



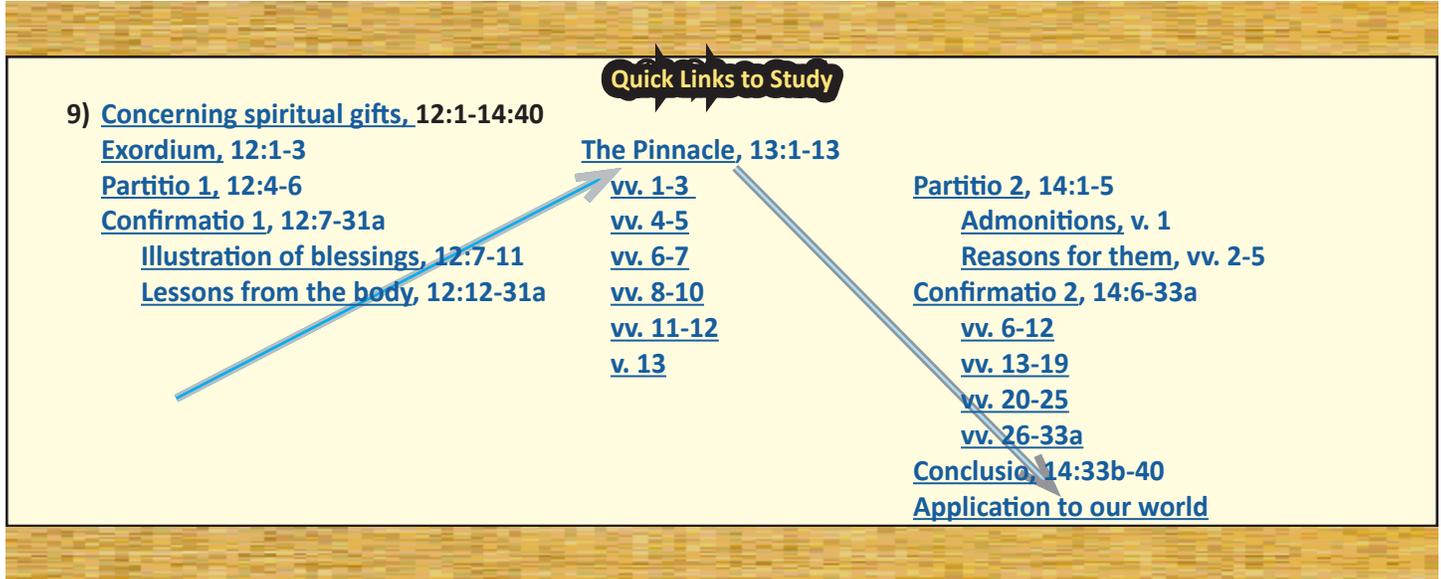
The Apostle Paul, Servant of Christ

Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν: Concerning spiritual blessing: An Indepth Look at 1 Cor. 12-14



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Introduction

In the modern Christian global world, one of the ongoing issues and debates concerns the issue of glossolalia, better known as ‘speaking in tongues.’ The central biblical text to which appeal is made either for or against the modern practice is First Corinthians fourteen. Whether the modern practices of this bear any resemblance to what Paul dealt with at Corinth in the mid first century is usually the heart of the discussion.

What must be understood is the inseparable link of chapters twelve through fourteen with each other. If one is to correctly understand Paul on this issue then these three chapters must be studied as a single unit of scripture text. The following study honors that natural linkage of the text along with a deep probing of both the social and religious history of mid first century Corinth, along with the built in rhetorical structures used by the apostle Paul to make his case. All of Paul’s letters are ‘occasional,’ meaning that they were composed to address real problems in real first century Christian congregations.

But the two letters addressed to the Christian community at Corinth from about 51 to 56 AD require more understanding of the historical background than any of Paul’s other letters. This is particularly the case with First Corinthians. The majority of the problems plaguing the Corinthian community are unique to that church and are focused on many issues present in the city during the middle of the first century. The dynamics of Corinth

were evolving during the middle of the first century so that much of the city life prior to the beginning of the Christian era had little in common with the city by the end of the first century. For example, the ethnic composition of the population underwent profound transformation during the first century. Those who made up a much larger Christian community some fifty years after its founding around 50 AD were a very different group of people than those in the church at its beginning. First Clement, written to this church around 96 AD, reflects much of this change.

This material is taken from the BIC commentary [one volume ten](#) on First Corinthians, and represents a major section of chapter ten of the volume [THE APOSTLE PAUL: SERVANT OF CHRIST](#), both of which are available at [cranfordville.com](#). This material has undergone some editing to appear as an article rather than as part of a book chapter.

9) Concerning spiritual gifts, 12:1-14:40.

One should recognize first the interconnectedness of this large unit of text with what has preceded it from the beginning of the letter.¹ Spiritual elitism pa-

¹“Too many writers treat 12:1–14:40 as if it were simply an ad hoc response to questions about spiritual gifts (or spiritual persons) rather than an address to this topic within the broader theological framework of 11:2–14:40 in deliberate continuity with 8:1–11:1, and indeed ultimately with 1:1–4:21. The way in which some ranked their self-perceived ‘spirituality’ or giftedness by the Holy

rating under the banner of ‘being spiritual’ comes to the surface repeatedly in claims to superior wisdom, insistence on ‘my rights’ in disregard for others in the church in matters of meat offered to idols, how one appears in the gathered community, to the abuses in the observance of the Lord’s Supper -- all of this is deeply connected to the perception of ‘giftedness’ that Paul discusses beginning in chapter twelve.

The internal structure of these three chapters has been extensively analyzed by many modern commen-

Spirit so as to encourage superior status enhancement which resulted in the attitude ‘I have no need of you’ (12:21–26) provides a close parallel to the status enjoyment of those who enjoyed the more comfortable location and better table fare than the latecomers at the Lord’s Supper (11:21–22; see above). We noted this unity of thought and theology in our short introduction to 11:2–14:40 (above). This whole section (11:2–14:40) takes up, in turn, the theme of ‘respect for the other’ which characterizes Paul’s demand and plea for ‘the strong’ to put themselves in a position of understanding and respect for ‘the weak’ in 8:1–11:1. Paul himself had offered a model of such concern by foregoing his ‘right’ to financial support from a person or persons to whom he might need to give privileged acknowledgment, in effect, as benefactor(s) or patron(s). The church of God ceases to be the church if it remains no longer characterized by an inclusive mutuality and reciprocity.

“The problem of rich and poor, of influential and deprived, however, offers less subtle opportunities for status enhancement and self-deception than issues of ‘spirituality.’ Here the temptation to glory in being ‘one of us’ (i.e., those people who are ‘spiritual’) takes a more insidious and ultimately more disastrously damaging form. For it engenders a self-glorifying at variance with the reality of divine grace and the transformative proclamation of the cross (1:18–2:5, esp. 1:10, 31). Three-quarters of a century before the work of Dale Martin on glossolalia as a ‘status indicator,’ Karl Barth perceived the unity of the whole epistle as turning on the contrast between glorying ‘in God’ and glorying in ‘their own belief in God and in particular leader and heroes; in the fact that they confuse belief with specific human experiences, convictions....’ Against this, the clarion call of Paul rings out, ‘Let no man glory in man’ (3:21), or, expressed in positive form: ‘He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord’ (1:31).⁷¹ Barth acknowledges that chs. 12–14 display an almost dazzling wealth of spiritual and religious life, but observes that ‘what we are really concerned with is not phenomena in themselves, but with their ‘whence?’ and ‘whither?’ To what do they point? To what do they testify?’⁷² As soon as their character as gifts has been recognized, with all the implications of the logic of that term, the Corinthians in that light only may “covet the best gifts” (v. 31).³ The chapter on love, however, underlines that these gifts are given for the mutual building up the whole church inclusively; not for the self, or for the enhancement of any exclusive ‘spiritual’ group within the church. ‘The criterion by which Paul compares ... the phenomena... is the idea of mutual and common edification.’⁷⁴ Yet edification, or building up in mutuality for the benefit of the whole, also emerges as the theme of chs. 8–10 and 11, and indeed of the entire epistle, as Margaret Mitchell demonstrates.⁵⁷”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 900–901.]

