips, *those who are ungifted*). The general thrust of the issue is clear enough: the person who occupies the place or position of an ἰδιώτης is embarrassed and excluded by being unable to join in the corporate response of affirmation, τὸ Ἀμήν, to an acclamation of praise or to a prayer which is unintelligible. It is also clear that ἴδιος, *one’s own*, i.e., that which *belongs to a specific individual* (in contrast to what is common or shared), encourages the inference that in broad lexicographical terms ἰδιώτης denotes *a private person*, perhaps *self-taught*, in contrast to an *expert* who is trained in a common expertise. In this respect it is possible to support *ordinary person* (REB), *unlearned* (KJV/AV), or *outsider* (NRSV). Normally, however, a person who is still *a private individual* in a context such as this carries the meaning of **the uninitiated person** (NJB). The problem is caused by the phrase *a person who held the position of, fills the place of* (ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου). This looks like a more technical category. Hence many have suggested that it denotes a *layperson* or *proselyte*, or more plausibly a *catechumen* under instruction before admission to full church membership. This would account for the use of τόπος as suggesting some formal status, and ἀναπληρῶν as denoting a specific group. Moffatt points out that if we translate *outsider*, this is to be understood *not* as an unbeliever, but as an “outsider” *in the view of “the gifted,”* i.e., *an ordinary Christian*.

Robertson and Plummer convincingly argue that especially in the case of early or small house groups “it is unlikely that ... there was a portion of the room set apart for the ἰδιῶται, or that these were laymen as distinct from officials.... Here ‘unlearned’ or ‘inexperienced’ may be the meaning; but RV margin is probably right; ‘without gifts’, i.e., having no gift of tongues.... It would therefore be somewhat like ἀμύητος, ‘uninitiated.’” Héring therefore regards the ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον clause as indicating that these “have a definite place in the assembly.... They are not pagans present by chance, but sympathizers who are yet unbaptized, or quite simply ‘ordinary’ Christians who do not possess any gifts of inspiration. The Apostle is afraid that they might be repelled by unintelligible ... speech.” This well sums up the issue, while **uninitiated** avoids any overly technical meaning at the same time as permitting the nuance *ungifted*. Schrage notes that while broadly the Greek word denotes a *nonspecialist* or *layperson*, here it denotes someone who is “not an insider” (*der Nicht-Eingeweihte*). Hence it may suggest a Corinthian term for one whom the “spiritual people” do not regard as “gifted” (like them) with “tongues.”

Amen transliterates both Gk. Ἀμήν and Heb. אָמֵן (‘amen). The LXX regularly reflects the transliteration of the Hebrew, e.g., 1 Chron 16:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6; Tob 8:8; 3 Macc 7:13. The use of the liturgical term here to signify endorsement or solemn assent to the praise or prayer of another occurs in Num 5:22; Deut 27:15; 1 Chron 16:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6, and our verse reflects the appropriation of this use in the earliest Christian churches. The word is also used more frequently in the NT at the end of the speaker’s own ascription of praise or act of prayer (e.g., Rom 1:25; 11:36; 15:33; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 2 Tim 4:18; 1 Pet 5:11; Rev 1:6). These liturgical uses are different from the use of the term exclusively in the Gospels to affirm a solemn declaration with the introductory signal *truly* (Matt 5:18; Mark 3:28; or doubly repeated in John 1:51; 3:3; 5:19, et al.). The responsive use in worship as signifying endorsement or solemn assent became prominent in the subapostolic and early patristic periods (e.g., Justin, *Apology*, 1:65–67; Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, 25), and is also a regular feature of synagogue worship (e.g., 1QS 1:18–20; *m. Berakoth* 8:8). **Amen** concludes doxologies (Rom 11:33–36; Eph 3:20–21) or petitions (Heb 13:21–22).

As we noted above, the nuance conveyed by the Hebrew verb in the niphal, *to be firm*, may be retained by the notion of an endorsement which *not only expresses formal agreement* but also thereby *nails our own colors to the mast*. Jesus, as himself the One who is true, is called **the Amen** in Rev 3:14. Paul uses the term also in the context of his own commitment in action to what he has spoken in words (2 Cor 1:15–22), which in turn reflects God’s faithful promise to remain true to what he has spoken (2 Cor 1:18, 20). Worship and prayer, Paul emphasizes, should be *intelligible and corporate*, whether or not any additional issue arises in the context of private devotion. Murphy O’Connor comments on this passage: “The goal of corporate worship is not a personal thrill, but the building up of the Body of Christ ... leaps of faith ... had to be consistent with the core of what was already accepted. Such consistency was recognized by the community shouting ‘Amen’ ... ‘this is true and valid.’”

17 This verse simply explicates and applies the principle established in the previous verses, but it places it in the context of the theme of **building up** which Paul has taken up in 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:3, 4, 5, and 12, and will repeat in 14:26. The connective γάρ, **for**, confirms the logical link. The occurrence of σὺ μὲν ... with λλ’ ὁ ἕτερος (where ἀλλά



is even stronger than δέ) signals an emphatic contrast which we have indicated by **you on your side ... but the other on his or her side**.... Paul trenchantly attacks the individualism and egocentric horizons which assume that corporate worship is simply about “God and *me*,” rather than “God and *all of us*.” On οικοδομέω perhaps in a dual sense see above especially 14:4 (with reference to Vielhauer), but even more important, 8:1 uses the verb to introduce the wider issue of Christlike concern for “the other” (ὁ ἕτερος), whether in daily life (8:6–13) or in church worship (14:1–40). We have noted the importance of οικοδομέω in Margaret Mitchell’s work.

18–19 (1) ὅτι, *that*, is inserted after εὐχαριστώ τῷ θεῷ in F, G, and many Latin MSS (cf. NRSV, NJB, NIV, *I thank God that ...* as against REB, **Thank God, I am more gifted**.... (2) KJV/AV reads *I thank my God*, but ℱ⁴⁶, κ, B, and D omit μου, followed by Westcott-Hort (RV) and other VSS. (3) κ, A, and D read γλώσση, *in a tongue*, while B, K, and L read γλώσσας, **tongues**, with the UBS 4th ed. (4) All the main MSS (except A) read λαλῶ, while K and L read λαλῶν (participle); A omits the verb. (5) Most early MSS read τῷ νοί, *with my mind* (instrumental); a variant is διὰ τοῦ νοός μου, *through my mind*. None of these affects the substance of vv. 18 and 19, and they reflect stylistic variations which express the same implicit themes or ideas.

Our translation, **Thank God, I am more gifted in tongues than any of you**, replicates the REB. Apart from the omission of ὅτι (see Textual Notes), the REB reflects the point at issue as turning on “giftedness” (in contrast to ιδιώτης, v. 16), not the sheer frequency of the use of the gift or the duration of the times when the gift is used, i.e., it is a *qualitative* rather than a *quantitative* use of μάλλον, **more**. Paul establishes personal credentials before offering a critique of that in which he himself not only shares but is especially gifted.

Virtually all commentators appear to agree that ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ has the force of **in the assembled congregation**. Hence it is astonishing that the contrast between the respective contexts of public worship and private devotion seem so often to be neglected when it is asked in crude terms whether or not Paul is “in favor of” tongues, or, more surprisingly, that he inconsistently criticizes what he values. It is transparently clear that Paul expresses thanks for a gift given “for private use” (*privat Gebrauch*; cf. v. 28b). In public the use of this gift may do more harm than good, constituting a distracting and intrusive self-advertisement (or group advertisement) into “public worship,” i.e., the intelligible communication of doxology, prayer, scripture, probably creed, and proclamation of the word of God.

Confusion has arisen simply from the imposition of a non-Pauline understanding (or at least an understanding for which there is no conclusive evidence) that tongues in public are acceptable if a second gift of “interpretation of tongues” can be provided as a two-stage operation. But we have shown above that neither the list of gifts in 12:8–10 nor 14:9 nor 14:13 envisages anything more than a tongue-speaker finding the means of building up the community at worship by praying for the gift of sharing that which causes his or her exaltation or exalted awareness by “putting it into intelligible words.” Paul does not approve of uttering unintelligible noises in public worship, whether or not someone purports subsequently to “decode” them. Moreover, since the “tongue” would normally be addressed *to God* (14:2, 15, 16), the notion of interpreting glossolalia as a “message” of prophecy addressed *to the congregation* (14:3, “prophesies ... to other people”) owes more to pietist traditions than to exegesis of this epistle. Our arguments are set forth above, and are corroborated by Paul’s allusion to Isaiah in vv. 20–25.

The numbers **five** (πέντε) in **five words** (NRSV, NJB) or **five intelligible words** (REB, NIV) and **ten thousand** (μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσση, NRSV, NIV, NJB) are *not* numerical quantifiers (see also above on μάλλον as **more gifted**). **Five** is “a round number for ‘several’ ” (Luke 12:6; 14:9). Similarly, μύριοι denotes *ten thousand* as a noun in statistical contexts, but the adjective μυρίους (here in accusative plural form in apposition to λόγους) means *countless, innumerable* (as in 1 Cor 4:15, *1 Clement* 34:6, Philo, *De Legatione ad Gaium* 54), or *myriad*. It is an extravagant term for the highest number conceivable: today, billions to the power of billions; REB, *thousands*; our translation **thousands upon thousands in a tongue**. The Revelation of John uses μυριάς in the plural in μυριάδες μυριάδων (Rev 5:11; 9:16), where any statistical interpretation misses the point and destroys the vision of innumerable millions of redeemed and worshiping people of God.

iv. Maturity as Love for the Other: Gospel and Home for Believers and Outsiders (14:20–25)

This is the fourth section of vv. 1–25, although some prefer to regard it as a first section within vv. 20–40. We argued in the introduction to this chapter that it is best understood as a corroboration and reinforcement of the cumulative argument of vv. 1–19. The use of the mind and communicative intelligibility reflects love for the other (ὁ ἕτερος, v. 17) which takes up the themes of 8:7–13 and 13:1–13. The use of gifts excludes any notion of “cleverness,” status, or competitive evaluations of privilege (cf. 2:1–5 with 14:20). “Unintelligible speech” served as a sign of judgment, of not-belonging, in Isa 28:11–12 (LXX), for unbelief. Such speech places both believers and unbelievers in positions which are inappropriate or self-defeating. The believer may feel “alien” even within the worshiping community, while it is prophetic proclamation of the gospel, not tongues, that will bring the unbeliever who may be present to Christian faith.



20 Nowhere does Paul state more clearly than in v. 20 that the way in which speaking in tongues is used at Corinth ministers to childish love of display or thoughtless self-centeredness. It is utterly pointless to seek to disengage references to childishness in ch. 13 from issues about tongues when the connection here is transparent and explicit. On the other hand, Paul does not say that speaking in tongues is childish; only that *their public use* and their tendency to minister at Corinth to *self-advertisement at the cost of concern for others* betrays the thoughtless, self-centered horizons of the child who has not yet learned to put himself or herself in the place of others and to seek to see themselves through the eyes of others. Paul uses the noun *παιδιά*, **children** (all major modern VSS), and the negative present imperative μή ... γίνεσθε suggests **do not continue to be**... A survey of the lexicographical evidence reveals that so often does *παιδίον* denote very young infants of a few days old or newborn that the English idiom **children born yesterday** serves as a legitimate intensifier. The metaphor of mental childishness also occurs elsewhere.

Paul bids his **fellow Christians** (ἀδελφοί) to retain the innocence of young **children** but to avoid their tendency toward attention seeking and lack of mature thought, especially for others. Although *κακία* is translated *evil* in NRSV, REB, **wickedness** (NJB) has much stronger lexicographical support. The difference of translation seriously affects the meaning of an important maxim. To be innocent in matters of *evil* may imply remaining aloof from seeking to understand the evil forces which contend against the good. However, to be innocent of **wickedness** entails rejecting knowledge of devious strategies which may promote one's own evil purposes, including here perhaps a hint that even religious contexts can offer subtle temptations to manipulate them on behalf of self-interests in ways which ultimately may come to be *wicked*.

The Corinthian Christians are to bring to bear all the claims to be "wise" and "mature" (Paul takes up their term τέλειοι, **mature adults**, cf. 2:6, as against νηπίοις, *babies*, in 3:1–2) *to build up others*, not to win applause for themselves or to use strategies of self-fulfillment or self-promotion (cf. 14:4). We translate the dative plural ταῖς φρεσίν, **in matters of the mind**, since this is a dative which denotes reference or sphere. The noun φρήν occurs only here in the NT (thus only in the plural), but in Plutarch and in Philo it clearly denotes the sphere of *thinking*, or *judgment*, or *understanding*. **Mind** recalls its cognate relation with φρόνησις and φρονέω. Bertram rightly perceives the issue to be one of *taking adult responsibility for others*, as against "childish" self-concern. Deluz relates the outlook of **children** to overvaluing the spectacular: "Children love anything that shines or moves or makes a noise.... Many modern Christians have the same mentality.... They would rather be made to feel than to think ... fall too easily under the spell of virtuosi ... anyone with charm.... It shows lack of maturity in the things of the Spirit."

21 With certain modifications to explicate the force, Paul quotes scripture broadly from Isa 28:11–12. **The Law** may be used to denote the whole of Jewish and Christian scripture in the OT, not just the Pentateuch (Rom 3:19; cf. also John 10:34). It remains authoritative for the young church, no less than for Jewish synagogues. The quotation, however, reflects precisely neither the LXX nor the Hebrew. C. D. Stanley observes in his specialist study: "Determining the precise relationship between the wording of 1 Cor 14:21 and the text of the LXX is one of the greatest challenges in the entire corpus of Pauline citations." Whereas some variants in the LXX tradition often account for some changes, Paul's quotation, according to Stanley, cannot be explained so easily. It remains distinct from both the LXX and from the Hebrew MT. However, (i) Origen does claim to have encountered the Pauline wording in Aquila's version (*Philocalia*, 9); (ii) if this remains uncertain, we argue that Paul combines exegesis and application in a way which addresses the differences identified in the next paragraph.

The main differences include (1) Paul's choice of ἐν ἑτερογλωσσοῖσι καὶ ἐν χεῖλεσιν ἐτέρων for the LXX's διὰ φωνισμὸν χειλέων διὰ γλώσσης ἐτέρας, (2) a shift to the first person singular λαλήσω, (3) Paul's omission of LXX's λέγοντες ... σύντριμμα ..., (4) the shift to the future tense of εἰσακούω, (5) the addition of λέγει κύριος as if it were part of the text, and (6) the substitution of οὐδ' οὕτως for οὐκ. Some tortuous explanations have been offered for such a variety of minor alterations, other than the use of memory or versions no longer extant. Dietrich-Alex Koch's is perhaps the most complex.

The technical issues assume due proportion only in the light of understanding how Paul superimposes the parallel situations of Corinth and Isaiah 28 onto one another with the effect that the genuine force of OT scripture speaks creatively to a new situation. Ronald Clements explains the situation which Isaiah addressed. "Isaiah found himself in conflict with certain priests and prophets of Jerusalem": their self-indulgence in festivities and drink had confused their speech and their thinking, and led them to mock the serious declarations of Isaiah about divine action. "Isaiah turns back their mockeries on their own head by warning of the way God himself will punish them (v. 11) ... [with] the coming of the Assyrians." "Whom will he teach knowledge?" (28:9) alludes to Isaiah's wasting his time because the scoffers are too drunk, confused, and self-confident to care. The Hebrew of 28:10 suggests "onomatopoeic ... representation of the din made by the revellers" who found Isaiah's rebuke "foolish and childish," while in 28:11 "the reference is clearly to the harsh-sounding Assyrian language which ... 'this people' would soon be hearing.... [These foreigners] would soon be teaching them a lesson...." Bruce, Kistemaker, Allo, and Schrage paint a similar background.²¹³



The two contexts match well. Those who are “wise” and “gifted” in their own eyes dismiss the plain message as “childish,” when in reality it is the supposedly wise who think and act like children. Divine judgment, as so often occurs in life, has a dimension of “internal grammar,” i.e., God permits the seeds of its own fall to operate. The disdain of plain speech comes home with a vengeance: if they want something other than intelligible speech, they can have it; however, it will serve as an uncomfortable judgment, for it will place many of God’s own people for whom they ought to care in the position of *aliens and outsiders*. As we shall see from our exegesis of v. 22, commentators differ in their judgment of where the emphasis lies. Fee and many others argue that Paul’s main concern is the effect of tongues on unbelievers: “in Paul’s context this refers to the outsiders of v. 23.” This misses the subtlety of Paul’s *dual* point: (i) tongue-speaking in public worship is inappropriate in the first place because *it places many of God’s own people in the situation of feeling like foreigners in a foreign land and “not at home” in their own home*; (ii) second, tongue-speaking, contrary to some mistaken assumptions about “spirituality” in Hellenism, *will not bring the message of the gospel of Christ home to unbelievers*. The cross is more than “religion” or “religious phenomena.”

This now accounts for many of the similarities to, and apparent divergences from, the LXX text of Isa 28:11–12, *for Paul is simultaneously quoting and applying the passage*. (1) The repetitive use of ἕτερος as an adjective or as part of a compound faithfully conveys the force of 28:11, but resonates with the wordplay between disdain for “the other” and concern for “the other” (cf. 4:6; 6:1; 14:17, disdain; 10:24, 29, concern). (2) The use of the first person λαλήσω is intensified by perceiving the prophet or apostle in a context of divine agency by the addition of (see [5] above) λέγει κύριος. (3) Some aspects of 28:11 do not directly apply to the situation, and parts of quotations are often omitted. (4) The future tense embraces the consequences which will follow if people persist in their love of the esoteric or unusual at the expense of the welfare of “the other,” for whom Christ died (cf. 8:6–13). In sum, such a situation served “to confirm scepticism, instead of arousing an inspiring faith.”

22 This is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult verses in our epistle. Chrysostom writes, “The difficulty at this place is great, which seems to arise from what is said.” Hays finds “great confusion” since v. 22 “seems to stand in direct contradiction to the explanation that follows in vv. 23–25.... Paul’s argument here is somewhat garbled.” Kistemaker notes that “this text has been problematic for every interpreter,” while Ruef and Sweet acknowledge their perplexity.²²¹ Héring asks why speaking in **tongues** is “a ‘sign for unbelievers’ and prophecy a ‘sign for believers’ (to follow the usual translation)? The exact opposite would be expected.” Uncharacteristically we receive little help from Conzelmann.²²³ As Senft observes, “everything depends on the sense which we attribute to the obscure εἰς σημεῖόν εἰναι ... **a sign for**.” After considering difficulties and possibilities, however, Senft returns to “the ancient solution of Bengel”: “Prophecy makes believers of unbelievers; the speaking tongue leaves the unbeliever to himself” (*quatenus prophetia ex infidelibus credentes facit; lingua loquens infidelum sibi relinquit*). Bengel adds that when tongues are in evidence *infideles ... infideles manent: sed prophetia ex infidelibus fideles facit*. It is unusual for Bengel to repeat himself. He recognizes that even this is only a broad match: *sermo Pauli est indefinitus*.

Our translation therefore is designed to indicate that εἰς σημεῖόν carries a different force in each of its different contexts. Yet Smit does not press the issue far enough, as his paraphrase suggests. As Barrett and many lexicographical specialists recognize, the prepositional phrase almost certainly means **serves as a sign**, while σημεῖόν may denote **a warning sign, a sign, an outward indicator, or signal** for judgment, warning, identification, or benefit. We have to choose between a wooden translation which conveys contradiction, and one which brings out the force of Paul’s point. In our survey of views we begin with our own approach. We agree with Sandnes that Paul invites the Corinthians to evaluate the respective *effects* of tongues and prophecy: what signal does each convey? Love for the other will always take account of *perceptions* and *effects* in relation to *others*.

(1) Paul has just stated in v. 21 that the experience of being surrounded by the “tongues” of the Assyrians **served as a sign** (cf. εἰς σημεῖόν εἰσιν, v. 22) (that Israel had been placed under God’s **judgment**) for unbelief. Nevertheless, this was an inappropriate situation for the people of God, who had been misled by the “people of influence” who expressed scepticism about Isaiah’s message. **Tongues serve as a sign ... for unbelievers** (τοῖς ἀπίστοις, dative of disadvantage). Hence Christian believers should not have such a “sign” marking their community worship and thereby generating a sense of “wrongness” or “strangeness” more appropriate to what *unbelievers* might be expected to feel. *Believers should feel “at home” in their own corporate worship*. Conversely, where **prophetic speech** operates with effect, this *signals* the presence and action of God in nurturing **people of faith**. *Unbelievers* do not produce **prophetic speech** which communicates gospel truth. Hence on one side **prophetic speech** characterizes the believing *church at worship*; **tongues**, on the other side, constitute *negative signs* (at least in public and in their effect) generating barriers and alienation inappropriate for **believers**.

The history of effects (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of interpretation, however, has set up *horizons of expectation* which presuppose that the series of datives are all *datives of advantage*, signifying *propriety* or *benefit* rather than external *reference, disadvantage*, or a context of *indicative judgment*. J. B. Phillips thus entirely reverses Paul’s point by



translating “That means that ‘tongues’ are a sign of God’s power, not for those who are unbelievers but to those who already believe.” However, there is no textual MS support for reversing the sequence of the terms.

(2) B. C. Johanson treats the first part of the verse as a rhetorical question posed not initially by Paul but initially at Corinth. In effect, v. 21 expresses a view held by some at Corinth, which Paul corrects in vv. 22–23: (a) large numbers of commentators express perplexity about the respective role of *unbelievers* and *believers* in relation to tongues; (b) *σημεῖον* may be used in either “a positive sense” or “a negative sense”; (c) the quotation from Isa 28:11–12 presents difficulties, although Origen’s testimony to an earlier form in Aquila should not be ignored; (d) “unintelligible tongues will be ineffective in causing ‘This people to listen to the Lord’”; (e) certain supposed solutions put forward by A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer and by O. P. Robertson contain flaws.

Johanson’s next claim is crucial. (f) In the context of the rhetorical structure the role of **as a sign for** should be expressed “in terms of *function*. . . . Function is indicated by εἰς σημεῖον. . . .” At this point, however, Johanson introduces “a new solution,” which is problematic, although the thesis that the words already constitute an earlier maxim had been proposed by Sweet.²³¹ Johanson suggests that we may understand *σημεῖον* in a positive sense in v. 22a, but that “to do so we would have to attribute the assertions in v. 22 to someone other than Paul.” This is partly indicated by ὥστε, **so then**, but within the frame of a rhetorical question: “Are tongues, then, meant as a sign not for believers but for unbelievers . . . ?” The absurdity of what some of the “glossolalists” at Corinth had apparently believed or argued emerges in Paul’s comments in vv. 23–25: “Then comes his swift rebuttal in vv. 23–25, showing that for the non-Christian tongues are madness, while it is rather prophecy that convicts the heart.” Paul expounds his critique in terms of the “childishness” of the “glossolalist” view which is in question, which in turn alludes back to his critique in 1:10–4:21, especially in relation to τέλειος (2:6) and νήπιος (3:1; cf. also 13:10–11; 14:29). A “sophist-glossolalist” group were probably using **tongues as a sign** that “God was among them.”

In our view, Paul’s appeal to the experience of making those who do not share glossolalia feel “alien” among aliens, like the exiled to whom Isaiah refers, provides sufficient explanation of v. 21 without resort to Johanson’s hypothesis. Our explanation coheres with the points made under (3) and (4) below. However, it has the merit of consistency and plausibility. Moreover, if any parallels whatever are permitted between Corinth and phenomena today, no doubt glossolalia is indeed promoted in some circles today as a **sign** of God’s “power” ministry to reach outsiders as well as authenticate the tongue-speakers. Further, deep in the origins of the Pentecostal movement, and reemphasized today, tongues are seen as “a bond of love” as well as a “fullness of divine power,” awakening faith “like a bell.”²³⁶ The exegetical and hermeneutical problem is whether this narrative experience has any close relationship with the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12–14.

(3) C. K. Barrett understands **sign** in the negative sense, namely, as a sign of judgment: “When they are not met with faith (cf. Heb 4:2) tongues *serve* to harden and thus condemn the unbeliever (cf. verses 23f.) [although] they will at least not offend a Christian assembly that understands what is going on” (his italics). The first part of Barrett’s claim coheres well with Paul’s argument. However, his entire argument elsewhere in this chapter seems to imply that speaking in tongues within the assembled church community has more negative than positive consequences for “the other,” whether “the other” is a visiting unbeliever or an “ordinary” or “uninitiated” Christian. Hence only the first part of this suggestion is entirely satisfactory.

(4) A number of research articles, e.g., by Grudem (1979), Lanier (1991), and Smit (1994), as well as work by Rengstorf (1965; Eng. 1971) and Horn (1992), stress the effect of the **sign as serving as a sign of judgment upon those who are unbelievers**: “His [Paul’s] point is that speaking in tongues not only does not open up access into the mysteries of God for the ἄπιστος, but actually bars this.” Grudem concludes that tongues without interpretation are a sign to unbelievers of God’s judgment and displeasure, whereas prophecy ministers to the experience of God’s presence and blessing.²³⁹ Lanier similarly argues that Paul follows on logically from the condemnatory force of Isa 28:11–12 to argue for the judgmental significance and hence damning effect of tongues upon **those who are unbelievers**. Smit also links the meaning of **sign** directly with the Isaiah quotation. Paul portrays **speaking in tongues** as a **sign** which inexpert **unbelievers** (rightly or wrongly) associate with, and interpret as, pagan μανία, and thereby are pushed yet further away into judgment. On the other hand, **prophetic speech** brings genuine conviction (ἐλεγχος) of truth, and hence **faith**.

Virtually all of these four views contribute factors which illuminate the text and obviate the despair of some of the commentators with whose observations we began. While Bengel caught the general tone of Paul’s concern, we can perhaps be more specific. With (3) and (4) we may agree that in the public worship of the church the transference of experience of being alien prefigured in Isaiah 28 constitutes a **sign of judgment** rather than of grace; it is **prophetic speech** which proclaims grace. With (2), we may concede with Johanson that if all else fails, we must take seriously the possibility of the use of a Corinthian maxim (as in 6:12, 10:23, and elsewhere). However, (1) coheres perhaps most closely with the precise nuance of Paul’s argument not only in vv. 20–25, but also earlier in this chapter.



23 The hypothetical clauses which paint an all-too-possible scenario build up to a climax with the keyword *μαίνεσθε* (v. 23), **you are raving and out of your mind**. We have carefully traced the nuances of *μαίνεσθαι* through the LXX (e.g., Wis 14:28; 4 Macc 7:5; 8:5; 10:13), the NT (cf. Acts 26:24, 25), the papyri (e.g., *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 1:33), Philo and Josephus (e.g., *Wars* 1.352), and in the classical Greek background, notably in Euripides, *Bacchae* 690–711, 748–68, 1095–1136, since, although this stems from the fifth century BC, this last work made a lasting impact on hellenistic understanding of the verb in the context of religion which was emotionally “high” or out of control. Without doubt most references convey the notion of being *mad* (as REB, KJV/AV), *insane*, or **out of your mind** (as NRSV and NIV). However, the verb often applies, as here, to the production of sounds while someone is **out of his mind**; hence NJB translates **that you were all raving** (also proposed, especially by Grimm-Thayer, below). To exclude either of these two nuances is to diminish the force of the verb; hence it hardly overtranslates to use (as is sometimes necessary) two English terms: **raving and out of your mind**. This need not commit us to any specific theory of a conscious equivalence to Bacchic frenzy, as Forbes rightly insists. However, the term carries the double meaning of emotional lack of self-control, expressed as **raving**, and an unattractive, even frightening loss of rational *sanity*.

The buildup of clauses is deliberately impressionistic. In accordance with frequent uses of πάντες, *all*, Paul does not enumerate a statistical totality (explicitly denied in 12:30, μή πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; i.e., **all do not speak with tongues, do they?**) but uses the kind of impressionist description that we use when we say, “**everyone** was laughing” or “**everyone** was shouting...” The same point must be made about the phrase ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη. Some have used this to infer that the *entire* community could squeeze into a single large house or villa, including sympathetic inquirers or catechumens and unbelievers. Paul is concerned, however, to float a *scenario* which will sum up his argument of 14:1–25. Conzelmann rightly warns us that “even ... the high tension of spiritual inspiration here cannot be presumed to be normal. We shall have to beware of generalizations.”²⁴⁵

Hays argues that the use of *μαίνεσθε* “does not necessarily have the pejorative sense that this translation [*you are out of your mind*, NRSV, NIV] suggests for readers today.” However, this makes Paul’s painting of a “worst scenario” even more serious: “Outsiders ... will think that this ... is simply one more mystery cult that whips its partisans into a frenzy of frothy enthusiasm.... It does not mean that the persons in question are crazy.”²⁴⁷ This does indeed run up against the criticisms put forward by Forbes. Yet again, to endorse Conzelmann’s warning against generalization, why should we *stereotype the uninitiated or unbeliever*? Some (not all) might well dismiss what is going on as yet another “hyped-up” religious cult; others (not all) more probably found a lack of sober proclamation unattractive, unhelpful, and emotionally self-indulgent. In cosmopolitan Corinth, whatever the more specific reason, it contradicted Paul’s evangelistic maxim (1 Cor 9:20–23) that he would gladly restrain whatever “rights” or “freedoms” were theoretically his, if thereby he could win for Christ the varieties of “other,” be they social elite or socially deprived, or of any specific cultural prejudice. On the meaning of ἰδιῶται, **uninitiated**, see the detailed discussion above under v. 16.

24–25 The use of εἰδὲ with the present subjunctive προφητεύσωσιν projects a scenario which the English idiom **suppose, by contrast, that ...** (used by NJB in v. 23). Again, πάντες, *all people*, is impressionist rather than numerical (see above under v. 23) and therefore should be rendered **everyone, everybody** (NIV); as against *all* (NRSV, REB). The indefinite τις ἄπιστος, **someone who is an unbeliever**, maintains the mode and mood of a projected possible scenario. The present passives ἐλέγχεται and ἀνακρίνεται express the heart of this verse: the person in question **undergoes conviction and judgment**. The Greek ἐλέγχω means *to bring to the light, to expose*, especially in classical contexts, but in the NT and often in the papyri it denotes both *conviction of sin* and *conviction of truth*, most especially in the Fourth Gospel, where the agent who brings home this conviction is Jesus Christ or the Spirit-Paraclete (John 8:9, 46; 16:8; cf. Acts 6:10; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.54; Jas 2:9; *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 1032:30; *BGU* 1138:13). The meaning rendered in our translation coheres with parallel contexts in the NT and in first-century literature. NRSV’s *reproved* is too narrow; NIV’s *convince* unnecessarily loses some force; while NJB’s *put to the test* allows contextual factors too much influence in determining a special use within the lexicographical evidence. As Calvin and Barrett note, the sense is closely parallel to that which John 16:8 ascribes to the work of the Holy Spirit—Paraclete (see below, n. 249).

Undergoes judgment coheres with this reconstruction for ἀνακρίνω, although we concede that in lexicographical terms the verb has two distinguishable meanings: (i) *to question, to examine*; (ii) **to judge, to discern, to call to account**. However, even the first meaning generally occurs in settings of accusation or judicial hearings, even if not always so. The outcome in the present context is the same: the words of the prophets bring home the truth of the gospel in such a way that the hearer “stands under” the verdict of the cross (cf. 1:18–25). The reaction portrayed in v. 25 makes it plain that the hearers perceive themselves as falling under judgment, whether for their unbelief or for their conduct, or most probably, in their eyes, for both. The word of God in Paul and in most strata of the NT brings **judgment**, grace, and promise.



It is important for our discussion of **prophetic speech** and *prophecy* (see above at 14:3) to remind ourselves that v. 25 stands in the path of C. M. Roebek's claim that prophecy is addressed only to the believing community and must not be confused with kerygma or gospel proclamation. On the contrary, this verse corroborates the arguments of Hill, Gillespie, and most especially Müller that prophetic speech enacts judgment and grace, and combines a speech-act of gospel promise with pastoral exhortation.²⁵² Both the church and the world stand under a prophetic announcement of judgment and grace in the mode of warning and promise, as indeed was the case in the OT. Müller uses the term *Bussrede*. The prophetic word, Hill and Müller insist, plumbs the secrets of the inner being of the self to generate both awareness of self-centeredness and belief.²⁵⁴ (See further the second note on Prophecy, especially section (5), where we also note the significance of the work of Vielhauer, and especially the claims of Sandnes about Paul himself [1093–94].) Since in Paul's theology it is God, especially God the Holy Spirit, who knows the secrets of the heart (cf. Rom 8:27), it is more probable that ὑπὸ πάντων (grammatically either masculine or neuter plural) embraces **all that is said** in the most inclusive sense (both prophets and the prophetic message) rather than exclusively the prophets only, especially since Paul's antecedent is not the noun *prophets* but the verb προφητεύωσιν (indefinite present subjunctive), **everyone is using prophetic speech**.