tators.² The extensive use of γλῶσσα (21x only in chaps 12-14) and the word group προφητεία, προφητεύω, προφήτης (20x in chaps 12-14 out of 22x total uses in the letter) clearly point to a central theme for all three chapters. Structural parallels can also be traced:

Confirmatio	12:7-30	14:6-33a
Partitio	12:4-6	14:1-5
Exordium	12:1-3	-----

Chapter 13 forms a rhetorical pinnacle with emphasis on the highest expression of spiritual giftedness. Here the earlier theme of reciprocity resurfaces as foundational to authentic Christian community. The tone of these chapters reflects a deliberative rhetoric with an appeal to utility and advantage. But the earlier theme of concern for one another permeates all of these chapters.³ One cannot be a Christian and a church cannot

²“It is also customary today to offer a comment on the rhetorical structure and strategy of these chapters, even if this often amounts to a more sophisticated version of what more traditional commentators have termed their ‘argument.’ Some attempts remain speculative, but in addition to Margaret Mitchell’s constructive analysis two accounts deserve particular attention. First, the argument of Eriksson, to which we have already referred, succeeds in relating Paul’s strategy, in part at least to his appeal where possible to shared prePauline traditions. His chapter on chs. 12–14 remains constructive and largely convincing.⁹ Further, Joop Smit’s work on the argument and genre of 12–14 also deserves note.¹⁰ Like Mitchell, he clearly demonstrates the coherence of Paul’s argument in chs. 12–14. Although we have emphasized the continuity of thought with 8:1–11:1 and indeed also with 1:10–4:21, Smit points out that γλῶσσα occurs twenty-one times in chs. 12–14, but not elsewhere in the epistle. Similarly, the group προφητεία, προφητεύω, προφήτης occurs twenty times, but otherwise only twice in this epistle (11:4, 5). Smit regards 12:1–3 as an exordium, in which he opts for the rhetorical method of insinuatio (i.e., the indirect approach in contrast to the overt principium).¹¹ He then expounds two rounds of argumentation: 12:4–30 and 14:1–33a. Within the first, 12:4–6 form a *partitio*, or succinct introduction to promote clarity for the *confirmatio* of vv. 7–30. 14:1–5 provide a *partitio* for the *confirmatio* of 14:6–33a.¹² Smit agrees with Mitchell that *the main strategy or genre is that of deliberative rhetoric, an appeal to utility and advantage*, especially in 14:1–33a.¹³ A detailed analysis is included with which we are in broad agreement, subject to wider reservations about how much is certain and how much can be achieved by such an analysis (expressed above).¹⁴” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 902.]

³“Too many writers treat 12:1–14:40 as if it were simply an ad hoc response to questions about spiritual gifts (or spiritual persons) rather than an address to this topic within the broader theological framework of 11:2–14:40 in deliberate continuity with 8:1–11:1, and indeed ultimately with 1:1–4:21. The way in which some ranked their self-perceived ‘spirituality’ or giftedness by the Holy Spirit so as to encourage superior status enhancement which resulted in the attitude ‘I have no need of you’ (12:21–26) provides a close parallel to the status enjoyment of those who enjoyed the more comfortable location and better table fare than the latecomers

be a community of believers unless love for one another centers in mutual respect and regard for others above one's self. Social distinction of class and differing status have no place in the community of God's true people. To inject the discriminating ways of the surrounding world into the life of the church is to nullify at the Lord's Supper (11:21–22; see above). We noted this unity of thought and theology in our short introduction to 11:2–14:40 (above). This whole section (11:2–14:40) takes up, in turn, the theme of 'respect for the other' which characterizes Paul's demand and plea for 'the strong' to put themselves in a position of understanding and respect for 'the weak' in 8:1–11:1. Paul himself had offered a model of such concern by foregoing his 'right' to financial support from a person or persons to whom he might need to give privileged acknowledgment, in effect, as benefactor(s) or patron(s). *The church of God ceases to be the church if it remains no longer characterized by an inclusive mutuality and reciprocity.*

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[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 900–901.]

its basis for existing. At minimal as the episode over the Lord's supper reveals such worldliness brings down the wrath of God on both the community and its members.

Exordium, 12:1-3. 1 Περί δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδελφοί, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν. 2 Οἴδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε πρὸς τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι. 3 διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει, Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

12.1 δὲ
ἀδελφοί,
οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν.
465
12.2 Οἴδατε
ὅτι... πρὸς τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε
ἀπαγόμενοι.
12.3 διὸ
467 γνωρίζω ὑμῖν
ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ
λαλῶν
ὅτι οὐδεὶς...λέγει·
καὶ
οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν·
Κύριος Ἰησοῦς,
εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

The ancient Greek rhetorical label 'exordium' simply means the introduction of a theme or topic for discussion. Here Paul uses the standard new topic structure *Περί δὲ ...*, *And concerning ...*, at the beginning of the sentence: 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12. Generally this is a signal of Paul responding to one of the questions posed to him by the delegation sent from Corinth to Ephesus to seek his advice (cf. 16:15-18).

Here the topic to be treated is identified as τῶν πνευματικῶν. But what does this mean? Huge difference of viewpoint over the meaning of the phrase typifies the interpretive history.⁴ The issue arises because

⁴"The translation and meaning of τῶν πνευματικῶν is universally discussed. Since the genitive plural masculine and neuter share the same Greek ending, some understand the Greek to mean spiritual persons (modern writers from Heinrici and Weiss to Blomberg and Wire and earlier commentators from Grotius to Locke).¹⁶ Most interpreters, however, believe that the term denotes spiritual gifts (from Tertullian, Novatian, and Cyril of Jerusalem
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the adjective πνευματικός, -ή, -όν, here in the genitive case plural number can be taken either as masculine, i.e., *spiritual persons*, or as neuter, i.e., *spiritual things*.⁵ It has often been taken as neuter gender and wrongly translated as ‘spiritual gifts’ based on equating πνευματικῶν (v. 1) with χαρισμάτων (v. 4). But this latter word technically means ‘expressions of grace.’ And clearly from the discussion in vv. 4–6 Paul is going to talk about an issue far broader than just χαρισμάτων. It is part of the discussion but just one part.

The etymological sense of the adjective πνευματικός, -ή, -όν means ‘having been breathed upon.’ Typically in both the Greek world along with some strands of Judaism, as well as early Christianity, the ‘breathing’ was done by deity rather than humans who normally were the objects of the divine breathing.

This lent itself in the Greek world especially to the idea of ecstatic speech. That is, the speech or language(s) of the gods and goddesses. The influence of [Delphi](#) upon Greek thinking was enormous, and soundly criticized by many of the philosophers, especially Plato for its use of emotion in supposedly communicating ideas from the invisible world. As early as 1,400 BCE the site at Delphi was the mythical source of divine oracles from the Pythia, the priestess at the temple of Apollo located at Delphi. The priestess Pythia functioned as the voice of Apollo and was given the ability to speak the language of Apollo⁶ and then trans-

to Conzelmann, Senft, and Lange).¹⁷ This is adopted by AV/KJV, RSV, NRSV, JB, and NIV (cf. NJB, REB, gifts of the Spirit). The main argument for the latter view that the Greek ‘is to be taken in a neuter, not a masculine sense ... is clear from 14:1 and from the interchange with χαρίσματα.’¹⁸ Conzelmann further equates gifts with ‘ecstatic phenomena,’ an interpretation which has been questioned by Gundry and recently attacked in detail by Forbes.¹⁹”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 909–911.]