We translate τὰ κρυπτά τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ, v. 25 (*the secrets of his heart*, REB, NJB, most VSS) as **the secret depths of their very being** since the use of *heart* to convey all that Heb. לב (lebh) behind καρδία denotes has steadily become less adequate in our own culture, as *heart* becomes increasingly associated with feeling, romantic attraction, or mere innerness as opposed to the pre-conscious tendencies which drive habituation, volition, acts of judgments, and deep feeling as an integrated totality. This confrontation with the unmasking, exposing power of the divine word and divine Spirit is well described by Theissen: "The step toward uncovering the unconscious is undertaken where the interpersonal limit of understanding becomes an intrapersonal limit, where one stands over against oneself in as strange a manner as to a strange person ... accepting it as part of oneself."²⁵⁶ Bultmann reminds us that in Paul καρδία, especially in its deliberative and volitional sense, "need not penetrate into the field of consciousness at all, but may designate the hidden tendency of the self." "*Krupta tes kardias* (secrets of the heart) include unconscious contents.... What comes to light is what is hidden in the heart."

Those who **undergo conviction and judgment** (the meaning agreed by Bultmann and Theissen) **fall to their knees in obeisance and worship God**. The Greek πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον does indeed mean *to fall down on his face* (NJB, KJV/AV) in first-century language and culture. However, since this is a conscious act of worship (προσκυνήσει ... ἀπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ...), this *falling down* (NIV, REB) must not be confused with neo-Pentecostalist phenomena often described as being "slain in the Spirit." *To throw oneself to the ground* (in prostration) was used in the OT and in the first century "as a sign of devotion, before high-ranking persons or divine beings especially when one approaches with a petition ... Matt 2:11; ... Rev 5:14; 19:4; 22:8 (in all these places closely connected with προσκυνεῖν). NRSV attempts a Western cultural parallel by translating *a person will bow down before God*, which avoids certain pitfalls but loses force. Those who undergo **conviction and judgment** in today's terms **fall to their knees** both "in shame that the hidden sins of their heart should have been brought to light," and in *petitioning* God (see BAGD) for forgiveness and performing an act of worship, i.e., **falling to their knees in obeisance**. Although προσκυνέω takes the accusative in classical Greek and the LXX, in the NT it regularly takes the dative, probably more often but not exclusively. As Chrysostom observes, the aim is "not to astonish ... bringing a suspicion of madness" but "to draw people from vain-glory to ... wonder and worship."

In this context ἀπαγγέλλω denotes the declarative speech-act of **confession** or worshiping acknowledgment. The convicted persons now understand that what they had hitherto brushed aside as mere "religious phenomena," or "going through the motions" of a religious cult, are **indeed really** the case. The adverb ὄντως, formed from the adjectival participle ὄν, *being*, is generally translated *really* or *certainly*, but in modern English these words have become thinned down by overuse ("I am really pleased to say ..."). Here the portentous nature of this profound reevaluation and new grasp of truth invites a more weighty, even sonorous rendering. In this context the words convey some such confession as *in all reality*, or, to maintain **really**, the insertion of **indeed** captures the note of revised conviction. In all **reality** they encounter not simply human religion which constructs or projects a god; they encounter **God**, who draws forth authentic worship as he is authentically active and present among the believers. "God's word effects its entrance ... and then creates conviction.... It bears witness to a profound sense of unworthiness, as well as of the immediate presence of God."²⁶⁴ Allo suggests that the conviction brought about by prophetic speech stands in contrast to the Corinthian claim that it is speaking in tongues that provides the necessary sign of authenticity.

b. Does the Spirit Create Order or Anarchy? Controlled Speech and Building Up (14:26–40)

(26) What follows, then, my dear friends? Suppose that when you assemble together each contributes a hymn, an item of teaching, something disclosed, or speaks in a tongue, or puts the tongues language into words, the point remains: "let everything serve the building up of the community." (27) If it is in a tongue that someone



speaks, let only two or at the most three speak in turn, and let the one who speaks put it into words. (28) However, if he or she cannot put it into words, let them remain silent in the assembled congregation, and address God privately. (29) In the case of prophets, however, let two or three speak, and let the others sift what is said. (30) If something is disclosed to another person who is sitting down nearby, the first speaker should stop speaking. (31, 32) For you have the power for it to be one by one, every one of you, when you prophesy, in order that all may learn and everyone be encouraged or exhorted. And the spiritual utterances of the prophets are subject to the prophets' control. (33a) For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

(33b, 34) As in all the churches of God's holy people, when congregations meet in public, the women should allow for silence. For there exists no permission for them to speak [in the way they do (?)]. Let them keep to their ordered place, as the law indicates. (35) If they want to learn anything, let them interrogate their own husbands at home. For a woman to speak thus in public worship brings disgrace. (36) Or was it from you that the word of God went forth? Or are you the only ones to whom it came?

(37, 38) If anyone thinks that he or she is a prophet or a person "of the Spirit," let them recognize that what I write to you is [a command] from the Lord. If anyone does not recognize it, he or she is not [to be?] recognized. (39, 40) So then, my dear friends, continue to be zealously concerned about prophetic speech and do not forbid speaking in tongues. Only, everything should happen fittingly and in an ordered manner.

The term "controlled speech" constitutes a recurrent refrain in William R. Baker's recent volume on personal speech-ethics. Baker discusses the significance of "controlled speech" as an ethical issue in Wisdom literature, the OT, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, rabbinic literature, Graeco-Roman texts, Philo, and parts of the NT, all of which provide a background for the issue in James.²⁶⁷ The Babylonian Counsels of Wisdom perceive "order" as dependent on such axioms as "let your mouth be controlled and your speech guarded." In OT Wisdom literature "A person of knowledge uses words with restraint" (Prov 17:27), while unethical, wicked people are characterized by "a loose mouth" (cf. Ps 50:19; 59:7; Prov 25:28). Josephus observes that the Essenes stress the importance of controlled speech for order and mutual respect: "let there be no shouting ... allow each to speak in turn" (Josephus, *Wars* 2.8.6). Revealed knowledge especially merits control in the Qumran writings; this is to be communicated only "with discretion" (1QS 10:24) and "within a firm boundary" (10:25). Plato compares the ethics of speech with the kind of control that "runs in" (ἀναλαμβάνω) utterances as one would a spirited horse (Plato, *Laws* 701C). Plutarch appeals to the symbolic "fence of teeth in front of the tongue" as a guard for the ethics of speech. Philo sees the control of the tongue as a paradigm case of self-discipline (*De Specialibus Legibus* 2.195). Without this "chaos and confusion enter everything" (Philo, *De Abrahamo* 21.29, cf. *De Vita Mosis* 2.198).

Whereas some perceive Paul as merely imposing an authoritarian hierarchy or a paternalist polemic against the freedom of "enthusiasm," more attention should be paid to the background of an ethic of **controlled speech in traditions of speech-ethics** from the OT to hellenistic Judaism and Philo as a corollary of "order." Together with this, Paul's earlier emphasis expounds an **ordered dialectic between unity and differentiation** as in 12:4–31 (see introduction to 14:1–40, above). As we have noted, the role of **love** (8:7–13; 13:1–13) also plays an important part. Just arguably the dialectic of oneness and differentiation implies a trinitarian perspective in 12:3–6, and at the very least it is grounded in the character and will of God.

i. General Principles and Their Practical Application to Various Cases (14:26–33a)

26 ^κ (i.e., latest corrector), D, F, G, K, L, most minuscules, Vulgate, Syriac Peshitta, and in general Western texts include ὁμῶν after ἕκαστος to make **each** of you specific to the addressees. The Alexandrian \mathfrak{B}^{46} , ^κ*, A, B, 33, and Sahidic as well as Coptic Bohairic omit the pronoun. We agree with Metzger, Fee, and Kistemaker that the shorter text is more likely to be the earlier. KJV/AV follows the Western reading.

Virtually all commentators and VSS agree that τί οὖν ἐστίν (v. 26) carries some such sense as "What does this imply?: a question inserted in diatribe style to quicken the interest, as in v. 15: anaphora" (cf. NRSV, *What should be done, then, my friends?* REB, *To sum up, my friends;* NJB, *Then what should it be like?*). Once again we vary the rendering of ἀδελφοί in the search for a gender-inclusive equivalent, which escapes precise translation by any single English word or phrase.

(1) The first main difficulty arises from how to translate and to understand ὅταν with the present subjunctive; this is closely followed by a second major difficulty over the meaning and translation of ἔχει. NJB uses **suppose** for ἔαν with the aorist subjunctive in 14:6 and 23, but arguably the present subjunctive here with ὅταν signifies repetition: *whenever you assemble together*. Dunn believes that this verse provides "the *description* of a *typical gathering* for worship" (my italics). However, while the ἕκαστος ἔχει clauses represent possible scenarios, or, in the language of Heidegger and Ricoeur, projections of "possible worlds," the repetitive reiterative function of ὅταν συνέρχησθε falls not upon the hypothetical scenarios but on the main axiom, that "the overriding aim is to build up the congregation." This purpose of **building up the community** has cumulatively become a refrain or axiom in 14:3, 5, 12, and 26 (where



v. 12 not only uses the identical phrase πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν but also adds the implicit τῆς ἐκκλησίας, which 1 Cor 3:9 made explicit by describing the congregation as θεοῦ οἰκοδομῆ). The use of the verb οἰκοδομέω in 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4, 17 confirms this point (see above). Lietzmann is so convinced of the importance of understanding where the relationship between the indefinite hypothesis and the definite principle engages the force of the sentence that in effect he changes the strict syntax of the Greek: ἕκαστος ἔχει signifies a projected thought world serving as “surely an indirect expression of the wish ‘so should it be’”. Alternatively the sentence is downright clumsy in stylistic formulation and intends to say (*will sagen*): ‘Everyone who presents a psalm or a piece of instruction ... should do it for the purpose of building people up.’” Lietzmann’s diagnosis of the problem is right, even if he overpresses it into a change of syntax.²⁷⁶ “Edification must once more be insisted on as the true aim of them all.”

BDF observe that ἄν with the subjunctive of repeated action in the present time stands as near the conjunction or relative as possible. Hence the temporal force of *whenever* governs the **assembling together**, not the ἕκαστος ἔχει clauses, which need to be disengaged from definite description to formulate hypothetical scenarios. **Suppose that when you assemble** seems to offer an acceptable solution without radically recasting the Greek, as Lietzmann does, to achieve this purpose.

(2) The second major problem concerns the meaning and force of ἕκαστος. We have already discussed the impressionist (as against numerical) understanding of πάντες λαλῶσιν in v. 23 (see above). As Conzelmann urges, followed by Senft (but against Fee), in the same way ἕκαστος “naturally must not be pressed to the effect that every single individual has one of the gifts mentioned, but means: one has this—another has that.” The hypothetical εἴτε γλώσση in the very next verse confirms this. The meaning of ἔχει is difficult to determine. At first glance, *has* seems obvious (NRSV, NIV, KJV/AV, Barrett, Collins, Luther [*hat*]). However, Lietzmann uses *vortragen*, which means either *presents* or *performs*, while NJB renders it *brings*; REB, **contributing** (followed here by Phillips and the NT in Modern English by Montgomery). *Has* reveals how much is pre-judged by Weymouth’s explication *there is not one of you who is not ready either with ...* Do the worshipers *bring* a pre-chosen, pre-prepared choice of *psalm* or **hymn** (either or both properly translate ψαλμόν), their **item of teaching** (διδαχὴν), or something disclosed (ἀποκάλυψιν)?

In our view some of these gifts are by definition *brought* in the sense that **teaching** arises out of processes of reflection over a time span, even if an event may also trigger some more sudden insight. (Against Barrett and especially Fee, Wolff argues that the choices of psalm and teaching are “not spontaneous (*nichts Spontanes*) but an enabling by God’s Spirit for reflection of what is handed down (*Überlieferungen*).” The text simply does not specify whether a worshiper *brings* a choice of *psalm* (NJB) or *has* (has composed or is in process of composing) a **hymn** (NIV). We use the broader translation since the latter may include the former, whereas the former (*psalm*) is more specific. On the other hand, it seems odd to try to imagine “bringing” **speaking in tongues**, since this appears to represent an upsurge of deep Godward yearning, longing, or celebrating praise which seizes the worshiper in the context of worship. Hence REB’s **contribute** avoids assuming that all the named phenomena are “brought,” or that all emerge on the spot as gifts which worshipers “have” during the process of worship.

HERMENEUTICAL METHOD IN THESE VERSES

A general comment on method is invited here. It is difficult to avoid the influence of the so-called hermeneutical circle by virtue of which exegetical decisions tend to be influenced by hypothetical reconstructions of the larger picture, but the larger picture rests, in turn, on exegetical decisions. Here the difference of exegetical judgment between Lietzmann, Conzelmann, Wolff, and the present writer on one side, and Fee (with, e.g., Hays) on the other becomes apparent. In his commentary of 1987 and his later work of 1994, supported by his smaller study of 1996, Fee perceives the Pauline communities as “charismatic” and “congregational.” Thus he draws from vv. 23 and 26 the following conclusions: (i) “all the believers from all the house churches met together in some way”; (ii) “this worship was ‘charismatic’ ... a general participation of all members ...”; (iii) and “charismatic” also in the emphasis on “the more spontaneous gifts of utterance”; (iv) “All” speak in tongues and prophesy, since the apparent negation of this in 12:29–30 was merely “to discourage ‘all’ from doing so” in actual practice, even if all could if they were permitted.” Paul’s use of **each** underlines this, even though Lietzmann, Conzelmann, Schrage, and Wolff view this only as a projected scenario, while Hodge regards it as a *de facto* situation which Paul is eager to correct. (v) **Hymn** may include extempore prayer or an “interpretation” of tongues, but Fee rejects the strong possibility that, grounded in biblical tradition, the earliest hymns were probably from the Psalms of the OT. (vi) No leadership is mentioned: “the community appears to be left to itself and to the Holy Spirit.” In his study of 1996 Fee sees this verse as among “the most noteworthy available evidence [for] the free, spontaneous nature of worship in Paul’s churches ... with the (potential) participation of everyone (1 Cor 14:26)... Spontaneity does not mean lack of order.”

The points carefully outlined above, including the contributions of Lietzmann, Conzelmann, and Wolff, are not adequately addressed (although Wolff [German 1996] and Schrage [German 1999] postdate Fee’s two books). It is essential to allow for a distinction in translation and meaning between those gifts which can hardly be other than



spontaneous (e.g., tongues), those which are likely to require sustained biblical reflection (e.g., **item of teaching**), and those which resist exclusion from either category (**prophetic speech, something disclosed**). Wolff's attention to tradition in Paul is confirmed elsewhere in this epistle. Bengel retains a judicious balance. In addition to recognizing that gifts may be reflective or spontaneous, he also questions the numerical or literal understanding of *all*, but adds, "Then was more fruitful than today when one single person (*unus*) ... fills up the time with a sermon."

(3) The third main difficulty concerns the meaning and translation of ἀποκάλυψιν and more especially of ἐρμηνείαν. Again, *a revelation* (NRSV, REB, NIV, NJB, KJV/AV) seems to suggest an act of divine disclosure on the spot. The word may indeed include this, but it does not exclude the communication of what came to be revealed by God through some experience or through biblical reflection prior to the act of worship itself. NJB covers this eventuality by *bring ... a revelation*, but then this excludes the implied contemporaneity of NIV's *has ... a revelation*. In Gal 1:12, 16 Paul uses ἀποκάλυψις of the revelation of God's Son which he had received at his call, albeit with ongoing consequences and entailments. In 1 Cor 1:7 the term denotes the future appearance of Jesus Christ. In 14:6 "ἀποκάλυψις ... is distinguished from glossolalia and grouped together with 'knowledge or prophecy or teaching'; it is thus ... something presented in an understandable fashion." Hence **something disclosed** avoids either foreclosing the temporal scope of the term or becoming distracted by modern philosophical and theological controversy about "revelation." The disengagement from later theological traditions runs parallel with the rendering of διδασχὴ as *a piece of teaching* (Barrett), *instruction* (REB, NIV, NJB), or *lesson* (NRSV), in contrast to the older KJV/AV, *a doctrine*.