⁵It belongs to the larger word group including πνεῦμα, πνευματικός, πνέω, ἐμπνέω, πνοή, ἐκπνέω, θεόπνευστος. All of the work off the etymological meaning of breath or breathing in both the Greek and the Jewish background. This relates to both humans and deities. The πνεῦμα as breath was the expression of life and the act of breathing signaled being alive. The English word *spirit* comes ultimately from the Latin *spiritus* meaning breath: “Middle English, from Anglo-French or Latin; Anglo-French, *espirit*, *spirit*, from Latin *spiritus*, literally, breath, from *spirare* to blow, breathe. First Known Use: 13th century” [[Merriam-Webster online dictionary](#), s.v., ‘spirit’]

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 6:332.]

⁶“For the theme and content as well as the source of the experience of the spirit, which is not granted to everyone but only to chosen and pre-disposed souls, is always something divine or a god, especially the most ‘spiritual’ of the gods, Apollo.

A final poetic witness to Apollonian inspiration manticism is

late it into human expression as an oracle expressed in Greek either orally or in written form.⁷ The earlier Greek background of manticism⁸ stood as a foundational influence upon the Greek understanding of ecstatic speech as the speech of the gods that could be translated into human language by the priests and priestesses of the individual deities. The large Corinthian temple of Apollo provided a convenient access to these traditions for the residents of the city.

Delphi was not that far from Corinth but

the Didyma inscr. of 263 A.D.⁵⁶ which extols the new form of the ancient oracular source of Apollo: its θεῖον πνεῦμα προφήταις ἄρδεται etc. through nymphs, to whom manticism is dear. Here πνεῦμα θεῖον might well be an apologetic concept of the

movement of pagan restoration in opposition to the spiritual utterances of Christianity. In a late magic pap. which has rules for giving oracles the ἅγιον πνεῦμα which makes magic possible by causing ecstasy is called syncretistically the “messenger of Apollo”: πρὸς ἐπιταγὴν ἁγίου πνεύματος, ἀν[γέλ]ου Φοῖβο[υ], Preis. Zaub., III, 289.

In what we read elsewhere of the inspiration of *pneuma* at Delphi and other places the original cultic-mythological understanding of the religion of Apollo has been widely permeated partly by scientific and partly by speculative theories which Platonism, Stoicism and Neo-Platonism developed in explanation and evaluation of the phenomenon of manticism and its decline.

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 6:347.]

⁷“Theologically significant is the idea that πνεῦμα is the cause and source of ecstatic speech⁴⁹ in which the priestess becomes so directly the ‘divine voice’ (→ 344, 5 ff.) that the Delphic πνεῦμα can be called the voice (ὁμῆ) which blows forth from the στόμιον (ἀναπνεῖ, Ps.-Luc. Nero, 10; Dio C., 63, 14, 2). Lucan (*De Bello Civili*, V, 83) speaks of the *venti loquaces* of the site of the oracle. The coming and going of the πνεῦμα are characteristically linked with φωνή-effects, e.g., the sound of a wind-instrument (Vergil. *Aen.*, 6, 82 ff.) or of the πρῶκτός (Aristoph. *Nu.*, 164), the ecstatic speech of the sibyl (Vergil. *Aen.*, 6, 82 ff.) and Delphic prophecy (Diod. S., 16, 26), or the κραυγὴ ἰσχυρά of a Pythia into which an ἄλαλον καὶ κακὸν πνεῦμα came (Plut. *Def. Orac.*, 51 [II, 438b]). From the standpoint of religious phenomenology the NT bears witness to the same original combination when it constantly links πνεῦμα and προφητεῦειν (Lk. 1:67; 2 Pt. 1:21 etc.), or when it refers to speaking with tongues as a gift of the Spirit (a reflection of Pythian prophesying in Corinth, 1 C. 12–14),⁵⁰ or when it speaks of the crying out either of the unclean spirit which departs from a man or of the Holy Spirit which fills him.⁵¹” [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 6:345–346.]

⁸“The art of divination and prophecy” [*The Free Dictionary*, s.v., [manticism](#)]



much closer was Eleusis (ca. 20 km) where the [Eleusinian Mysteries](#) were practiced as the initiation rites for the cults of Demeter and Persephone. Ecstatic speech, i.e., glossolalia, was a central activity of the worship of these pagan deities, and reflected one stream of the Delphic influence which permeated virtually all of Greek life in Paul's day. What helped the tongues speaking here was that the rites were performed at the mouths of caves spewing out sulphur fumes which were taken to be the 'breathing' of the gods from inside the caves. Just a little breathing of these fumes and everyone could speak making unknowable sounds in the ritual dances performed in the worship. Residents of Corinth in large numbers participated regularly in these rites.

Once more Paul is having to deal with Greek cultural influences filtering into the life of the church as a superior way of religious understanding. The elitism deeply associated with Greek based ecstatic speech tradition played well into the thinking of the Christian elitists in the church at Corinth.

What is gradually being recognized by more recent commentators is that ultimately not much difference in meaning comes from taking τῶν πνευματικῶν⁹ either masculine or neuter in gender.¹⁰ But the most important point of the term as used by Paul centers on the [Holy Spirit as the source of the blessing upon those commit-](#)

⁹The one often forgotten reality is that τῶν πνευματικῶν fundamentally means actions by the Spirit of God both to individuals and with the granting of divine blessings. Always foundational is the work of God's Spirit, and not the individual or the blessing granted to him/her. This was where the elitists in the church at Corinth went completely astray, due to their Greek heritage defining terms rather than the Gospel of Christ.

¹⁰“A relatively wide range of writers conclude that it is ‘impossible to find objective ground for a decision between the two possibilities, and little difference in sense is involved—spiritual persons are those who have spiritual gifts.’²⁰ It refers to either. But if both the writer and the readers well knew that the Greek ending included both genders (i.e., excluded neither), why should the meaning be construed in either-or terms at all? Hence Schrage notes that the masculine may embrace the Corinthians' meaning, while the neuter reflects Paul's preference to substitute *χαρίσματα*.²¹ Meyer rightly cites Chrysostom and Luther as interpreting the Greek to mean *Concerning the forms of action which proceed from the Holy Spirit and make manifest his agency*.²² The key issue which has been raised (at least the form in which Paul wishes to address it), is this: What criteria are we to apply for specific people or specific gifts to be considered genuinely ‘of the Holy Spirit’? This is what vv. 2 and 3 explicate in terms of a Christomorphic criterion.²³ Since it would overtranslate the Greek to render *Concerning what counts as people or as gifts of the Spirit*, we use quotation marks. The church needed clarification about a status-earning buzz slogan: *Now about things that “come from the Spirit,”* i.e., people say they do, but do they? How are we to know? Well, Paul replies, I do not want you to be ‘not knowing’ (ἀγνοεῖν), i.e., to remain without knowledge.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 910–911.]

ted to Christ. The translation of τῶν πνευματικῶν by Thiselton as “the things that come from the Spirit” represents a more accurate rendering of the inclusive nature of Paul's discussion.

The main clause in v. 1 is οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, *I do not want you to be ignorant*. Paul implies here that a lot of discussion about τῶν πνευματικῶν had been taking place among the Corinthian Christians. But, most all of it was misinformation that needed to be corrected. Many in the church felt deeply knowledgeable about τῶν πνευματικῶν but their ‘knowledge’ was coming out of their Greek background and traditions and consequently misrepresented the apostolic teaching of the Gospel.

The amplification of the topic in vv. 2-3 puts emphasis upon the individuals rather than just ‘things.’ First, Paul alludes to the influence of their pagan religious background about communicating with the gods: Οἴδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε πρὸς τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι. *You know that when you were pagans you were led astray in regard to non speaking idols*.¹¹ That is, the Corinthians in their pre-Christian life worshiped idols which they were convinced could and did speak to the worshippers through the voices of the priests and priestesses.¹² Ecstatic speaking and ritualistic dancing, especially by the female priests, typified the worship

¹¹“(i) Syntax. If ἤγεσθε is construed as the finite verb within the subordinate ὅτε clause, there is no finite verb for the main clause, in place of which the text has only the participle ἀπαγόμενοι. The simplest way of restoring an intelligible syntax and completing the finite verb is to assume that a final (i.e., second) ἦτε is to be supplied by the readers, thus adding the copula to the participle to transpose it into a periphrastic imperfect passive, you used to be carried away.²⁷ The omission of the copula is a regular example of elliptic construction and is perhaps rendered all the more probable by the fact that ἦτε has already occurred once in the subordinate clause.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 911.]