The most controversial problem arises from the meaning of ἔχει ἐρμηνείαν, translated above as **puts the tongues language into words** but translated elsewhere as *has ... an interpretation* (REB). Without question what is interpreted or put into words is *that which is* potentially but not actually articulated in the speaking in tongues, as the use of the precise phrase ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν in 12:10 confirms. Barrett translates interpretation, but also affirms "of a communication made in a tongue." Yet we have already questioned in what sense, if any, the preconscious or sublinguistic experience which prompts sounds described technically as **tongues** serves as an actual rather than potential communication. Wittgenstein wrestles continuously with the relation between thought and language, and between experience, stance, and "self-awareness" (cf. συνειδησις in 8:7–13). He observes, "Meaning is as little an experience as intending. But what distinguishes them (sub-linguistic "private," dormant, inoperative meanings) from experience? They have no experience-content. For the contents (images for instance) ... are not the meaning. The intention *with which* one acts does not 'accompany' the action any more than the thought 'accompanies' the speech... 'Talking' (whether out loud or silently) and 'thinking' are not concepts of the same kind." "Talking" becomes communicative only in relation to a given context and semiotic code which presupposes a shared competency between speaker and hearers. Without the latter, "if God had looked into our minds he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of."²⁹² However, a directed longing, a praising stance, an overflowing heart, all these constitute realities which Wittgenstein's hypothetical "God" *could* "see," even if not as "meanings" to be communicated.

It is difficult, unless this analysis is wildly wrong, to understand what is "there" for another human agent, albeit through the Spirit, to interpret as a communicative message. However, it is entirely plausible that, like waking from a scrambled dream, or raising one's threshold of brain waves from the alpha waves of contemplation to the beta waves of meditation, in this very experience meaning emerges as the transnormal experience and attains intelligibility within a context of behavior or events for the speaker, who may then put it into words. Far from causing insurmountable problems, therefore, our understanding of this Greek phrase supports and coheres with our exegesis of 14:2, 4, 6–11, 13 and 18–22 (see above for exegesis of and Notes on these verses, including a response to the counterarguments of Christopher Forbes).

The principles of **the building up of the community** now receives full weight and expression. It is in the first place "a general rule" (*la règle générale*) (cf. v. 12). We have already considered arguments for explicating what is implicit in **building up**, namely, **building up the community**. Barrett confirms these arguments: "The last three words are not in the Greek, but repeatedly (e.g., v. 4) Paul chooses to apply the metaphor of edification to the whole body of Christians rather than to the individual." Our translation of this phrase, therefore, replicates Barrett's.

27 Once again, most VSS and most commentators envisage an agency *additional* to the person or persons who speak(s) in tongues as providing an interpretation of the processes which have overwhelmed the speaker or speakers. However, we have argued consistently that all (or at least virtually all) the relevant passages in 12:1–14:26 which use διερμηνεύω or ἐρμηνεύω (especially 14:6 and 14:13) are more likely to refer to the persons who speak in tongues as themselves articulating what had otherwise been inexpressible in everyday speech. We may recall that Luther and Heinrici hold this view especially of 14:13. The syntax makes this understanding entirely compatible with this verse, even if on its own the Greek could be understood either in the traditional way or in the terms proposed here.

First and foremost, both BDF and BAGD, together with H. D. Betz in *EDNT*, firmly agree that the numeral εἷς (here translated **the one who speaks**) passes regularly "from the force of a numeral (*one* as opposed to several) to that



of τις (indefinite article) ... paralleled in English [“one speaks ...”], German, and the Romance language [reaching] its climax in modern Greek. The model for the NT was also Hebrew אֶחָד [*echad*] and Aramaic אֶחָד [*chad*].” The numeral may serve to denote “*someone ... exactly the same thing as the indef. art.... someone, ... Mk 10:17; εἰς ὄνοματι κλεοπαῖς Lk 24:18 ... perhaps Hebraistic (cf. Num 1:1; 2 Esdr 10:17).*” “In koine Greek the use of εἷς is extended so that it increasingly takes the place, e.g., of the indefinite pronoun τις.... Also significant is the influence of Semitic usage.” It might be thought that its syntagmatic relation to **two or at the most three** would ensure a numerical meaning, and this is what the standard translations assume. However, in a seriatim group εἷς τις ἐξ αὐτῶν (Luke 22:50) can be used to refer back to antecedents (v. 49, οἱ περὶ αὐτόν ...). Here, therefore, εἷς may refer back in syntax to the τις of the first clause within the verse, varied not only for stylistic reasons but *also to emphasize the preference for a single speaker*, albeit with a concession for **two or at the most** (expressing the reluctance of this concession) **three**. It is noteworthy that Fee allows that εἷς here “could refer to one of the ... tongues speakers.

Second, Conzelmann, Findlay, and NRSV render καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος “*and in turn, [or “by turns] ... not all confusedly speaking at once,*” against Edwards’ notion that “they speak antiphonally (ἀνὰ μέρος “in turns”) until they come to the end of the utterance,” passing into antiphonal church music “by an easy and apparently rapid gradation.” REB and Barrett’s *one at a time* conveys the same idea. Presumably two speakers felt so convinced that they were inspired that they felt “impelled” to speak even if they overrode another. If several are overwhelmed by feelings or experiences that find initial expression in **tongues**, these are to cease to let **one** or **two** (never more than three) make these feelings or experiences communicable so that the community may be edified by joining in with the prayer or praise, aware of its grounds and content. However, these utterances are to remain firmly within “the ethics of controlled speech” (see above, introduction to 14:26–40).

Wolff helpfully compares a parallel “rule” for the avoidance of “confusion” in worship in the Qumran community (1QS 6:8–10). The “rule” at Qumran in the Manual of Discipline ensures that worshipers listen properly to their neighbors before bursting forth into speech. Fee observes that unlike pagan “ecstasy,” Christian inspiration of either tongues or prophetic speech “is not ‘out of control.’ ... The Spirit does not ‘possess’ or ‘overpower’ the speaker.”³⁰³ Even so, Paul limits these “interventions” because, as Héring notes, if tongue-speaking in public has to be articulated in plain words, and if on top of this prophetic speech has to be tested, by the time that one adds Bible readings, psalms, prayer, and so forth it might be “necessary to dam these floods of eloquence.” On the other hand, we need not suppose that the status of every prophetic declaration was necessarily determined and foreclosed on the spot, as Héring implies. Craig asks (if an “interpreter” is an additional agent), “Can it be that Paul is giving here a permission on the basis of conditions which could not often be met? How could anyone know in advance that another would have the gift ...?”³⁰⁵ For, as Fee concedes, “interpreter of tongues” is not a habituated personal gift comparable with “teacher” or “prophet.” Thus, either Paul is very negative, or the verb denotes the tongue-speaker’s gift to use intelligible words for the experience.

nd v. 36 introduces Paul’s indignant rhetorical questions following the disjunctive particle ἢ. He suggests an original setting in which Paul argued for eschatological freedom. “Paul’s rhetorical questions are his sarcastic rebuttal of his opponents’ position.”³⁵⁶

Horrell finds the view of Odell-Scott and Allison “implausible” not least because, as Conzelmann also notes, v. 36, which attacks the self-important claims of some at Corinth to be “different,” then leaves v. 33b *either* as part of the Corinthian slogan, which would not cohere with our knowledge of Corinth, *or* as simply hanging without continuation until after an overly long quotation, *or* as belonging to vv. 26–33a, which, apart from Barrett, KJV/AV, RV, Alford, and Phillips, is widely accepted as belonging with vv. 34–37 (as UBS 4th ed., NRSV, REB, NIV, NJB, Conzelmann, and most writers).³⁵⁷ “The point about the particle ... makes most sense when v. 36 is linked with v. 33.” Witherington offers stronger and more detailed arguments why the hypothesis of Odell-Scott and Flanagan and Snyder are open to doubt. In sum, because of such phrases as **as in all the churches of God’s holy people**, and because 6:12; 10:23; 7:1 et al. represent not “rebuttals” but circumstantial qualifications “they raise more questions than they answer.” With a deft turn, he adds: “In all probability Paul is anticipating the response he expected to get (v. 36) when the Corinthians read his argument (vv. 34–35).” The decisive objection, however, arises under the next heading.

(3) Paul’s Use of Contextual Terms: “Speaking,” “Silence,” “Order,” and “Churches”

(a) Speaking

We strongly contend, as Earle Ellis and Ben Witherington do, that vv. 34–35 take up “a large amount of significant vocabulary” from the verses which immediately precede them. The four key terms (as Witherington rightly asserts) are λαλέω (repeatedly from 14:14 to 32), σιγάω (14:28, 30, 34), ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (14:28, 35; cf. 34); and ὑποτάσσω (14:32, 34). Ellis stresses that the use of σιγάω, *to be silent, to stop speaking, to refrain from speaking*, is “the catch-word connection between verses 28, 30, 34,” which is overlooked by theories of interpolation. It is this that constrains and shapes our translation, as we indicate in the brief introduction to vv. 33a–36. Against the argument that the use of οὐ



γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται, **there exists no permission**, is not Pauline, several writers refer with approval to S. Aalen's argument that the key word is drawn here by Paul from a rabbinic formula used in the context of biblical texts, especially in the Pentateuch, which express a principle often introduced with ὁ νόμος λέγει, **the law indicates**. BAGD, Moulton-Milligan et al. and Grimm-Thayer provide instances of the verb in the sense of *it is permitted* (sometimes with the perfect stative sense, **there exists permission**) in the papyri, Josephus, and other first-century sources.

(b) *Silence*

The verb σιγάω, depending on context, means either **to stop speaking** (as in v. 30, also REB), or *to hold one's tongue*, or *hold one's peace*, or **to refrain from using a particular kind of speech**, or *speech in a presupposed context*. Hence while KJV/AV translates *keep silence* (v. 34) NEB has *should not address the meeting*, although REB returns to *should keep silent*, even though it translates λαλεῖν as *have no permission to talk*. On the other hand, vv. 29–33 clearly concern **prophetic speech**, and v. 29b especially the **sifting of prophetic speech**. We must therefore firmly keep in view that since 11:5 makes it clear that Paul approves of women using **prophetic speech** their *silence* may allude either to **stopping speaking** or more probably to the possibility of sitting in judgment over prophetic speech which may come from their husbands, i.e., **sifting prophetic speech**, or to a constant intervention of **questions** (cf. v. 35) under the guise of **sifting** what has been said. To provide a balance between contextual constraints and unknown factors, we propose a general term in keeping with Paul's own in the previous verses, namely, **should allow for silence**.

(c) *Order*

The contextual character of ὑποτάσσω is constrained by an explicitly double context. In v. 32 the verb is used in the middle voice to denote *self-control*, or **controlled speech**. Paul may be insisting on a specific extension of this to a group who saw reflective critical control as reimposing an oppressive “order” from which they had been liberated. A. C. Wire, from the standpoint of a feminist critique of Paul's antiegalitarianism, paints a plausible scenario for such a group. In this case Paul has to extend his principle of “order” (τάσσω) to those who might genuinely perceive such an imposition as an apostolic power bid to quench the Spirit and to curb legitimate liberty.

A second context of “order,” then, is also introduced. This is larger than speech-ethics or ecclesiology. The Pentateuch (ὁ νόμος) declares the *ordered character of creation and human life* and the regulative character (especially Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers) of *boundaries* or *differentiations*. REB well captures this second context by translating ὑποτασσέσθωσαν as *they should keep their place as the law directs* (against NRSV), *should be subordinate*, or, worse, NIV, *must be in submission*. These are quite different in force from the theological context of **keep their ordered place**.

NRSV and NIV presumably rest partly on lexicography and partly on the exegetical tradition which sees **the law** here as referring to Gen 3:16, the “subordination” of Eve. Chrysostom, Bengel, Godet, Grosheide, Robertson and Plummer, and Orr and Walther are among those who support this tradition. F. F. Bruce, however, shows the difficulty of this view and offers a series of constructive comments. He agrees with most commentators that **the law** is likely to refer to the Pentateuch (cf. 9:8), but nevertheless rejects the widespread view that it refers specifically to Gen 3:16. He observes: “This is unlikely, since in MT and LXX Gen 3:16 speaks of a woman's instinctive inclination ... (Heb. תְּשׁוּקָה [teshuqah]; Gk [LXX] ἡποστροφὴ) towards her husband, of which he takes advantage so as to dominate her. The reference is more probably to the creation narratives...” We may take this much further. The patterns of **order** demonstrated in divine actions of creation through differentiation and order and in the Levitical and Deuteronomic codes are integral to the Pentateuch. The prior state of “the earth” was “without form and void” (Heb. תְּהוֹ וּבְהוֹ, *tohu wabohu*, almost onomatopoeic for chaotic abyss, Gen 1:2). God then “divides” or “separates” light from darkness (Gen 1:4) and heaven from earth (1:6–8) to give each “form.” This principle of **order** and *differentiation* (Heb. בָּדַל, *badal*, 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18; LXX διαχώρισεν, vv. 4, 6, 7, διαχωρίζειν, vv. 14, 18, διαχωρίζον, v. 6) occurs in the standard creation parallels in Babylonian and Egyptian texts.

This conviction that God the Holy Spirit creatively transforms chaos into **order** runs throughout the scriptures, and as Stephen Barton reminds us, anthropological and biblical research cohere and converge in exposing the importance of “boundaries” and “markers” for determining what is “out of place” or suitably “in place” in the life of **God's holy people**. Barton himself argues that the specific central issue in 14:33b–36, as it is also in 11:17–34, arises from “conflict ... between Paul and the Corinthians about *where the line is to be drawn between church and household*” (Barton's italics). However, “the social importance of boundaries,” which also relates to issues of “sacredness” and “power,” is not confined, in our view, to that between church and household in this passage.³⁷⁰ Barton cites the standard work of E. Leach, Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, and V. W. Turner among others on the anthropological background, and Wayne Meeks, G. Theissen, and E. Schüssler Fiorenza on related issues in the NT. Philo, as Barton notes, relates male-female boundaries to boundaries of place, especially the contrast between public space and the home (Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.169–71).



What seems surprising is the extent to which writers tend to overspecify the particular aspect of boundaries of “order” which Paul has as his main concern: husbands versus wives; public space versus the home; speech versus silence; controlled speech versus uncontrolled “inspired” or “ecstatic” speech. Although her work defends the emancipated women prophets against an insecure authoritarian Paul, A. C. Wire is surely right to identify the very large issue of *whether “order” still applies to a charismatic gospel community. In the eyes of many at Corinth, it did not; in Paul’s view, such a claim undermines the very unity of God by making the God of the Spirit of the new age contradict the God who revealed his ordered ways through scripture* (cf. **the law** in a way which would later be called Marcionite or Montanist). Indeed, Wire explicitly argues that Paul’s “rhetoric” depends largely on a (male) logic of differentiation: thought versus reality (3:18; 8:2, 3; 10:12; 11:16; 14:37–8); private versus public (7:2, 8–9, 36; 11:5a, 21–22a; 14:18–19a, 28, 34–35; 16:2); self-benefit versus community benefit (1:10; 3:3; 8:9–11; 9:22; 10:24, 28–29, 32–33; 11:21–22; 12:7, 24b–25; 13:5b; 14:3, 4, 12); shame versus honor (1:26, 27; 4:10, 14; 11:3–7, 13–15, 21–22; 12:23a; 14:34–35; 15:42, 43a); and human versus divine (2:12–15; 3:1, 3; 6:15–17; 7:32–34; 10:21–22; 11:7, 20–21; 15:50): “Paul’s rhetoric in 1 Corinthians again and again stresses ... dissociation ... antithesis... [The Corinthians, especially their women prophets,] do not expect the Lord’s Spirit to produce resolution ... an ordered meal in contrast to strife, disorder... Rather, the spirit seems to be known for generating multiple authorities in contrast to a world of stated authority.” Paul integrates these differentiations, Wire argues, by appeals to unifying definitions, justice, scripture, argument, God’s calling, the Lord’s command, structures of reality, and “universal church practice.”³⁷⁵ Wire is not alone in ascribing a special sense of “emancipation” to women’s opinion at Corinth, which generated a specific theology of liberation.

All of these points seem to substantiate our understanding and translation of ὑποτασέσθωσαν as **let them keep to their ordered place**. It is extremely important to distinguish this from *submission* based on Gen 3:16 (see Bruce’s comment above), since this then confuses the Christian believer’s role within *the created order* with a role still unresolved within *fallen* creation, which then appears to conflict with Gal 3:28. Thus Kistemaker rightly understands the issue as one of “respect” in God’s order, in which, Witherington observes, “women are not being commanded to submit to their husbands, but to the principle of order” (although he unduly adds, “in the worship service”). The proof of the permanence of the principle of **order** even within an eschatological mode emerges in 1 Cor 15:28. When everything has been properly ordered (ὑποταγῆ ... τὰ πάντα, Jesus Christ, *the Son*, will also resume his ordered place (ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται) in relation to the God who orders all things (τῷ ὑποτάξαντι ... τὰ πάντα). This exhibits an “ordered” Trinity, not a “subordinationist” Christology.