¹²“Whether or not Forbes is right about the need to modify our view of the content of the ‘gifts’ of 12:1–2 (see below), the issue remains that in preChristian paganism the notion of status-conferring ‘experiences’ (like claims to ‘wisdom’) cohered with the cultural, social, rhetorical, and religious climate of Corinth and had found its way into the church. Thus John Painter draws a contrast between the ‘spirituality’ of the πνευματικοί which stressed knowledge, wisdom, and exalted states of consciousness and ‘the proclamation of the cross as the saving event.’²⁵³ While Painter links 12:2 with 1 Cor 1:1–4:21, Martin connects v. 2 with the emphasis on unity-in-diversity in 12:1–14:40.²⁵⁴ Both point toward the divine act of ‘status-conferring’ in the corporate event of 15:1–58. The contrast with attitudes carried over from paganism thus becomes fundamental and not ‘minimal.’²⁵⁵” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 916.]

practices in most of the Corinthian temples as central to establishing communication with the patron deity of the individual temples.¹³ Quite naturally the ideas instilled

¹³“Greeks considered *madness* an important aspect of worship. Women in particular responded to Bacchus (also known as Dionysus), the god of madness; ‘him of the orgiastic cry, exciter of women, Dionysus, glorified with mad honors’. (Plutarch, *Moralia* 671c). Ancient Corinth was a center of Dionysiac worship, and Pausanius, world traveler of the second century of our era gives this description:

In the market-place, for most of the temples are there, is the Ephesian Artemis, and there are two wooden statues of Dionysus, gilt except the faces, which are painted with red paint, one they call Lysian Dionysus and the other Dionysus the Reveler. The tradition about these statues I will record. Pentheus, they say, when he outraged Dionysus, among other acts of reckless daring actually at last went to mount Cithaeron to spy on the women, and climbed up into a tree to see what they were doing; and when they detected him, they forthwith dragged him down, and tore him limb from limb. And afterwards, so they say at Corinth, the Pythian priestess told them to discover that tree and pay it divine honors. And that is why these statues are made of that very wood. (Description of Greece, II.ii; tr. A.R. Shilleto)

“There was in Corinth, then, a significant monument memorializing the savagery of female Bacchus worshippers. Nor was such a feminine ferocity confined to Pentheus alone. Women under the inspiration of Bacchus were said to have torn Orpheus limb from limb; and Alexander the Great was supposed to have incorporated a group of these maenads (mad women) into his army in his attempt to conquer India. There was also a tradition that women during the course of the worship tore apart young animals and ate them raw, warm and bleeding, thereby receiving within themselves the life of the god. In a 1976 address to the Mystery Religions Division of the Society of Biblical Literature, Ross Kraemer argued that there is evidence that women participated in a second level of initiation in Bacchic worship that was not available to men. Among Dionysiac worshippers, writes Livy in his *History of Rome*, ‘the majority are women’ (XXXIX.xv)

While women were famed for their wildness in the Bacchic cult and in certain other mystery cults, other aspects of their worship were more traditional. Of special importance to the study of the situation Paul addresses is the concept of clamor, noisy outbursts of religious pandemonium. Strabo (first century) explains how popular writers describe the phenomenon:

They represent them, one and all, as a kind of inspired people and as subject to Bacchic frenzy, and, in the guise of minister, as inspiring terror at the celebration of the sacred rites by means of war-dances accompanied by uproar and noise and cymbals and drums and also by flute and outcry... (Georg., X, 3:7)

“The ‘sounding gong and tinkling cymbal’ used in such worship are mentioned in a derogatory sense in 1 Corinthians 13:1; but the religious outcry itself is dealt with more directly. It is essential that we understand that much of the shouting involved in the rite was the specific function of women. Euripides describes the advent of Dionysiac religion to Thebes thus:

‘This city, first in Hellas, now shrills and echoes to my women’s cries, their ecstasy of joy’ (Bacchae, 11, 20-24)

“The word used here for ‘cry’ is **olulugia**, defined by the *Etymologicum Magnum* as ‘the sound which women make to exult in worship’ and by E.R. Dodds as ‘the women’s ritual cry of triumph or thanksgiving’. Pausanias tells of ‘the mountain they say was

into the thinking of the Corinthians would not be left behind easily upon conversion to Christianity. But Paul’s agenda as outlined here at the beginning in 12:1-3 is to help the Corinthian believers shed completely this kind of thinking and replace it with apostolic teaching.

Thus against this atmosphere in the city Paul makes the declarations in v. 3 that sound unusual to a modern western reader: διὸ γνωρίζω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν λέγει, Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, καὶ οὐδεὶς δύναται εἰπεῖν, Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, εἰ μὴ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ. **Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. What indeed does constitute authentic spirituality, i.e., who is truly πνευματικός?**¹⁴ Evidently from actual occurrences at

called Eva from the Bacchic cry ‘Evvoe’ which Dionysus and his attendant women first uttered there’ (Descr. of Greece, IV, xxxi)

“Menander also demonstrates women’s role in worship:

‘We were offering sacrifice five times a day, and seven serving women were beating cymbals around us while the rest of the women pitched high the chant (olulugia)’ (Fragment 326).

“Women were expected, then, to provide certain types of sound-effects; and some of these effects seem to have been limited to feminine ministrants.

“Apart from savagery and shouting, ancient writers usually describe worshipers of Dionysus as engaging in dancing, drinking, sexual promiscuity, varying degrees of undress, and other forms of excessive behavior. It was only in frenzy that one could hold communion with the god, or - in ecstasy so great that the soul seemed to leave the body - to become one with him.

“There are significant indications that the old pagan religion still exerted a powerful influence on the recent converts at Corinth. They were uncomfortable over meat that had been offered to idols (8:1-13), and they had to be reminded not to attend sacrificial meals in pagan temples (10:20, 21) As in Bacchic feasts, there was drunkenness at the Lord’s Supper and ecstatic madness at the worship services. A surprising description comes from the pen of the neo-Platonist Iamblichus as he explains the mystery cults, the popular religions of the day, for Dionysus was not the only god who inspired frenzy:

It is necessary to investigate the causes of the divine frenzy (madness). These are illuminations that come down from the gods, the inspirations that are imparted from them, and the absolute authority from them, which not only encompasses all things in us but banishes entirely away the notions and activities which are peculiarly our own. The frenzy causes words to be let fall that are not uttered with the understanding of those who speak them; but it is declared, on the contrary, that they are sounded with a frenzied mouth, the speakers being all of them subservient and entirely controlled by the energy of a dominant intelligence. All enthusiasm is of such a character, and is brought to perfection from causes of such a kind. (The Egyptian Mysteries, tr. Alexander Wilder. pp. 119f.)

[Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, “Pandemonium and Silence at Corinth,” [IntelligentChristian website](#)]

¹⁴“The preposition with the dative ἐν πνεύματι could denote the sphere of the Spirit of God, understood in effect as a locative, and could be translated in the Spirit (NJB) or under the influence of the Spirit (REB, JB). But the context and theology of confessional declaration point to the dative of instrumentality, or agency

Corinth the mark of false spirituality for Christians are the declarations Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς, *Let Jesus be cursed!*, and Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, *Jesus is Lord*. The second declaration can only be made authentically ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ, *by the Holy Spirit*. The authentic declaration comes only ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν, *when speaking by the Spirit of God*. God would never lead a person the call down a curse upon Jesus!