(d) *The Church and Speech*

Wire is right about Paul’s concern that Corinth does not make unilateral local decisions which are at odds with **all the churches** since these are no less the *one holy people of God*. The context makes it quite clear why Paul uses ἀγίων (against those who mistakenly urge that this phrase is “non-Pauline”). In contrast to Babel, the Spirit of God brings God’s people together as one holy people. Paul anticipates the later so-called “marks of the church” in classical theology as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” as many confess Sunday by Sunday in the Nicene Creed. This verse looks back to 1:2, “called as holy (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις) with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place—their Lord as well as ours.”

It is essential to ask what Paul means by **speaking in this context** of church practice. Since Paul expresses no reservation at all about a woman’s praying (προσευχουμένη) or using prophetic speech (ἡ προφητευσουσα) in 11:5, **speaking** cannot denote speaking of any kind without qualification. It is possible that the universal practice was more “strict,” and that Paul cites it with broad approval, subject to the qualification enunciated in 11:5 (see below). However, it is likely that the *contextually presupposed* understanding which does not need to be explicated for the addressees is either a *failure to stop speaking* (if Wire’s hypothesis about a more “liberated” and “spiritual” women’s group is valid, i.e., they would be resistant to the notion of giving priority to an ethic of controlled speech over spiritual inspiration), or more probably the *disruptive sifting of prophetic speech* (as in v. 29), which might involve (1) repetitive interruption with questioning; and (2) the possibility of wives cross-examining their husbands, especially if, as is developed in the *Didache*, issues of contextual lifestyle are part of the sifting. This scenario becomes more plausible when we review the remaining issues.

Fee observes that, apart from those who regard vv. 34–35 as a non-Pauline interpolation, the majority of (especially Protestant) commentators regard it as axiomatic that Paul refers either to some form of *disruptive speech*, or, as a possible alternative, that 14:34–35 is a more formal *church* setting than 11:2–16. The latter is not easy to sustain, since Paul at once goes on to discuss the Lord’s Supper in 11:17–33, where the immensely solemn wording about self-examination (11:28) and drinking judgment on oneself (v. 29) precludes the notion that ch. 11 is like being “at home” (ἐν οἴκῳ, v. 34). What emerges, however, is that neither *silence* nor *speech* nor *church* is used in a generalized, context-



free way. Thus Bruce interprets the issue as one of “forbidding them to interrupt proceedings....” In what sense they might “interrupt,” however, awaits further comment.

(4) Residual Issues: A Pre-Pauline Rule? Relation to 11:5? Jewish and Greek Backgrounds? A Scenario

(a) If we concur with Witherington and others that what is at issue is not “speech” as much as “*abuse of speech*,” a probable scenario begins to emerge. All of Paul’s language is context-specific, although he also appeals to the established tradition of the churches in general that respect for order entails silence in the kind of context that is under discussion. Ellis’s suggestion, reformulated by Eriksson but which Fee scarcely pauses to consider, that Paul takes up a *pre-Pauline* tradition and adds it in the margin to otherwise wholly context-relative argument, is defended by Barton as cohering with, and supporting, Paul’s sense of place, thereby allowing for Paul’s endorsement of a wider principle which can be contextually applied and would account for supposedly non-Pauline phrases *without* regarding them as *post-Pauline*. This is a possibility, but it remains an unnecessary hypothesis in the light of our discussion above on the relation between **the law** and **respect for order** which permeates the Pentateuch. There is nothing whatever “un-Pauline” about the allusion to **the law**, once we have grasped the exegetical issues. We shall return to **there exists no permission** shortly.

(b) Most of the hypotheses about “reconciling” 11:5 with 14:33b–36 remain unnecessary. The widespread notion that whereas 11:2–16 speaks of prophetic speech, the use of *λαλεῖν* refers to *chatter* in these verses ignores first-century lexicographical evidence and the context of discussion in 14:27–40. Deluz writes: “Paul, then, is not forbidding women to undertake ‘ministry of the word’; he is forbidding them to indulge in feminine chatter which was becoming a considerable nuisance.” Moffatt asserts, “*Keep quiet* means even more than a prohibition of chattering. Worship is not to be turned into discussion groups....” This view seems to have gained currency from Heinrici, who, together with Héring, cannot imagine Paul’s silencing “inspired” or “liturgical” speech, but can see him as calling to order “ordinary members of the congregation.”³⁸⁶ C. and R. Kroeger argue that Paul forbids either “chatter” or, at the other end of the spectrum, “frenzied shouting.” C. K. Barrett, however, soundly dismisses the faulty lexicography to which such interpretations of *λαλεῖν* often appeal. The meaning *to chatter* does occur in classical Greek of the earlier centuries, “but in the NT and in Paul the verb normally does not have this meaning, and it is used throughout chapter 14 (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 39) in the sense of inspired speech.” Fiorenza’s argument that 11:2–16 refers to women as such, but 14:33b–36 refers only to married women is also possible (especially since *γυναῖκες* may mean *married women*, or *wives*, as well as *women*) but remains speculative and not perhaps the most obvious explanation if no contradiction between 11:2–16 and 14:33b–36 arises from a contextual exegesis.

(c) A short research article by D. J. Nadeau (1994) reminds us that in this polemical and contextually constrained situation Paul is deeply concerned to avoid any confusion between the emerging Christian churches and marginal Graeco-Roman or oriental cults in which women exercised more prominent roles than in the synagogues which formed the Jewish roots of the churches. Paul expresses his missionary or evangelistic concern in his allusions to what unbelievers will make of tongues (14:23) and his hopes for their conversion under sober prophetic communication (14:24, 25). In 9:19–23 he has stated that he himself is willing to undergo voluntary restraint and control, even of that to which he has a “right,” if it enhances his attempts to win others for Christ. Controlled speech reflects the traditions of the Bible, the synagogue, and the early churches. Perhaps this is why he uses the rabbinic formulations concerning whether **permission exists** and what **the law** indicates. Nadeau has well noted one major strand in Paul’s concerns, although he has not set forth the whole picture, as Paul’s unqualified support for prayer and prophetic speech by women in 11:5 demonstrates. However, if a form of speech or timing of speech other than prayer or proclamation is involved which may generate more hellenistic than Jewish resonances, then Nadeau has taken us forward in some measure.

(d) With Witherington, we believe that the speaking in question denotes the *activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public*. This would become especially sensitive and problematic *if wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct which supported or undermined the authenticity of a claim to utter a prophetic message*, and would readily introduce Paul’s allusion to reserving questions of a certain kind for home. The women would in this case (i) be acting as judges over their husbands in public; (ii) risk turning worship into an extended discussion session with perhaps private interests; (iii) militate against the ethics of controlled and restrained speech in the context of which the congregation should be silently listening to God rather than eager to address one another; and (iv) disrupt the sense of respect for the orderliness of God’s agency in creation and in the world as against the confusion which preexisted the creative activity of God’s Spirit.

The issue of whether “order” merely attaches to worship services and ecclesiology or to larger questions about God, the Spirit of God, and divine governance which is to be reflected in **God’s holy people** appears to represent a point of divergence from Witherington’s otherwise helpful analysis. Wire’s analysis of the situation, whether our own theology lies with the Corinthian women prophets or with Paul, should not too easily be brushed aside. Two different



understandings of God and of the divine Spirit are at issue. Even if the broader picture is rejected, however, to understand **speaking as sifting prophetic speech** takes thorough account of the earlier context of vv. 32–33, and of that to which these verses lead on in v. 37. Otherwise v. 37, **If anyone thinks that he or she is a prophet under the influence of the Spirit** ... loses its contextual meaning and leaves a worse case of “Pauline authoritarianism” than vv. 34–35!

(5) What Kind of Interrogation? (14:35)

Most of the fundamental exegetical issues have already been discussed above. In different ways Stephen Barton and Antoinette Wire clarify the importance of boundaries between public and private space in relation to the issues under discussion. In Wire’s view Paul wishes to disempower the women by confining their “place” to the home. For Paul, however, the concern is not to disempower women, but (i) to reflect in life and worship the dialectic of creativity and order which reflects God’s own nature and his governance of the world; (ii) to keep in view the missionary vision of how any Christian activity, whether corporate or individual, is perceived in the world still to be reached by the gospel (cf. 9:19–23; 14:23–25); and (iii) to avoid a merely localized or brazenly unilateral self-regulation which nurtures the false sense of corporate self-sufficiency of what Calvin calls here “a church ... turned in on itself, to the neglect of others.” This verse thus comes in between the allusions in vv. 33b–34 to **all the churches of God’s holy people** (v. 33) and **when congregations meet in public** (v. 34), and in v. 36 to the apostolic origin and shared currency of **the word of God**.

If, as we believe, Witherington is right in asserting that the context of discourse refers most particularly to the **sifting, weighing, testing, or discerning** of prophetic speech, it has even been the case that “a prophet is not without honour except in his own homeland and in his own home” (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ, Matt 13:57); or still further in Mark 6:4, 5: “a prophet is not without honour (ἄτιμος) except in his own homeland and among his relatives (καὶ ἐν τοῖς συγγενεῦσιν αὐτοῦ) and in his home (καὶ ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ) and he could do no work of power there.” The fact that this saying occurs in all four Gospels (cf. Luke 4:24; John 4:44), and that a version of the axiom seems to occur also in the *Gospel of Thomas* 31, suggests that an early authentic saying of Jesus may have become virtually a proverb in the early church as the experience of the fate of Jesus was replicated for early Christian preachers. On Matthew, Hagner comments: “Jesus was widely held to be a prophet (cf. 21:11, 46). The people of his own home town, however, and even his own household or family (cf. Mark 3:21) were outraged and indignant at the pretensions of one who was to them so familiar and hence thought to be ordinary ... (with wider scope ... John 1:11).” We have only to recall the debates at Corinth about the status of “people of the Spirit” as against those who were deemed “ordinary” to understand the immense piquancy and sensitivity when a person uttered **prophetic speech**, and as it was **sifted**, or even perhaps to initiate a “sifting,” a wife or close relation might interrogate the speaker in public about how the prophets matched their spiritual state or their lifestyle in daily situations as part of the “testing.” If even the intimate family of Jesus found his implicit status a *cause of stumbling* and **affront** (σκάνδαλον, Mark 6:3; 1 Cor 1:23), we need not find any difficulty in envisaging the same **affront** caused by the implication that an irritating husband might be regarded as “spiritual” in this context. Does *his* life really suggest that the Holy Spirit of God prompts what he says? This calls for **sifting** indeed!

We therefore suggest that ἐπερωτάωσαν means something more than *let them ask their (own) husbands* (NRSV, REB, NJB). In Mark 14:60–61 the high priest *cross-examined* or **interrogated** Jesus (ἐπηρώτησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν) while in v. 61 the same verb moves from judicial investigation to virtual accusation. In hellenistic literature the word may be used of questioning the gods sometimes in the LXX sense of inquiring into God’s will. Even in examples concerning *asking questions* in everyday life. Grimm-Thayer note the mood of **interrogation** which can still apply in their first entry: *to accost one with an enquiry, to put a question to ... to interrogate*. They convincingly explain the compound ἐπί as having a *directive* force, which governs an accusative (here in v. 35 τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας). They cite the quasi-legal context of *cross-examination* in Mark 11:29, where Jesus **interrogates** “the chief priests and the scribes” about the basis on which they simultaneously *reject his authority* while purporting to *accept the authority* of John the Baptist. If anywhere the Marcan narrative has to do with **sifting** authoritative speech, it is surely here. Thus the noun ἐπερώτημα oscillates between *inquiry* and *demand*, with overtones of earnest intensity. By contrast, without the directive compound, the *simple* verb ἐρωτάω means more generally *to ask*, in an “open” sense.

In contrast to the *honor* which Jesus associated with the recognition of a prophet (see above), the embarrassing and humiliating cross-examination or **interrogation** of a prophet by a close relative (especially in Jewish or Jewish and Roman cultural context by a wife or close relative who is a **woman**) brings not *honor* but humiliation and **disgrace**. The importance of the honor-shame universe of discourse for first-century Corinth (in contrast to the purity-guilt contrast of the post-Augustan West) stands in the foreground here. J. K. Chance asserts the importance of the honor/shame contrast especially in contexts of *kinship or gender*, both in the biblical writings and in anthropological research. Gender and kinship raise the stakes to “highly emotional” levels, where what is “local” (not merely general) intensifies and personalizes issues.⁴⁰⁴ Over the centuries, however, *shame* has become almost merged into *guilt*, in contrast to more public or intersubjective aspects of the *respect, approval, or disapproval of others*, especially in the family, community,



or state. The best equivalent in modern English is to *win approval* or **disgrace**. If we restructure the adjective *αἰσχρός*, *shameful*, *disgraceful*, *dishonorable*, *unbecoming*, the force of Paul's words may be most accurately conveyed by to **speak thus in public worship** (ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ stands in semantic contrast to ἐν οἴκῳ) **brings disgrace**. Paul emphasizes **disgrace** by placing *αἰσχρόν* as the first word of v. 35b; English achieves the same effect by placing it last in the sentence.

We may note in passing that whether or not the allusions to **silence** and to **disgrace** in Titus 1:11 consciously look back to our verses, those who are enjoined to be **silent** in Titus 1:11–13 are the broader category of the *leaders* rather than the *women*, even if the issue of disruption and disgrace remains the same. A loud mouth and insistent, polarized argumentation confound the force of the gospel and undermine mutual respect when what is required is a lifestyle which respects the need for self-control in the ethics of speech. Once again, I have elaborated this point with reference to Titus 1:12 and 13 or elsewhere, since the role of these verses in relation to the argument of the epistle is often misunderstood. Kierkegaard comments on these verses to extol the virtue of silence in just such a broader context: "Silence is just what is needed so that the Word of God may work its work in us... We can only hear the word of God in silence."⁴⁰⁶ Witherington also broadens the issue to all people: "The Corinthians should know that the OT speaks about a respectful silence when a word of counsel is spoken (Job 29:21)." However, the context constrains the scope of the meaning and application when the issue is more specifically that of women and silence. An early example of decontextualization in the posthistory of the text can be found in Tertullian. In his work *On Baptism* Tertullian contrasts Paul with the pseudonymous Paul of the apocryphal *Paul and Thecla*. Paul himself, he argues, gives no license for women to teach or to baptize, and cites 1 Cor 14:35 in support of this. We must keep in mind, however, our introduction on "controlled speech" in biblical traditions (see above).

36 Witherington offers two useful observations on v. 36. First, he perceives the point of Paul's rhetorical questions to lie in the scenario that "it appears the Corinthians are trying to make up their own rules, and perhaps thinking their own word is sufficient or authoritative or even *the word of God for themselves* (cf. v. 36)" (my italics). Fee rightly adds, "Has God given them a special word that allows them both to reject Paul's instructions ... and to be so out of touch with the churches?"⁴¹⁰ Second, a further affinity between v. 33 and v. 36 exists in the contrast between **all** and **only you**. Thus Witherington comments, "This summary statement [question] applies to *all*, not just women, for he [Paul] uses the word *μόνου* instead of *μόνας* probably to indicate a mixed audience." Robertson and Plummer identify misleading nuances in the AV/KJV: the *from* and *unto* cannot be left as possible alternatives, and *only* must be rendered **only ones** or *only people* (here, as we have noted, inclusive masculine plural), to mean: "Were you the starting point of the Gospel? Or were you its only destination?" This accords, again, precisely with Paul's overture to the whole letter in 1:2: *called ... with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place—their Lord and ours too!* Hence, *has Christ been apportioned out?* (1:13).