But just what is Paul getting at with Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς?¹⁵ The specific setting for such utterances is

of the Spirit of God. Schrage and Collins both endorse this, and NRSV, RSV, NIV rightly translate by the Spirit of God, which we have simply made more explicit to reflect Paul's double use of the same syntax.⁵⁷ We find here a classic model of Wolterstorff's philosophical analysis of human acts of speaking (λαλῶν) which represent speech generated by divine agency (λέγει). Wolterstorff argues that just as the words which a secretary speaks can count as words which her employer speaks (if the secretary knows his or her mind and is empowered or authorized to speak on his or her behalf), so human words can in appropriate situations, count as 'divine discourse.' He calls this 'double agency discourse.'⁵⁸ On this basis Paul is asking what content of human speech may be said to count as what is spoken by the Spirit or through the agency of the Spirit of God. Wolterstorff readily shows that, e.g., in the case of ambassadors who speak for a head of state 'double-speaking' and 'double agency' is entirely intelligible.⁵⁹ So Paul asks: Under what conditions does an utterance of a πνευματικός count as an utterance of τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα? More broadly, what experiences and actions, as well as words, will count as manifestations of the Holy Spirit, rather than self-induced experiences, acts, or words, or even those induced by other agencies?" [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 917.]

¹⁵“Astonishing as it may seem, no less than twelve distinct explanations have been offered to try to account for the use of the phrase ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς. Before we briefly list these, it may be helpful provisionally to note the semantic range and lexicographical data which relate to ἀνάθεμα. In classical Greek literature the word regularly means votive offering devoted to a deity. In the history of the word the active voice of ἀνατίθημι, *to set up* (i.e., in a temple) or *place upon* (another), takes the middle form ἀνεθέμην, *to lay before*. With the long vowel ἀνάθημα occurs in, e.g., Sophocles, *Antigone* 286; 3 *Macc* 3:17; *Jdt* 16:19; *Epistle of Aristeeas* 40; *Josephus*, *Wars* 6.335; *Antiquities* 17.156. The form with the shorter vowel, ἀνάθεμα, assumes: (i) this votive offering meaning from its hellenistic background (Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 25.7; Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 1.253); and (ii) the LXX translation for Heb. *cherem*, that which is to be thoroughly destroyed as holy-to-God, that which is taboo and unavailable to human use or contact (*Lev* 27:28; *Josh* 6:17; 7:12; *Judg* 1:17). (iii) In noncultic contexts it then enters ordinary discourse as *cursed* or *cut off*, especially cut off from God (*Gal* 1:8–9; *Rom* 9:3; 10:1). Schrage and Davis discuss especially (ii) and (iii).⁶² The absence of the verb in ἀναθέμα Ἰησοῦς permits either the imperatival or subjunctive *Jesus be cursed* or the indicative assertion *Jesus is cursed*. We shall argue that the utterance concerning κύριος is a confession which combines an assertion about Jesus Christ with self-involvement on the part of the speaker. There need to be compelling reasons for understanding the parallel clause in a different way. This will emerge as we set forth the various possibilities, pausing where more general remarks serve our

not defined. If Paul is alluding to a moment of persecution when especially the Jewish synagogue is pressuring the individual to recant his/her conversion to Christianity, then both declarations become understandable. Another less likely possibility in light of the mentioning of individuals in the church who denied the resurrection of Jesus (cf. chap 15) would be that Ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς is referring to the human Jesus in distinction to the spiritual Christ. The most likely scenario is the first one, given the opposition of Christian from the Jewish synagogue depicted by Luke in his account in Acts.

Thus Paul asserts that the authentically πνευματικός individual will claim Jesus as Lord both in confession and living. Notice carefully that for Paul being πνευματικός, *spiritual*, means ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ λαλῶν, i.e., being guided by the Spirit of God. It has nothing to do with status oriented actions such as ecstatic speech etc. It does not mean being able to speak directly with God in a some kind of heavenly language. Instead, πνευματικός means being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit doing the will of God. The emphasis flow from God to the individual, not the reverse direction understood from the Corinthian's pagan background. This pagan background from the religious atmosphere of Corinth represented a total misunderstanding of authentic πνευματικός. This Paul intended to correct in his discussion in 12:4-14:40.

Partitio 1, 12:4-6. 4 Διαρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσίν, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα 5 καὶ διαρέσεις διακονῶν εἰσίν, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος 6 καὶ διαρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσίν, ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. 4 *Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.*

	12.4	δὲ
468		Διαρέσεις χαρισμάτων εἰσίν,
		δὲ
469		τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα ·
	12.5	καὶ
470		διαρέσεις διακονῶν εἰσίν,
		καὶ
471		ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος ·
	12.6	καὶ
472		διαρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσίν,
		δὲ
473		ὁ αὐτὸς θεὸς
		ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα
		ἐν πᾶσιν.

In this beginning expansion of the general theme

purpose and evaluation. A final assessment, however, awaits the examination of the κύριος confession.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 918.]

of τῶν πνευματικῶν, the apostle puts on the table the idea of unity in the midst of diversity.

Διαιρέσεις χαρισμάτων εἰσίν,
τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα
καὶ διαιρέσεις διακονιῶν εἰσίν,
καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος
καὶ διαιρέσεις ἐνεργημάτων εἰσίν,
ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς
ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν.

**Diversities of giftings exist
but one Spirit
and diversities of ministries exist
and the same Lord
and diversities of enablings exist,
but the same God**

who enables all things in all people.

The diversity emphasis is found in the threefold use of διαιρέσεις, the plural of διαίρεσις. What precisely does διαιρέσεις mean?¹⁶ The context emphasis here is on divine distribution of various χαρισμάτων, **grace giftings**, διακονιῶν, **ministries**, and ἐνεργημάτων, **enablings**. But the tendency of many commentators is to draw too sharp a distinction between ‘distinctions’ and ‘distributions.’ In the subsequent amplification both ideas received emphasis from Paul. The main point of διαιρέσεις is to stress that the three fold blessings defined come as distributions from God. They are not humanly produced. The concluding declaration in v. 11

¹⁶“In the NT it [διαιρέω] obviously means ‘to apportion and distribute,’ as in Lk. 15:12: τὸν βίον; 1 C. 12:11: τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. The πνεῦμα allots the gifts of the Spirit to the various members of the community according to His will.

διαίρεσις has three important meanings in secular Greek: “separation or dissolution”; “division” either generally or logically; and “distribution,” as the apportionment of property or an estate in the pap.1 In the LXX it means “distribution” in Jdt. 9:4; Sir. 14:5; or “what is distributed”: a. a part in ψ 135:13 (parts of the sea), or Jos. 19:51 V 1, p 185 == 19:8f. (an inheritance); or b. a “division,” as in Ju. 5:16; εἰς διαιρέσεις Ρουβὴν == 5:15: εἰς τὰς μερίδας Ρουβὴν == clan; 1 Ch. 24:1; 2 Ch. 8:14; 35:5, 10, 12; 2 Esr. 6:18: courses of priests; 1 Ch. 26:19: διαιρέσεις τῶν πυλῶν, 1 Ch. 27:1–15: divisions of the army.

“So far as concerns 1 C. 12:4 f.), this can be decided only from the context. The plur. διαιρέσεις, the opposition to τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, and the parallelism with the basic concept of ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος (v. 7) all favour ‘distribution’ rather than ‘distinction.’ The one Spirit is manifested in apportionments of gifts of the Spirit, so that in the community the one χάρις of God is experienced by charismatics in these distributions (of χαρίσματα). The one concept διαίρεσις here includes both distribution and what is distributed.

In early patristic writing we find the peculiar use of διαίρεσις to denote the distinction in the intertrinitarian relationship. Cf. Athenag. Suppl., 10:3: τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δύναμιν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Cf. 12, 2; Tatian, 5, 1 f.; Origin. Joh., II, 10, 74.