To follow Conzelmann in regarding any "ecumenical" concern as a "bourgeois consolidation of the church" and hence a post-Pauline interpolation (he concedes that no textual reading affects this verse) is to impose a developmental theory upon Paul which does violence to the unity of Paul's thought in this epistle. It is significant that while he rightly sees all of these verses as turning on "what it means to be *pneumatikos*" Fee cites "twofold" rather than "threefold" criteria here. He includes: (1) the variety of the Spirit's gifts; and (2) the criterion of "edification"; but omits (3) the self-coherence and unity of the Spirit's gifts and agency which Christian lifestyle and church order must equally reflect. It is a tragedy of church life that some are so weighed down by history that church activity becomes mere replication and routinization, while others are so concerned with novelty and "relevance" that historical roots do not receive the respect that they deserve as part of a corporate memory and corporate identity.⁴¹⁵ "Some regard must be had to church practice elsewhere (cf. 11:16; 14:33b) including places which were evangelized before Corinth.... There may be an implication that, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isa 2:3/Mic 4:2, it is from Jerusalem (as in Rom 15:19) that the word goes forth." Bruce's comment takes up the OT references also cited by C. H. Kling, who anticipates the point: "Are you the original church, so that your wisdom is to set the standard of propriety ... at liberty to stand alone?"⁴¹⁷

iii. A Particular Warning and a General Encouragement (14:37–40)

37–38 (1) Some textual variants assume particular importance, not least because this is one of Käsemann's four most celebrated examples of "sentences of Holy Law in the NT," which favors the reading of the indicative *ἀγνοεῖται*, **he/she is not recognized** (κ*, probably A*, D*, G, 33, 1739, it^d, Syriac, Coptic VSS, Vg, Origen's Greek text, and Ambrose), as against the third person imperative *ἀγνοεῖτω*, **he/she is to be recognized** or *let him be ignorant* (early \mathfrak{P}^{46} , B, D^{b,c} [A²], most later MSS). Many modern VSS and some textual specialists are divided. Thus Metzger, NIV, and NJB favor the passive indicative, Zuntz, NRSV (but not RSV), REB, ASV, and KJV/AV favor the imperative. However, the overwhelming majority of modern commentators support the reading of the indicative (including, e.g., Conzelmann, Barrett, Bruce, Grosheide, Fee, Lange, Klauck, and Hays).⁴²⁰ Although the imperative has earlier and stronger MS support, exegetical considerations in the light of parallels in Paul suggest an early correction by \mathfrak{P}^{46} of a reading deemed



to be “difficult” in the sense of unduly harsh, especially if the passive indicative is taken to mean **not recognized by God; not known by God**.

(2) The word *command* (ἐντολή) in v. 37 is omitted by D*, G, Old Latin, and Origen, and Zuntz considers this to be the original text, i.e., **recognize that what I have written is of the Lord**. Would copyists wish to harden or to soften an original? \mathfrak{B}^{46} , B, κ^c , and 33 read ἐντολή, but some Western traditions read the plural ἐντολαί, *commands*. On this basis Zuntz and Barrett view **command** as a later intruder which generated variants. Most follow \mathfrak{B}^{46} , B, and κ^c (including UBS 4th ed.) as the better-supported reading, but we cannot be certain which is the original. Either can be defended.

The content of vv. 37–38 serves to add force to the exegesis of vv. 34–36 as continuing the theme of **sifting** or *discriminating* between authentic prophetic speech “given” to a prophetic speaker by the Holy Spirit of God and utterances which had diverged from the Spirit’s impetus, or perhaps were simply self-generated by autosuggestion, self-deception, or simply error. In our account (with Witherington) of an **interrogation** of someone who had uttered speech which seemed “prophetic” (at least in the first instance to the speaker, and perhaps was indeed authentic prophecy) the issue of **recognizing** and **being recognized** (or possibly *knowing* and *being known*) is entirely pertinent. Once again, those who are all too ready to regard Paul as authoritarian, and equally those who underestimate the role of *coherence* in **sifting** prophetic speech, tend to pay attention to the wrong thing in these verses. Paul’s axiom is entirely logical. God’s Spirit does not contradict himself. He does not undermine his own prior disclosures and thereby cause “confusion” or disorder (v. 33a). If a prophet’s utterance contradicts *apostolic* utterances (let alone biblical tradition), does not that of itself disenfranchise the currency of the prophetic utterance?

What Käsemann here unnecessarily objectifies as “sentences of holy law” amount to what philosophers of language perceive to be the irresistible logic of “internal grammar.” All four of Käsemann’s key examples come from this epistle: 1 Cor 3:17; 14:38; 16:22; and 5:3–5. Käsemann writes: “The same verb describes in the chiasmus of the protasis and apodosis both human guilt and divine judgment in order to characterize by this method both the precise correspondence of the two in content and their *indissoluble and harsh logical connection*” (my italics). It may well be correct that such examples as 1 Cor 5:3–5 do entail a “harsh” judgment, although I have argued elsewhere that judgment in this case is to lead to salvation. In 1 Cor 3:17 and 14:38, however, *internal logic* is entailed: one cannot simultaneously destroy the church, claim to be of the church, and fail to destroy oneself (3:17). One cannot dismiss apostolic disclosure as not of the Spirit of Christ (to whom apostleship by its nature points) and claim simultaneously to be “of the Spirit” (πνευματικός) without exposing self-contradictions before God. Lange prefers to translate ἀγνοεῖται as *is not known* on the basis of the close parallel with 8:1–3: “If a ‘pneumatic’ does not know—as Paul expresses it in the form of a word-play, then he shows *thereby* that he is not known by God, i.e., that the Spirit of God does not dwell in him” (my italics). Indeed, against the later argument of Wire and others, Chrysostom argues that Paul uses this form precisely to show that *neither compulsion nor high-handed confrontation are in Paul’s mind. The inauthentic, obstinate “prophet” has exposed his or her own status as “not known,” i.e., not recognized by God whose judgment is final.*

Collins makes the point well. “Paul appeals to those who think themselves prophetic types and/or spiritual persons. He confronts them in their self-inflation....” Nevertheless, “internal grammar” should not be seen as a way of disengaging the self-generated effects of self-absorption or sin from divine judgment. Thus Collins continues with reference to Paul’s apostolic *ethos*. The well-known argument of Paul, taking up hellenistic Jewish sermon material in Rom 1:18–32, demonstrates that here *personal divine judgment* consists in “*giving up*” persons to suffer *the inbuilt or “internal” consequences* of their obstinate self-absorption. Hence Hays cites parallels from the OT, the Gospels and (like Käsemann) Paul: “Those who are ashamed of me ... of them shall the Son of Man be ashamed” (Mark 8:38); “You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you” (1 Sam 15:26); “If he does not acknowledge this (cf. our translation **recognize**), God does not acknowledge him” (1 Cor 14:38); “if anyone among you thinks himself wise, let him become a fool in order to become wise” (1 Cor 3:18); “if anyone thinks himself to ‘know’ something, he does not yet ‘know’ as he ought; if anyone loves God, he is ‘known’ by him” (1 Cor 8:2, 3). Paul is not saying (as NRSV implies) that *the community* should not recognize the self-confident prophet in 14:38 (NRSV, this is not *to be recognized*).

A. C. Wire, however, adopts a very different approach to 14:37–38, together with 1 Cor 3:18; 8:2, 3; 11:16, which, like Käsemann, Hays, and others, she associates with our present verses. In her judgment Paul uses a rhetorical device which permits him to associate “reality” with his own apostolic stance and to dismiss that of the Corinthian (women) prophets as mere “thought,” pretense, or subjective truth claim. Thus to *think* one is wise (εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι, 3:18a) is set in contrast to *being* or *becoming* wise *in reality* (μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός, 3:18b). Similarly, **if anyone thinks that he or she is a prophet** (εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι) or **‘of the Spirit’** (14:37a), such a person is **to recognize** the *reality* (ἐπιγινώσκέτω) that **what Paul writes is [a command] from the Lord** (v. 37b). If the prophet (or self-styled prophet) does not *know* or **recognize** this (i.e., if he or she deems Paul’s claim to be not reality but merely



Pauline opinion), that person's opinion is disengaged from reality: **he or she is** (in actuality) **not recognized** (i.e., as a prophet *by God*). Wire argues that this characterizes Pauline rhetoric in relation to the “spiritual” (largely but not exclusively women) prophets at Corinth: “This provoking of confident boasts, suddenly to deflate them as mere thought and not reality, is found only twice elsewhere in Paul’s letters (Gal 6:3; Phil 3:4).” In Wire’s view, in the passage about silence, for which this forms the climactic summary, “women prophets, among others, must be intended.”⁴³³

The parallel between a disjunction between thought and reality occurs close by in the disjunction between private and public. Hence, Wire presses further, women’s “sphere of power” (if any) is to be relegated to the private sphere of the home (ἐν οἴκῳ, v. 35). She associates 14:35 with “private” tongues (14:18, 19, 28), providing meals “at home” (μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν ..., 11:22); the private invitation (10:24–33); and Paul’s exhortation to maintain a married state rather than to leave home for “single” (prophetic) ministry (7:2, 8–9, 36). The chief threat to “Paul’s gospel and leadership,” Wire insists, is in the case of Corinth “its prophesying women.” “At several points Paul proposes that the Corinthians do at home activities that he considers disrupting or difficult when they gather.... He may be trying to send back home a Pandora’s box of women’s spiritual and physical energy that has given the church the richness and disruptiveness of a home.”⁴³⁶

We must beware of mixing together (i) a hypothesis about women prophets with (ii) sentences of internal grammar which bring together logical contradiction and divine judgment as expressed in and through such contradiction. Wire herself (whether consciously or unwittingly) effectively makes the point by listing as Paul’s third “rhetorical device” the disassociation of “self-benefit” from “community benefit.” If Paul formulates a criterion of the good of the other (conceded or identified by Wire in 1:10; 3:3; 8:9–11; 9:22; 11:21–22; 12:24–25; 13:5; 14:3–4, 12), it becomes transparent that this is not a mere rhetorical strategy designed in the interests of gender, but constitutes part of Paul’s theology of the cross (cf. 1:18–25). If Christ is “for others” (cf. the *pre-Pauline traditions* of τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, 11:24; and Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, 15:3), then a criterion of authenticity cannot be other than the “community benefit” which encapsulates the love for the other which characterizes the christological basis and character of the agency and gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If the work of the Spirit is to promote the practical Lordship of Christ in every area of life (12:3–6), it becomes transparent that whatever does not cohere with practical witness to the Christlikeness of the God who does not undermine his own work and gifts cannot (logical *cannot*) be **recognized** (v. 38) as authentically “of the Holy Spirit of God” (πνευματικός, v. 37). What has been said above about the convergence between logic and an appeal to divine reality does not require revision in the light of Wire’s comments, even if these raise other relevant issues.

39–40 (1) On the MSS which place vv. 34–35 after vv. 39–40, see above under v. 34. (2) \mathfrak{F}^{46} , B², D*, F, G, and many Western MSS omit μου. UBS 4th ed. places the possessive pronoun in brackets. On one side, it is probably more convincing to argue (with Zuntz) that it should be retained, as it is in 11:33. On the other side, it might be argued that a copyist had 11:33 in mind when writing out his verse. This is far from being the only example of an ambivalent reading of μου. **My** probably expresses Pauline affection and concern for the readers.

Yet again ἀδελφοί is almost impossible to translate into modern idiomatic English. As we note above, we vary our translation to indicate this, here **my dear friends**. More controversial is our translation of the present imperative ζηλοῦτε, usually translated as *be eager to* (NRSV, REB, NIV, NJB; cf. KJV/AV, *covet to*). We considered the meaning of this term in 12:31 as ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. For our detailed arguments that the most accurate rendering in the parallel verse (and hence also here) is **continue to be zealously concerned about**, see under 12:31, and also the supporting research article by Smit. (We also argue there for the continuous force of the present imperative.) The accusative χαρίσματα in 12:31 is replaced by the accusative articular infinitive τὸ προφητεῦειν in v. 39a, which leads, in turn, to a second articular infinitive construction in v. 39b, τὸ λαλεῖν. The emphasis thus falls not on “being a prophet” but on the speech-act of **prophetic speech**. Similarly, the emphasis falls not on “tongues” but on **speaking** in this mode, i.e., their *use*. Paul is summarizing all of the arguments of ch. 14 (or at least 14:26–38). Hence these directions are to be understood and applied with all the constraints and encouragements with which Paul has already qualified them. Thus **continue to be zealously concerned about prophetic speech** almost certainly includes not only the *production* of prophetic speech or discourse but also its **sifting** and its use **in an ordered manner**.

The last verse of the chapter sums up **everything** (πάντα) that pertains to whatever **takes place** (γινέσθω) in public worship on the part of the assembled congregation, whether Paul happens to have mentioned it specifically here or not. The verb used here (γίνομαι) most often has the force of *to come about*, **to happen**, although it may also mean *be created, be made*, less frequently. In spite of the fact that most VSS translate *should be done* (NRSV, REB, NIV), the present force is *let all things be carried on* without a specific reference to agency. The δέ qualifies the specific reference to the encouragement of issues relating to **prophetic speech** and to the permissive status of **speaking in tongues**, and Robertson and Plummer’s translation **only** brings out its function more adequately than the more usual *but* (NRSV, NIV).



The punch line of much of the chapter is expressed in the adverb εὐσχημόνως and the adverbial phrase κατὰ τάξιν. The adverb is rendered *decently* or *becomingly* by BAGD, who then propose *properly* for this verse. *Properly* would be excellent if idiomatic English still used *proper* in its more classic sense of *with due decorum*. The cognate noun εὐσχημοσύνη clearly means *propriety, decorum, what is presentable in public*, and we do not doubt that Paul has in mind both *reverence and dignity appropriate to address to and from God*, and a *missionary or evangelistic* rather than strictly aesthetic dimension. The adjective εὐσχημῶν means what is **fitting** in 1 Cor 7:25, and what is *publicly presentable* in 1 Cor 12:24. In other contemporary writers the term also means *reputable*. If we take full account of both the lexicographical evidence for Paul's period, Paul's own uses of this and related terms, and contextual factors, **fittingly** perhaps best conveys the Greek.

The prepositional phrase κατὰ τάξιν is a metaphor drawn from a military universe of discourse. The cognate noun τάγμα means *that which is, ordered*, especially in literal terms of a body of troops drawn up in **ordered ranks**. Notably Clement of Rome, who addresses his letter from Rome to Corinth around AD 95 to correct partisanship and (again) disunity, presses into his service the metaphor or image of fighting God's enemies (cf. Heb 1:13) in God's army "serving our leaders (or generals, ἡγουμένους) *in a good order* (εὐτάκτως) ... *being subject to control* (ὑποτεταγμένως)... Not all are prefects nor tribunes nor centurions ... but *each in his own rank* (ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι ...)." Paul uses τάγμα of the purposive and **ordered manner** of the resurrection as the action of God and of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 15:23–24). The abstract noun τάξις is then used to denote *fixed succession or order*, while the prepositional phrase κατὰ τάξιν means *in an orderly manner*. *1 Clement* moves on from Clement's argument about military order to follow the themes of 1 Corinthians in terms of mutual help and communal benefit (*1 Clem.* 38:1–4); creative order and wisdom (39:1–9); and corporate worship in which we ought to do **everything in an ordered manner** (πάντα τάξει ποιεῖν ὀφείλομεν) ... at ordered times (κατὰ καιροῦς τεταγμένους, *1 Clem.* 40:1). Clement's next chapter considers diversity, but again, each in his or her own "order" (ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι). **Fittingly and in an ordered manner** well expresses the climax of ch. 14, especially in relation to 12:3–6, 12–18, 28–31; 13:1, 9–10; 14:1–33 (see above).⁴

WORD WEALTH

14:1 desire, *zelo* (dzay-low-oh), Strong's #2206: To be zealous for, to burn with desire, to pursue ardently, to desire eagerly or intensely. Negatively, the word is associated with strong envy and jealousy (Acts 7:9; 17:5; 1 Cor. 13:4; James 4:2).

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

14:1 The Pentecostal/Charismatic Context, SPIRITUAL GIFTS. This text bases the gifts of the Spirit on the one sure foundation of love and calls for integrity as the key for the preservation of the sacredness of the sanctuary and the dignity of the worship service. This passage affords the controlling guidelines for governing services in the biblically sensitive Pentecostal/Charismatic context. An elaboration of this and related themes appears in the study article, "Holy Spirit Gifts and Power."

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

14:1 The Propriety and Desirability of Prophecy, PROPHECY. The life of the NT church is intended to be blessed by the presence of the gift of prophecy. As Paul states here in noting love as our primary pursuit, prophecy is to be welcomed for the "edification and exhortation and comfort" of the congregation—corporately and individually (v. 3). Such encouragement of each other is "prophecy," not "words" in the sense of the Bible, which uses the very words of God, but in the sense of human words the Holy Spirit uniquely brings to mind.

The practice of the gift of prophecy is one purpose of Holy Spirit fullness (Acts 2:17). It also fulfills Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28) and Moses' earlier expressed hope (Num. 11:29).

The operation of the gift of prophecy is encouraged by Peter (1 Pet. 4:11), and Paul says that it is within the potential of every believer (1 Cor. 14:31). It is intended as a means of broad participation among the

⁴ Thiselton, A. C. (2000). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: a commentary on the Greek text* (pp. 1151–1168). Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.



congregation, mutually benefiting each other with anointed, loving words of upbuilding, insight, and affirmation. Such prophecy may provide such insight that hearts are humbled in worship of God, suddenly made aware of His Spirit's knowledge of their need and readiness to answer it (1 Cor. 14:24, 25).

Prophecy of this order is also a means by which vision and expectation are prompted and provided, and without which people may become passive or neglectful (1 Sam. 3:1; Prov. 29:18; Acts 2:17). There are specific guidelines for the operation of this gift, as with all gifts of the Holy Spirit, to insure that one gift not supplant the exercise of others or usurp the authority of spiritual leadership. Further, all such prophecy is subordinated to the plumbline of God's Eternal Word, the Bible—the standard by which all prophetic utterance in the church is to be judged (1 Cor. 14:26-33).

14:1 Paul provides guidelines for exercising the gifts of prophecy and tongues, comparing their public benefits with private exercise (vv. 2-25), stating their rules of operation (vv. 26-36), and giving a final exhortation (vv. 37-40).

14:1 See section 5 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 1 Cor.

14:1 Neither **love** nor **gifts** come automatically and should not be a passive matter of indifference. Believers should **desire especially** to **prophecy**, as compared to speaking in tongues in public (vv. 2-5). Tongues are primarily for self-edification and depend on the companion gift of interpretation when exercised in public. Tongues are permitted, but prophecy is preferred (v. 39).

14:2 Paul's assertion clearly establishes the primary purpose for tongues as the gift of the Spirit for private worship. It is a unique Godward and not a manward gift, unless interpreted so the hearers may understand (v. 5). Tongues are intended for personal prayer and praise to God (vv. 14, 17). Therefore, they can take on a strictly spiritual form of expression, since man is not the goal. The seat of their operation is not the mind, but the spirit (vv. 14, 15). They are an enablement of the Spirit for nonconceptual communication directly with God, who is Spirit (John 4:24). This is why they are so vastly important and constantly used by Paul (v. 18) **Mysteries**, as elsewhere in the NT, refers to secrets which have been divinely revealed.

14:3 The use of tongues is a means of private self-edification. This practice does not denote selfishness, but rather, spiritual strengthening. Prophecy, however, builds up, encourages, and comforts others in the church.

14:5 Paul's endorsement of prophecy over tongues in corporate gatherings is qualified by his equating the *value* of tongues with prophecy, if the tongue is accompanied by interpretation. Therefore, tongues without interpretation are for personal edification. Prophecy and tongues with interpretation minister to the entire congregation, being understood by all. This understanding serves to affirm the fact of and distinguish the application of the two distinct ways "tongues" may be manifested—in private or public, in personal devotion or in corporate gatherings.

14:6 Prophecy is preferred above tongues in public, where clear understanding by the hearers is the goal. Tongues exercised in a church meeting must therefore be interpreted.

14:13 See section 3 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 1 Cor.

14:13 The person who speaks in tongues publicly seems to bear the responsibility of interpretation, but 12:10 allows for a diversity in these two gifts. If no interpreter is present, the tongue is to be restrained (v. 28).

14:14 Paul reveals the place of tongues in his own personal prayer life. Praying in tongues is praying from the spirit instead of the intellect, and the same is true of singing praises. For Paul, praying and singing, both in tongues and in everyday language, were normal and regular parts of prayer and praise. There is no suggestion of hysteria, emotionalism, or abnormality of any kind.

14:16 Edification of others is always the guideline in the public use of tongues. At the same time v. 17 makes it clear that no censure is intended. It is not clear whether or not corporate singing, praising, or praying in tongues would be permitted or denied by Paul. What is clear is that no individual or group of individuals should so sing or pray in violation of the leadership, the spirit of the group as a whole, or the intent of the meeting. Differences exist in the acceptance of "singing in tongues" in corporate gatherings of believers. Some adhere to a strict disallowance of group exercise of this gift in concert, while others feel that "order" is not violated if the exercise is explained and nonfanatical expression maintained.

14:18 Paul did not depreciate tongues as a lesser gift, but thanked God for the self-edification afforded by the full measure of the gift in his own devotional life. (See also v. 5, "I wish you all spoke with tongues.")

14:21 In one respect, Paul's use of Is. 28:11, 12 notes how the harsh, unknown tongues of foreign invaders were a sign of divine judgment upon Israel in Isaiah's day—a warning that they scoffed at and completely rejected. He seems to be noting how tongues in the Corinthian church could have the same effect of hardening **believers** who were present, whose response to the sign of tongues might be **you are out of your mind** (similar to the reaction at Pentecost, Acts 2:13). Prophecy, however, is a sign to believers that God is in their midst, and brings conviction upon unbelievers, leading them to repentance. (In a second respect, Paul might have had double entendre in mind, for the Is.



passage also describes a second aspect of possible value in “tongues”—that people would receive a “rest” and “a refreshing.” In private exercise, the “edifying” benefit of tongues (v. 4) would doubtless include that.)

14:26 See section 4 of Truth-In-Action at the end of 1 Cor.

14:26 Each of you: The things of the Spirit are intended for every member of the body of Christ, not an elite few. This verse describes typical Christian worship in the present age.

KINGDOM DYNAMICS

14:27 Limits to Exercising Tongues, SPIRITUAL GIFTS. In a group gathering, the exercise of tongues (with interpretation each time, of course) is to be limited to sequences of two or three at the most. While many hold this to be a rigid number, others understand it to be a flexible guideline to keep a worship service in balance. An elaboration of this and related themes appears in the study article on page 2018, “Holy Spirit Gifts and Power.”

14:29 In order to preserve balance and prevent confusion in the worship service, Paul regulates prophecy. **Others** present, especially those who function in the gift of prophecy, are to **judge** the authenticity of the prophetic utterances. The judging includes its content, alignment with God’s Word, and relevancy to the meeting.

WORD WEALTH

14:32 subject, *hupotasso* (hoop-ot-as-so); Strong’s #5293: Literally “to stand under.” The word suggests subordination, obedience, submission, subservience, subjection. The divine gift of prophetic utterance is put under the control and responsibility of the possessor.

14:34 These verses are very difficult and are subject to great debate. The best interpretation is probably to see Paul as not forbidding women to manifest spiritual gifts in the service (see 11:5; Acts 2:18; 21:9). Rather, he prohibits undisciplined discussion that would disturb the service. Also possible is the forbidden speaking along the lines of 1 Tim. 2:11-15, which precludes women from becoming independent doctrinal (apostolic) authorities over men. One other view sees vv. 34, 35 as Paul’s quoting from their letter to him in beginning a new paragraph. Proponents of this view then see v. 36 as his rhetorical answer, essentially saying, “What? Men only? Nonsense!” Perhaps more helpful is noting that the Greek word here for “woman” is also translatable “wife.” Thus, the command may confront the impropriety in any age for a wife to domineeringly issue doctrinal commands and enforce authoritative teachings, embarrassing her husband in public. The Bible does not assign rigid social or church roles to men and women, but it does place headship and authority in husbands as an abiding principle for this age.

14:37 The spiritually minded will receive Paul’s instructions with apostolic authority. Those who reject them are responsible for the consequences of their ignorance.

14:39 Discontinuance of spiritual gifts was not Paul’s solution to their abuse. The guidelines he has given will provide safeguards assuring **order** in the service.⁵

C. The need for control (14:1–40). Paul teaches the place of both tongues and *prophecy in the local congregation (*see* Desire). In verse 5 he equates prophecy with tongues that are interpreted for the congregation; both benefit the congregation and can be understood by visitors. He reinforces the supernatural benefits of the exercise of these gifts in public (*see* Holy Spirit Gifts), especially in the presence of unbelievers (v. 25).

“Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church”

(14:1–40). Paul affirms the desirability and practical reasons of (1) personal edification and (2) public witness in the use of tongues (vv. 2, 4–5, 15, 22, 39). At the same time he asserts the primacy of prophecy as the congregation gathers for public worship (vv. 1, 3–5, 24–25, 31, 39). The key to the chapter is in verse 40, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (*see*

⁵ Hayford, J. W. (Ed.). (1997). *Spirit filled life study Bible* (electronic ed., 1 Co 13:13–14:39). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



Subject). Paul concludes this chapter with an exhortation about the encouragement of prophecies as the believers gather: “Do not forbid to speak with tongues.”

6

Lie #3

Women must not teach or preach to men in a church setting.

ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ has been called the best preacher among evangelist Billy Graham’s five children. That’s one reason hordes of women began packing twenty-five-thousand-seat civic arenas in 2000 to attend her series of Just Give Me Jesus revival meetings. Her audiences heard an articulate Bible expositor whose North Carolina accent, rapid-fire cadence, and sweeping gestures seemed eerily similar to her father’s. Yet this preacher wears a dress and understands the pain of childbirth. She also amazed TV viewers in May of that year when she clearly explained the plan of Christian salvation on a *Larry King Live* broadcast after King asked her, “How can you be so sure you are going to heaven?”

Suddenly, many Americans were asking the obvious question: Is Billy Graham going to be replaced by his *daughter*?

Lotz is indeed a powerful public speaker, and those who have heard her teach the Bible say she just may be the person God chose to assume her father’s mantle. Yet many evangelicals in the United States—including her fellow Southern Baptists—still cannot endorse her anointed ministry. In fact, when she stood to address a group of conservative pastors at a 1988 conference, many of them literally turned their backs on her—and turned their chairs around as well. Never mind honoring her famous father. These conservative ministers could not submit themselves to a woman preacher by facing her!

Lotz is not the only Christian woman who has been subjected to public humiliation because she dared stand in a pulpit to deliver the word of the Lord. We are familiar with her story because she is the daughter of a celebrity, but there are hundreds of thousands of women in this country who have similar tales of rejection.

There have even been cases in which women were reprimanded just for being physically near a pulpit. Several years ago, my friend Brenda J. Davis, the editor of *SpiritLed Woman* magazine, was invited to sing at a friend’s wedding in New York. Though she and her friends were all members of the same church, the engaged couple had decided to get married at a more traditional Baptist church where their parents were long-time members.

On the day of the wedding, Brenda walked to where she was to stand on the platform—three feet from the lectern—and began to sing, as the pianist played behind her and the bridal attendants took their places near the front of the sanctuary. Suddenly, with no warning, a group of six men in dark suits bolted from their seats in the first three rows and rushed toward Brenda.

“No! No! No!” one of the older deacons said gruffly, interrupting the second line of the song. “We don’t allow women in the pulpit! No women in the pulpit! You can’t stand here!” The other men, obviously flustered, were waving their hands frantically as they shooed Brenda off the podium to a spot on the side of the sanctuary.

“At first I thought the building was on fire,” Brenda told me. “Then I thought they were talking to someone behind me.” She stopped her song awkwardly in mid-sentence, and her accompanist abruptly quit playing. Once Brenda had been repositioned and the deacons were seated, the piano music resumed. But Brenda found it hard to smile at the audience, especially when she realized that the bride and groom were mortified by the behavior of the deacons.

These men were incredibly rude, but I’m sure they justified their behavior by citing chapter and verse in the Bible, claiming that God forbids women from holding any position of influence in the church—particularly if that position allows them to teach or preach. (I must admit I find it odd that we have invented a “no women in the pulpit” rule considering that the Bible never once refers to pulpits!) In many conservative churches in the United States, this “no women in the pulpit” argument is always based on one verse in the Bible, 1 Timothy 2:12. They claim that this command issued by the apostle Paul is universal and must be applied to all women at all times in the most literal sense. But the logic used in this argument is seriously flawed, and the typical misinterpretation of this verse has placed women in spiritual bondage for centuries.

What Did Paul Really Mean?

Before we delve deeper into the specific cultural context of the apostle Paul’s instructions, we need to examine 1 Timothy 2:12 closely. And as we do, we need to apply the most important rule of biblical hermeneutics: We must interpret this verse not solely on what it says or on what we think it says, but on what the rest of the Bible says about the subject being addressed in the passage.

People who misuse 1 Timothy 2:12 to deny ministry opportunities to all women at all times usually pride themselves on being so-called biblical literalists. “The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!” they say smugly. But in actuality, taking the Bible “literally” can sometimes lead to serious error.

For example, what if we take 1 Timothy 5:23 as a literal, universal command to the church? In it, Paul tells Timothy, “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” Is this verse to be applied to all ministers of the gospel? Does it

⁶ Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Hayford’s Bible handbook*. Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



give ministers the freedom to drink alcoholic beverages? My Anglican friends would say yes, but many conservative evangelicals insist that the drinking of wine or any other alcoholic beverage is sinful. (Or they insist that wine, in Christ’s day, was actually grape juice—an argument that has no basis in scholarship.) They obviously do not accept a “literal” interpretation of Paul’s advice to Timothy in this case.

That’s because 1 Timothy 5:23 was not meant to be applied as a doctrinal statement for all churches through the ages. It is not to be used as a rule of medicine or morality. It is a personal message from Paul to his son in the faith, and it gives us a glimpse of the apostle’s caring relationship with him.

What about 1 Corinthians 11:5, which says, “Every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head”? There are members of some conservative Christian denominations, particularly Mennonites, who take this verse literally and require women to wear a covering or bonnet on their heads while in church. But most Christians today accept the view that this passage of Scripture pertains to a specific cultural issue in first century Corinth and that it is not a universal command.

Many parts of Scripture, of course, are to be applied universally. But in Paul’s epistles, often his instructions are offered to bring correction to specific situations that had arisen in the early church. In 1 Corinthians 8, for example, he deals with the issue of whether Christians should eat meat that has been sacrificed to pagan idols. Since we don’t encounter such circumstances in modern society, we must be careful how we apply Paul’s words when dealing with corresponding contemporary issues.

Let’s look again at Paul’s words to Timothy and ask some important questions about how literally we are to take his instructions. 1 Timothy 2:12 appears below in several translations:

And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

—NKJV

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

—NIV

I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to remain in quietness and keep silence [in religious assemblies].

—AMP

I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly.

—NLT

Now let’s use some commonsense logic as we seek to understand what is being said here.

Is Paul forbidding women to teach in any setting?

Are his words, “I do not allow women to teach,” a blanket prohibition? Does this mean women cannot teach other women? Does it mean women cannot teach children in grade school? If we interpret the Bible properly, by looking at the whole of Scripture, we would have to say that Paul is certainly not making a universal decree about women teaching.

After all, he tells older women to teach younger ones in Titus 2:4. Throughout the Old Testament God commands mothers and fathers to teach their children. The “virtuous woman” of Proverbs 31 is described as having “the teaching of kindness . . . on her tongue” (v. 26). And Jesus’ Great Commission—which was given to all His disciples, male and female—commands us to teach His gospel throughout the world. (See Matthew 28:19–20.)

Is Paul forbidding women to teach men?

If so, does this mean it is unacceptable for women to teach boys in school? If not, at what age do boys become men, and at what point are women not allowed to teach them anymore? After high school? Does this mean women professors cannot teach college courses because adult males are in the class?

Again, we have to look at other places in Scripture where we see examples of women teaching men. We read in Acts 18:24–26 that Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, offered biblical teaching and correction to Apollos. In 2 Timothy 1:5 Paul commends Lois and Eunice for teaching the Scriptures to young Timothy. If the Bible prohibited this type of teaching, why would the instruction of these women be presented in a favorable way?

Is Paul forbidding women to teach or preach only in a church service?



Does his demand for “silence” mean it is wrong for women to share testimonies in church, pray publicly, read Scripture, or give announcements? It would seem odd for there to be any speaking limitations on women in church, since we are told that both men and women will “prophesy” in the New Testament age. (See Joel 2:28.) And we have examples in the Book of Acts of women prophets, such as Philip’s daughters. (See Acts 21:9.) Also, when Paul gives instructions for the use of prophecy in the church in 1 Corinthians 14, he does not limit the gift to men. In fact, he says, “For you can *all* prophesy one by one” (v. 31, emphasis added).

Does Paul mean that women are allowed to speak in church except when they are speaking “authoritatively”?

If so, how do we distinguish between authoritative and non-authoritative speech? Is a prophecy authoritative? Is a sermon delivered in a Sunday morning worship service authoritative, but a Wednesday night Bible lesson is not? And who is the judge of a sermon’s level of authority?

What about music? Is a song that teaches a truth from the gospel authoritative? If so, it is wrong for a woman to sing to an audience of men since the song is a form of teaching? This seems like a silly question, but there are churches in this decade that limit the gifts and ministries of women in these kinds of ways. In fact, I know of a woman who was told she had to stand with her back facing the congregation when she led worship. If she faced the crowd, she was warned, she would be out of order because she was assuming a position of authority over the church!