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 1:184–185.]

makes this point very clear: πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. **And all these are enabled by the one and same Spirit distributing to each one individually just as He chooses.**

What is then distributed? χαρισμάτων, **grace giftings**, διακονιῶν, **ministries**, and ἐνεργημάτων, **enablings** is Paul’s answer. One should be careful to not draw much distinction between these three groupings. Essentially they refer to the same fundament entity depicted three different ways. The individual blessings are first ‘**gifts of God’s grace**,’ χαρισμάτων.¹⁷ Thus no believer earns or deserves them. But they are also διακονιῶν, **ministries**.¹⁸ That is, these blessings are intended to benefit others through service to them, and not the individual recipient. Thirdly, these blessings are ἐνεργημάτων, **enablings**.¹⁹ That is, the blessings are realized only through the infusion of divine strength and power -- something done only as the believer seeks to use them proper to serve others. In brilliant fashion Paul sets up an inner linking of the idea of divine blessings with all three aspects essential to authentic blessing from God.

Boy, the self glorifying and elitist mentality that Paul has targeted throughout the letter really receives a hard blow here. If one seeks to be blessed of God, then he/she must seek that blessing within the framework laid out by Paul. It comes not as reward for self accomplishment. It must be utilized in service to others. Its spiritual strength depends solely upon the enabling presence of God through His Spirit. This completely dismantles the seeking of spiritual gifts for self glorification, as many of the Corinthians were doing. It’s easy to understand Paul’s earlier declaration in 3:1–3.

1 Κάγω, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῦ ἀλλ’ ὡς σαρκίνους, ὡς νηπίους ἐν Χριστῷ.
2 γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα· οὕτω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε.

¹⁷χάρισμα is a Pauline word in the NT with 16 of the 17 NT uses in his writings. Clearly he plays off root idea of the word group χαίρω, χαρά, συγχαίρω, χάρις, χαρίζομαι, χαριτώ, ἀχάριστος, χάρισμα, εὐχαριστέω, εὐχαριστία, εὐχάριστος. The idea of χάρις, grace, stands foundational with χάρισμα as a concrete expression of divine χάρις.

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 9:359.]

¹⁸διακονία is a heavily used word by Paul with 24 of the 34 NT uses in his writings. A part of the word group διακονέω, διακονία, διάκονος, the emphasis is upon helping others in humble service.

¹⁹This less frequently used word (2x in NT) is exclusively a Pauline First Corinthians term (12:6, 10). A part of the larger word group ἔργον, ἐργάζομαι, ἐργάτης, ἐργασία, ἐνεργής, ἐνέργεια, ἐνεργέω, ἐνέργημα, εὐεργεσία, εὐεργετέω, εὐεργέτης, the noun ἐνέργημα stresses action that has been put into effect. The English word ‘energized’ is pretty close to the Greek noun in meaning.

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 2:635.]

ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε, 3 ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but **rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.** 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?

In Paul's three fold stress on divine blessings, he repeats the exclusive divine source three times as well: τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, **but the same Spirit;** καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς κύριος, **and the same Lord;** ὁ δὲ αὐτὸς θεὸς ὁ ἐνεργῶν τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, **but the same God who enables all things among all people.** Blessing to the believer is totally and completely dependent upon God, His grace and strength. Special emphasis is given to the third declaration in order to emphasize that only within the continuing strength of God can His blessing be used for the benefit of others. In clear terms Paul is condemning the selfish orientation of so many of the Corinthians. For them, elitism was based upon "God, look at what I am doing for you." It was intently concerned that others think the same way toward the elitist. Such thinking is utterly condemned by Paul here. Plus any possible effort at 'status ranking' of the various blessings, or gifts, is likewise condemned by Paul here.

Confirmatio 1, 12:7-31a. Based on the premise set forth in vv. 4-6, Paul now applies and amplifies his principles concerning spiritual blessings. First he turns to specifying some of these blessings more precisely (vv. 7-11). Then using the analogy of a body, both literally as a human body and figuratively as the community as the body of Christ, Paul applies the principles of vv. 4-6 to the issue of factions in the Corinthian community in vv. 12-31a with the central theme of unity.

Illustrations of spiritual blessings, vv. 7-11. 7 ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδοται ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον. 8 ᾧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλῳ δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, 9 ἐτέρῳ πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, ἄλλῳ δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι, 10 ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, ἄλλῳ [δὲ] προφητεία, ἄλλῳ [δὲ] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, ἐτέρῳ γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλῳ δὲ ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν 11 πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. **7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common**

good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

474	12.7	δὲ	ἐκάστῳ δίδοται ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.
475	12.8	γὰρ	διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος
476		ᾧ μὲν...δίδοται λόγος σοφίας,	
477		δὲ	ἄλλῳ λόγος γνώσεως (δίδοται)
478			κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα,
479	12.9	ἐτέρῳ πίστις (δίδοται)	ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι,
480		δὲ	ἄλλῳ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων (δίδοται)
481			ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι,
482	12.10	δὲ	ἄλλῳ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων (δίδοται),
483		[δὲ]	ἄλλῳ προφητεία (δίδοται),
484		[δὲ]	ἄλλῳ διακρίσεις πνευμάτων (δίδοτο),
485		ἐτέρῳ γένη γλωσσῶν, (δίδοται),	
		δὲ	ἄλλῳ ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν.
	12.11	δὲ	πάντα ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν
		καὶ	τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ
			καθὼς βούλεται.

The header statement (v. 7) sets up the illustration of nine examples of specific spiritual blessings for ministry to others in vv. 8-10. Verse 11 both summarizes and reapplies the earlier principles in vv. 4-6. What is central in Paul's emphasis here is not specific 'gifts' but the use of all spiritual blessings for the benefit of the community, rather than the individual. Paul does not have any sort of 'master list' of spiritual gifts. He knows quite well that the work of the Holy Spirit can never be boxed into such a man made listing!

7 ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδοται ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Here τῶν πνευματικῶν in v. 1, which is first expanded by the threefold definition in vv. 4-6, is now labeled ἡ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος, **the manifestation of the Spirit.** In the other use of ἡ φανέρωσις in

2 Cor. 4:2, the emphasis is upon a public declaration. The adverb φανερώς built off the same root stresses **openly, publicly** in contrast to ἐν κρυπτῷ or κρυπτῶς, **in secret or secretly**, as its opposite. That is, the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual member of the community will be obvious, rather than secret or hidden. How? The prepositional phrase defines this as πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον, **for the common advantage**.²⁰ That is, when the Holy Spirit is active in a believer's life it will be seen in ministry actions to others, the διαίρεσις διακονιῶν of v. 5.

In vv. 8-10, a specification of nine areas of activities by the Holy Spirit are given. Despite innumerable efforts to categorize these, such efforts are useless and a waste of time.²¹ Plus, this attempt dangerously moves in the direction of attaching differing values on these that the spiritual elitists at Corinth were doing. This Paul was condemning soundly. But even worse is what I have personally seen attempted in a Texas congregation. That is, a compiler of the various listings²² into a 'master list' which served as the basis of a

²⁰“To the primary criterion of pointing to the Lordship of Christ or Christlikeness (12:3) as a mark of being authentically activated by the Spirit, Paul now adds a second criterion: the Spirit is at work where the public manifestation serves the common advantage of others, and not merely self-affirmation, self-fulfillment, or individual status. The Spirit produces visible effects for the profit of all, not for self-glorification. If the latter is prominent, suspicion is invited. δίδοται reflects both a continuous process of giving, and the sovereignty of God in choosing and in freely giving.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 936.]

²¹“Numerous attempts have been made to ‘classify’ the nine instances of gifts which Paul now enumerates. Weiss and Allo are among those who perceive a triad of triads here, while Collins argues for a 2 + 5 + 2 chiasmus.¹ Bengel and Meyer divide the list into three: (a) gifts which relate to ‘intellectual power’: λόγος σοφίας, λόγος γνώσεως (v. 8); (b) those which depend on ‘special energy of faith’: πίστις, ἰάματα, δυνάμεις, προφητεία, διακρίσεις πνευμάτων (vv. 9–10a); and (c) ‘Charismata which have reference to the γλῶσσαι: γένη γλωσσῶν, ἔρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν (v. 10b)’ (Meyer’s italics).² Tertullian began similarly by marking off (a) the first two gifts as *sermo intelligentiae et consilii*; but then subdivided (b) πίστις as *spiritus religionis et timoris Dei* from (c) ἰάματα and δυνάμεις as *valentiae spiritus*; and finally (d) προφητεία, διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, γένη γλωσσῶν and ἔρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 937.]

²²**Rom. 12:4-8.** 4 καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πολλὰ μέλη ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει πράξιν, 5 οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σώματι ἔσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ’ εἰς ἀλλήλων μέλη. 6 ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητεῖαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως, 7 εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, 8 εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει· ὁ μεταδίδους ἐν ἀπλότητι, ὁ προϊστάμενος ἐν σπουδῇ, ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰαρότητι. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the

complete reorganization of the administrative structure of a modern congregation.²³ It was a fiasco of the first

same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:8-10. 8 ᾧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται λόγος σοφίας, ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, 9 ἐτέρω πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, ἄλλω δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι, 10 ἄλλω δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, ἄλλω [δὲ] προφητεία, ἄλλω [δὲ] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, ἐτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλω δὲ ἔρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Cor. 12:27-31a. 27 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους. 28 καὶ οὐς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν. 29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μὴ πάντες προφῆται; μὴ πάντες διδασκαλοὶ; μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις; 30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν; 31 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts.

Eph. 4:11-14. 11 καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους, 12 πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 13 μέχρι κατανήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, 14 ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης, 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

²³“Different ‘lists’ of instantiations of gifts in Paul assume various shapes and sizes. Four lists occur in Rom 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:8–11; 12:27–28; and Eph 4:11. On this basis Dunn prefers to distinguish thematically between gifts which relate respectively to miracles, revelation, inspired utterance, and service, perceiving all of them to proceed from divine grace.⁴ Above all, ‘charisma is always an event, the gracious activity (ἐνέργημα) of God through a man.’⁵ The word ‘event,’ however, may be open to question. Paul’s charisma of living a celibate life without distraction no doubt en-

order and eventually ripped the congregation apart into bitter division. The futility of such efforts becomes clear when measured carefully against the scripture text, in large measure because they in reality attempt to do essentially the same thing that the Corinthian elitists were attempting.

God will never bless such an overt rejection of His Word given through the apostle Paul! That is, primary emphasis is placed on what the individual believer possesses. Paul condemns such individual seeking and reminds us that the bottom line is the spiritual well being of the community. The good news is that each believer has a contribution to make to the common advantage of the community. In the hugely class conscious society of first century Corinth that was most inspiring and encouraging. Plus, no contribution is valued over all the others by God. Even better good news!

What are the manifestations of the Spirit described here by Paul? Note the syntax of the Greek in vv. 8-10:

ὧ μὲν γὰρ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδονται

- a) λόγος σοφίας,
- b) ἄλλω δὲ λόγος γνώσεως κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα,
- c) ἑτέρω πίστις ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι,
- d) ἄλλω δὲ **χαρίσματα** ἰαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι,
- e) ἄλλω δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων,
- f) ἄλλω [δὲ] προφητεία,
- g) ἄλλω [δὲ] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων,
- h) ἑτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν,
- i) ἄλλω δὲ ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν

Note the grouping of the first two with ὧ μὲν... ἄλλω δὲ, **to the one on the one hand...but to the other....** The common use of λόγος but with the distinction of σοφίας and γνώσεως motivates the structure. Logos here is best understood as either as 'utterance' or 'articulate

tailed a continuous divine sustaining. In his earlier work Dunn's use of 'event' slides too readily into assumptions about 'spontaneity,' but in his volume on Paul's theology (1998) he fully recognizes that these gifts include 'more humdrum tasks and organizational roles, as the more eye-catching.... The grace was in the giving, we might say, not in the form of the manifestation.'⁶ He adds: the 'event' character should not be 'overpressed.... 1 Cor 14:26-32 suggests a mixture of prepared contribution and some spontaneous utterance' (my italics).⁷ Such gifts as teaching and critically evaluating can hardly be 'spontaneous,' but are habits of trained judgment marked precisely by a continuity of the Spirit's giving as a process over time (cf. Rom 12:7-8; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:11). 'Almsgiving' and 'works of mercy' (Rom 12:8) may well seem 'more excellent' if the use of the gifts is planned, deliberate, and entails a conscious act of will and service rather than a spontaneous welling up of a gesture without reflection. We shall note the importance of Theissen's claims (in effect, against Dunn) that 'tongues,' e.g., far from being merely spontaneous, may reflect 'socially learned behavior.'⁸ This issue is discussed further with reference especially to healing and to prophecy." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 937-938.]

utterance.²⁴ Against the backdrop of 16 uses of σοφία inside First Corinthians (1:17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 30; 2:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13; 3:19) the idea here is the wisdom of God **provided to the believer.**²⁵ From Paul's earlier discus-

²⁴"We insert **on his or her part** to provide a gender-inclusive way of communicating the contrastive particles which qualify the distribution or apportionment of gifts: ὧ μὲν ... ἄλλω δέ.... It is quite unsatisfactory to translate λόγος as *word*, even if in Christian circles 'a word' has become informal shorthand for a message. λόγος means word in certain (mainly linguistic) contexts, but more usually it indicates a rational statement, proposition, or sentence. However, it is not restricted to cognitive propositions. Hence the best translation is **utterance** with a nuance of intelligibility or rationality best conveyed by the compound phrase **articulate utterance**. In John 1:1 the inexpressible, transcendent, holy God becomes enfleshed as God's *articulate utterance* of his being and action in the embodied life and action of Jesus Christ. The fifteen or so sections listed under λόγος in BAGD confirm the frequency of conjunctions between *discourse* and *articulate speech*, with the proviso that λόγος can also mean *question* (Diogenes Laertius, 2.116; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.99; Matt 21:24), *prayer* (Matt 26:44; Mark 14:39), or *story* or *account* (Josephus, *Ant.* 19.132; Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15).⁹ In Col 2:23 λόγον ἔχειν σοφίας alludes to *human precepts that have a [mere] appearance of wisdom*. I have discussed the semantic range of λόγος more fully elsewhere.¹⁰"

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 938.]

²⁵"Our proposed translation relating to 'wisdom' reflects two points. First, the genitive σοφίας may be either subjective genitive, *articulate utterance derived from (God's) wisdom*, or objective genitive, *articulate utterance about (God's) wisdom*. Second, σοφία was clearly a catchword or slogan in the Corinthian community (see above on 1:17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 30; 2:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13; 3:19; sixteen times in this epistle, out of only two further uses in the four major epistles, Rom 11:33 and 2 Cor 1:12; six instances in Colossians [1:9, 28; 2:3, 23; 3:16; and 4:5]; and three in Ephesians). Hence we place it in quotation marks. The background which controls the exegesis, therefore, derives from the contrast between the pretentiousness and competitive status-seeking of human wisdom (1:17-22; 2:1-5; 3:19) and the gift of divine wisdom (1:24-31; 2:6-13). Since the emphasis in 12:8 falls entirely on gift, clearly divine wisdom as a gift of the Spirit lies in view here. Kistemaker offers an exegesis which coheres with these factors: 'The gift is the ability to speak divine wisdom which believers receive through the Holy Spirit (cf. 2:6-7). Divine wisdom is contrasted with human wisdom (1:17, 20, 25).'¹¹ Similarly, Zodiates defines this gift as 'an intelligent utterance of God's wisdom.' Wolff, Collins, and Schrage convincingly insist that any interpretations of this phrase must allude to 'Paul's lengthy discussion on word and wisdom (1:18-4:21)' (Collins).¹²