Is Paul’s instruction a blanket prohibition against women holding any position of authority over men?

Does this mean women should not hold political office or be placed in management positions over male employees in the business world? Does this mean a Christian man cannot stay in his job if his boss is a female? (I know of conservative evangelical men who have quit their jobs for this reason!)

Do Paul’s words here mean a woman cannot lead a church committee? Or does the prohibition apply only to full-time employees of the church, such as pastors? Numerous women in the Bible, including many in the New Testament church, held positions of significant spiritual authority. So a blanket rule against women in authority does not seem logical and in fact would be unscriptural.

If Paul’s words cannot be applied universally, what was the specific situation in Ephesus that required him to write these rather harsh words? To understand them we must consider what life was like in Ephesus in the first century.

Bible scholars have documented the fact that bizarre gnostic heresies were circulating throughout the region at that time, and these false teachings posed a serious threat to the infant Christian churches that were budding in that part of the world. That’s why so much of Paul’s message to Timothy deals with how to guard against false teaching. In a few instances, Paul actually mentions the fact that women were spreading these dangerous doctrines (1 Tim. 4:7; 5:13).

When Paul introduces his reason for writing this entire book, he says, “As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct *certain men* not to teach strange doctrines” (1 Tim. 1:3, emphasis added). What is translated as “certain men” is the indefinite Greek pronoun *tisi*. An indefinite pronoun does not indicate gender. Paul is saying, “Instruct certain people not to teach strange doctrines.” Later in 1 Timothy, it becomes evident that women were doing the teaching of these strange doctrines, at least in part. A major purpose of this entire epistle was to correct unbiblical teachings being presented by women.

In their excellent book *I Suffer Not a Woman*, Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger explain that certain cultic worship practices involving female priestesses of the Greek fertility goddess, Diana, had invaded the church of that day. These women priests promoted blasphemous ideas about sex and spirituality, and they sometimes actually performed rituals in which they pronounced curses on men in an attempt to spiritually emasculate them or to declare female superiority.

This teaching most certainly bred unhealthy attitudes among some women in the Ephesian church. These women were completely unlearned, but they were spreading false doctrines, and in some cases they were claiming to be teachers of the Law and demanding an audience. They were most likely mixing Christian



and Jewish teachings with strange heresies and warped versions of Bible stories. Some even taught that Eve was created before Adam and that she “liberated” the world when she listened to the serpent. Because of the spreading of these kinds of fables and hoaxes, chaos threatened the church.

Some of these rebellious women were actually disrupting worship services so they could teach their strange gospels. Rather than listening to church leaders who had been trained by Paul and the other apostles, these women were pridefully claiming that they deserved the pulpit themselves. In some instances they may have wrested control of the meetings and tried to teach or even perform their rituals.

Paul had to bring serious discipline to the situation quickly or the church would have been infected with a deadly virus. So he forbade these domineering women teachers from spreading their lies, and he commanded all the women in the congregation to be submissive so they could learn correct doctrine. The seriousness of the problem demanded a severe response.

To gain more insight into what was really going on in Ephesus at the time, we need to look closer at the phrase “or to have authority over men.” The Greek word for “to have authority over” is *authentain*, and it is the only time in the New Testament this word is used. Normally, the Greek word *exousia* is used for “authority.”

Bible scholars have noted that *authentain* has a forceful and extremely negative connotation. It implies a more specific meaning than “to have authority over” and can be translated “to dominate,” “to usurp” or “to take control.” Often when this word was used in ancient Greek literature it was associated with violence or even murder.

We can assume that because this word is used here, women in the Ephesian church were dominating church meetings, usurping the authority of church leaders and proclaiming themselves teachers when they had never been properly taught. So Paul called for an end to the madness. In essence he was saying, “Enough! I am not going to allow these know-it-all women to teach in your church anymore, nor I am allowing them to overthrow or usurp the authority of the leaders I appointed to teach you.”

Paul’s decree was not so much about the gender of those who were usurping authority but about the fact that they were not trained to teach and yet were pretending to be experts on Christian doctrine. In fact, Paul uses equally strong words when he warns Timothy about the men who were spreading false doctrines in Ephesus. He tells Timothy that he has “delivered over to Satan” two men, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim. 1:20), because they were spreading blasphemous heresies.

In Titus 1:10–11, the same solution was given by Paul to men who were spreading false teachings. “For there are many rebellious men . . . who must be silenced.” Yet, we would never generalize these instructions to say that because male false teachers were spreading heresies, then all male teachers must be silenced.

In his day, Paul would have been thrilled to have more skilled *men and women* who could teach the truth! A few women did serve as part of his apostolic team, such as Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), Priscilla (v. 3, NKJV), and Junia (v. 7, NKJV). But in the early church period most women were uneducated. We will discover that Paul’s desire for women to “receive instruction” in 1 Timothy 2:11 was actually a liberating message to first-century women—because they lived at a time when Jewish rabbis and Greek philosophers taught that women were not worthy of learning anything.

Aren’t Women Supposed to Be Silent?

Although the Bible is full of accounts of women who taught, prophesied, and delivered messages from God, many churches today teach that women cannot minister publicly—or hold positions as priests or pastors—because the apostle Paul supposedly issued a universal command telling women to be “silent.” The verse most often cited is 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, which says:

Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.

But we must remember that in Greek and Middle Eastern culture during the first century, women did not have educational opportunities, and in fact it was considered disgraceful for them to learn. Greek



philosophers, including Aristotle, held the view that women were ignorant, unteachable, and distracting because of their sexuality.

But the Christian message burst on the scene in Greece with a radical new idea that was best summarized by Paul in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, *there is neither male nor female*; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (emphasis added). Because of the gospel, women were truly liberated from the curse of subjugation that had resulted from the Fall. They were no longer to be viewed as sex objects or as ignorant inferiors or as the property of their fathers or husbands. **Along with men, they were called to be disciples of Christ.** They too were called to learn at the feet of Jesus.

Paul calls on women to learn the Scriptures “quietly” and “with entire submissiveness.” (See 1 Timothy 2:11–12.) They are also commanded to be “silent” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. Obviously, from what we know of the message of the entire Bible, this is not intended to be a universal command to keep women’s mouths shut at all times.

We must remember that all Christians—both males and females—are told in 1 Timothy 2:2 to lead “a tranquil and *quiet* life” (emphasis added). Does this mean men are supposed to refrain from speaking? Of course not.

Paul’s words about silence are simply calling for *teachableness* in his new female followers. Because women had not been trained to understand the Scriptures (in fact, they had been denied this opportunity!), he was calling them to embrace the discipline of learning the Word of God. In order to become faithful disciples in the true rabbinical tradition, they needed to approach the Scriptures with reverence and a submissive attitude. They could not be disciples if they were know-it-alls or if they opposed God’s Word or if they flippantly questioned it. Humility is the only posture a disciple can take if he or she expects to please the Master.

Paul was calling women to listen and to learn. He was not telling them to shut up and be invisible. He was inviting them to enroll in the seminary of the Holy Spirit and to become active followers of Christ. He was not commanding them to shut their mouths and fade into the background of the church. And if Paul was calling women to learn, then he fully expected them to teach and preach what they had been taught when the process of discipleship was complete.

Again, as we examine the passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 we must look to the whole of Scripture for its interpretation. **We know from preceding chapters in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians that Paul permitted women both to pray and to prophesy publicly. Just a few verses prior to his statement about silence, in fact, he tells the Corinthians that “all” people in the assembly should desire to prophesy. (See 1 Corinthians 14:1.) He also says that “if all prophesy,” unbelievers in the assembly will come under spiritual conviction and be converted (vv. 24–25, emphasis added). Paul never limited the gift of prophecy to males.**

Therefore he cannot be referring to this type of prophetic speech when he says, “It is improper for a woman to speak in church.” He is obviously referring to a type of speech that was creating problems in the church at Corinth. It had created such a disturbance, in fact, that the church’s leaders had sought Paul for his corrective advice about the problem.

The Greek word for “speak” in this passage is the present infinitive form, which can be translated “continually speaking up.” It implies a type of speech that was disruptive, annoying, or shameful. Most likely, there were women in this church who were continually interrupting the teacher to ask questions or possibly to disrupt the meeting or usurp the speaker’s authority. Although the Jewish rabbinical tradition allowed men in the assembly to ask questions during a teaching, and the New Testament church continued this practice for all believers, things had apparently gotten out of hand in Corinth.

The Secret to Interpreting 1 Corinthians 14

~~Actually there is another possible way to interpret this difficult passage about silencing women in 1 Corinthians 14. Many scholars of the New Testament who are familiar with the technicalities of the Greek language insist that part of this chapter is actually a quote taken from another source—a letter written to Paul by the leaders of the church in Corinth. This letter is referred to by Paul in chapter 7, when he~~



mentions “the things about which you wrote” (v. 1). Most of the specific issues Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, in fact, are topics that were included in that letter.

Paul’s seemingly restrictive words about women in chapter 14 take on a different light when we consider that he was very likely quoting a letter from church leaders who were imposing on the young Corinthian congregation a harsh, anti-woman position that was rooted in their rabbinical Jewish traditions. Consider this portion of the passage below, with the quoted section set apart:

26 What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret;

28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.

29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent.

31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets;

33 for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

34 **LET THE WOMEN KEEP SILENT IN THE CHURCHES; FOR THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK, BUT LET THEM SUBJECT THEMSELVES, JUST AS THE LAW ALSO SAYS.**

35 **AND IF THEY DESIRE TO LEARN ANYTHING, LET THEM ASK THEIR OWN HUSBANDS AT HOME; FOR IT IS IMPROPER FOR A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN CHURCH.**

36 Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.

38 But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.

40 But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

There are several reasons scholars believe that verses 34 and 35 of this passage are quotes from the letter Paul is answering.

The most important clue is that the Greek symbol η (with a grave accent) is used at the beginning of verse 36 to signal to the reader that the preceding statement is quoted. Because Greek does not have what we know as quotation marks, this device is used instead.

This would explain why verses 34 and 35 seem to contradict everything that Paul has said up to this point about the full participation of all believers in New Testament worship. The apostle has spent several chapters telling the Corinthians that all can “prophesy one by one” (v. 31). He even stated in 1 Corinthians 11:5 that women can pray and prophesy publicly. So why would he contradict himself in 14:35 by saying that women cannot speak in church?

It is also curious that verse 34 says women are not allowed to speak “just as the Law also says.” What law is this verse referring to? There is no law in the Old Testament that says women cannot speak. There is no reference to a Scripture given here. That’s because it is not referring to an Old Testament law but to a Jewish rabbinical tradition that the Corinthian church had adopted.

The harshness of the language in verse 35 gives us another clue that this “Law” is actually a man-made rule invented by the same type of legalistic Judaizers that Paul publicly opposed in the churches of Galatia and Colossae. The phrase, “It is improper for a woman to speak in church,” can actually be translated, “It is shameful for a woman to speak.”

Do we honestly believe this verse reflects the heart of God? Is this the view of the apostle Paul, who ordained women to serve with him in apostolic ministry? It cannot be. Paul is quoting those who held to a degrading view of women—and who actually described women in Jewish writings as vile and disgraceful.



And because Paul opposed this degrading view of women, he responds to the Corinthians in verse 36 with a sharp answer: “Was it from you that the word of God first went forth?” Another translation says, “What? Came the word of God out from you? Or came it unto you only?” (KJV).

This strange response makes no sense if we believe that Paul penned verses 34 and 35. But if he is contradicting the statements made by the Judaizers of Corinth, then we can understand the defiant tone of verse 36. To paraphrase the apostle, he is saying, “What! You are going to silence women when the gospel of Jesus was first preached by women after they saw Him at the tomb on Easter morning? Do you really think the gospel is only for men?”

This passage is one of the most misunderstood parts of the Bible. I believe the only way it can be logically interpreted is to accept the fact that Paul is responding to a quoted statement. This view was repeated by theologian Kenneth S. Kantzer in *Christianity Today*: “In 1 Corinthians 14 we are caught in an intricate interplay between quotations from a missing letter from the Corinthians and Paul’s solutions to problems the letter had raised. The verse is clearly not repeating a law of Scripture and cannot be taken as a universal command for women to be silent in church. That interpretation would flatly contradict what the apostle had just said three chapters earlier.”

How ironic that we have actually been using a statement written by a group of first-century legalists—men who wanted to burden the New Testament church with stifling Jewish rules and traditions—to shackle Christian women who are called to liberty in the Holy Spirit. Whom do we want to follow: the apostle Paul, who invited women to preach, pray, and prophesy in the assembly, or the legalists, who believed that it was “obscene” for women to speak in public?

This verse, so often used to put a bit and bridle in the mouths of godly Christian women, was never intended to keep females from teaching the Bible, proclaiming the gospel, or aggressively sharing their faith. How ridiculous! Didn’t the Holy Spirit fall on all the believers on the Day of Pentecost? On that day, weren’t the women as well as the men empowered to be witnesses of His resurrection? Didn’t Peter remind them of the prophet Joel’s prediction that “your sons and your daughters will prophesy” (Acts 2:17)? Weren’t all Jesus’ followers—male and female—commanded to go into all the world to make disciples and to teach all nations? (See Matthew 28:19–20.)

We have overlooked the obvious message of the Bible and then taken one obscure passage from Paul’s writings and twisted it to keep women in a place of subjugation and insignificance. I’m sure the devil has laughed in delight at the way we have actually helped him silence the spreading of the gospel! By telling women that it is virtuous for them to sit in the back of the church with their mouths closed, we have kept them off the mission field.

Thankfully, women through the centuries who had the fire of God burning in their hearts did not listen to the naysayers who told them they should be quiet. What would have happened if the great missionary Amy Carmichael had been content to stay in her comfortable home in England because of the misguided belief that women are not supposed to speak for God? Because Amy obeyed and preached with fervor, thousands in India found salvation through her Dohnavur Fellowship, and scores of young Indian girls were pulled out of the evil system of Hindu temple prostitution.

What would have happened if Southern Baptist missionary Bertha Smith had adhered to her own denomination’s restrictive policies about women in ministry? Because this brave missionary pioneer knew she could not keep silent about her faith, she took it to China and sparked a revival that is still felt there fifty years later.

What if healing evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson had swallowed the lie that says that women should not speak in church? She never would have blazed a trail across the United States in the 1920s with her Pentecostal message, and she never would have started the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, a denomination with a constituency of more than 5 million, more than 38,000 churches, and 49,000 ministers throughout 141 countries in 2005.

What if the great Bible teacher Henrietta Mears of Hollywood Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles had assumed that the apostle Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2:12 forbade her from teaching men? She never would



have led a Bible study with a young man named Bill Bright, who went on to establish Campus Crusade for Christ and lead an estimated 147 million people to Jesus.

What would the world be like if The Salvation Army founder Catherine Booth, healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman, or Bible teacher Corrie ten Boom had kept their mouths shut when the Spirit of God was prompting them to shout their messages from the housetops? May God forgive us for quenching the Spirit when we have told our sisters they cannot obey His call.

Chapter 3 Questions for Discussion

1. Describe a time when you or someone you know was denied a ministry opportunity simply because she was a woman.
2. Explain why 1 Timothy 2:12 cannot be interpreted literally, without considering the cultural context.
3. Explain why the apostle Paul had to bring correction to the church in Ephesus by asking certain women to stop teaching there.
4. Why did Paul ask the women to be “silent” in the church at Corinth? (See 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.)
5. Explain why it was a radically new concept in the first century for Paul to ask women to learn with a submissive attitude.
6. Some theologians believe 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is a quote from a letter written to Paul. If this is true, how does this change the meaning of the passage?

The woman is subject to the man, on account of the weakness of her nature, both of mind and of body.

Man is the beginning of woman and her end, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature.

Woman is in subjection according to the law of nature, but a slave is not. Children ought to love their father more than their mother.

—THIRTEENTH-CENTURY THEOLOGIAN THOMAS AQUINAS

[Short hair] is the symbol of the wicked fashion of rebellion of wives to their husbands' authority or of wicked daughters who rebel against their fathers. Men wear short hair as a sign that they take their responsibilities as made in the image of God and as rulers over their households. Women are to wear long hair as symbols of their submission to husband and father, taking their place with meekness as women surrendered to the will of God and subject to the authority God places over them.

—FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELIST JOHN R. RICE

Even the single woman is not to make any decision without a male head.

—LETHA SCANZONI

AUTHOR OF THE 1974 BOOK *All We're Meant to Be*⁷

⁷ Grady, J. L. (2013). *Ten lies the church tells women: how the bible has been misused to keep women in spiritual bondage*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House.