"Wisdom, in this context, becomes an evaluation of realities in the light of God's grace and the cross of Christ. It is part of a response to grace.¹³ Dunn compares 2 Cor 1:12 in this context: 'not by human wisdom but by the grace of God.'¹⁴ But it is the articulate utterance of this wisdom. Hence it relates to 'God's plan of salvation' and its articulation or communication. Schatzmann and Schrage confirm this point. First, Paul emphasizes 'the actual utterance of wisdom which becomes a shared experience because it results in the upbuilding of the body'; second, 'From 1 Cor. 1-3

it is almost certain that Paul identified the wisdom from God with God's saving deed in the crucified Christ, particularly in the proclamation of the saving event.¹⁵ It relates primarily to 'the revelation of God in the cross.'¹⁶

"Some popular interpretations of this phrase are therefore clearly far more individualistic and pragmatic than the above comments suggest. Kistemaker, Dunn, Schatzmann, and Schrage broadly view the articulation of 'wisdom' as the intelligible communication of the purposes of God, as focused in the 'reversals' of the cross (1:26–31), for the world and for the common advantage of all believers. We can but speculate whether this could include 'inspired messages' for specific individuals; certainly there is no firm evidence to warrant such an understanding. If we interpret the phrase to reflect Paul's other uses of σοφία in this epistle, such an utterance seems more than likely to allude to Christ-centered gospel wisdom. It would not, in other contexts, denote simply some convenient communication without any implicit christological connection. The introductory formulae in 12:1–3 and in 12:4–7 also lead us to expect such a function and content. Wisdom relates to building up the community for the common advantage of all through appropriation of the power and lifestyle of Christ. Craig goes so far as to allude to 1 Corinthians 1–4 to urge the conclusion that the first two of the nine 'gifts' (and probably several others) refer to 'the teaching ministries of the church.'¹⁷

"A hint from Chrysostom might seem to imply a different understanding. Chrysostom regards the 'spiritual gifts' in general in 12:1–11 as 'such as used to occur but now no longer take place.'¹⁸ Further, whereas he comments in detail on 12:1–7, he simply repeats the text of vv. 8–10 without comment, as if to imply that we can know nothing about the meaning of these gifts, which, he seems to imply, have ceased.¹⁹ Tertullian, however, returns to christological perspectives. The utterance which relates to wisdom is 'the Spirit of wisdom' to which Isaiah alludes: the messianic anointing of Isa 11:1–3 anticipates the christological counterparts in 1 Cor 12:8–11.20. Wisdom and knowledge, for Tertullian, is gospel wisdom and gospel knowledge.²¹ Clement of Alexandria stresses the unity and diversity of the gifts rather than their content, except to comment that they are 'apostolic,' i.e., reflect the 'knowledge, life, preaching, righteousness, purity and prophecy' of the apostles, concerning especially 'faith in Christ and the knowledge of the gospel.'²² Origen is quite clear that 'in the catalogue of charismata bestowed by God, Paul placed first λόγος σοφίας ... because he regarded proclamation (λόγος) as higher than miraculous powers.'²³

"Among older modern writers Godet and Heinrici echo the same point. Godet stresses an intellectual grasp of gospel principles; Heinrici interprets λόγος σοφίας as knowledge of salvation communicated to others.²⁴ Allo stresses the compatibility between the agency of the Holy Spirit and intellectual insight, citing the interpretation of this verse by Thomas Aquinas.²⁵ Allo's understanding borders on permitting a more individualistic view, as entailing knowledge of God's intimate purposes, but the emphasis remains on the intellectual. On the other hand, Héring points out that wisdom in the LXX tradition includes especially moral guidance for life.²⁶ Yet in the light of James Davis's study of Jewish sapiential traditions, this must not be understood to take us into the domain of 'achievement' rather than of divine grace.²⁷ We have already noted the kerygmatic aspect urged by Wolff, Collins, and Schrage."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 938–941.]

sion of σοφία the central emphasis of the term has to be understood as insight into God's unique working in the cross of Christ to provide salvation.

Drawing a clear distinction between σοφία and γνῶσις is virtually impossible within either First Corinthians and the larger body of all of his letters.²⁶ Perhaps

²⁶"There is no consensus whatever about any clear distinction between (1) λόγος σοφίας ... and (2) λόγος γνῶσεως. 'Knowledge' (γνῶσις) is no less a Corinthian catchphrase than 'wisdom' (see above on 1:5; 8:1, 7, 10, 11; also on 13:2, 8 and 14:6). Of twenty uses of the noun γνῶσις in Paul (excluding Ephesians and the Pastorals) no less than seventeen occur in 1 and 2 Corinthians, of which nine appear in 1 Corinthians, while only nine or ten further uses occur through Ephesians, the Pastorals, and the rest of the NT (three in 2 Pet. 1:5, 6; 3:18). In his initial thanksgiving (1:4–9) Paul gave thanks that the Corinthians had been made rich ἐν παντί λόγω καὶ πάσῃ γνῶσει, while in 8:1 the fundamental contrast is set up between ἀγάπη as that which builds up and γνῶσις as that inflates. Hence, just as wisdom occurs in this epistle both in a pejorative sense of human status-seeking and achievement and in a positive sense as the divine wisdom of the cross, so knowledge in a 'proto-gnostic' or 'standing-on-one's-rights' frame means 'the static, cognitive epistemology of the gnostics' and in a positive, relational, christological frame 'a dynamic affectional relationship from knowledge of God to being known by God' (Yeo).²⁸ Moreover, 'wisdom and knowledge appear together among the basic elements of the spirit of the children of light in IQS 4:3–4. The Qumran text lists them at the end ...' (Collins).²⁹

"Bengel assigns a more theoretical role to articulate utterance relating to "wisdom" and a more practical role to discourse relating to "knowledge" (sapientiae ... cognitionis ...); for "knowledge relates to things to be done; wisdom to things eternal; hence wisdom is not said to pass away (13:8) and knowledge occurs more frequently."³⁰ Paul speaks of these gifts as if they were daily events for the Corinthians (quae Corinthiis sint quotidianae); but today we encounter ambiguity about the force of the words and their distinction (hodie de ipsarum vocum vi et differentia ambigimus). Meyer, however, takes an opposing, even a reverse view, anticipating Yeo about the relational significance of γνῶσις.³¹ Augustine observes that for Paul "in Christ Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3); hence in 1 Cor 12:8, although wisdom may relate to "divine things" and "knowledge to human things," both aspects concern the believer's relationship to Christ, activated through the Spirit.³²

"Elsewhere Augustine comments that Paul 'certainly distinguishes these two things, although he does not there explain the difference, nor in what way one may be distinguished from the other.'³³ In yet another reference Augustine relates wisdom to the intellectual understanding of eternal realities, and knowledge to 'rational cognizance of temporal things,' which come as gifts from the Holy Spirit who is beyond the merely earthly.³⁴ If in On the Trinity, 5:4, he stresses the unity and sovereignty of the Spirit, in John 21 Augustine draws attention to the definitive nature of God's apportioning of gifts to one (e.g., λόγος σοφίας) and differently to another (e.g., λόγος γνῶσεως) as no more a person's business than Peter's query 'Lord, what about this man?' (John 21:21) and Jesus' reply 'What is that to you? You go on following me' (21:22).³⁵

"All this comes close to Dunn's conclusion: 'Gnōsis and sophia ... present us with special difficulties ... because in the Corinthian letters in particular they are not Paul's own choice of ex-

pression; his use of them has been determined in large measure by the situation which he addresses at Corinth.... This is why gnosis keeps recurring within the Corinthian letters and only rarely elsewhere.³⁶ After this introduction, however, Dunn hazards the view that since knowledge in 8:1, 4, concerns idols and monotheism, 'knowledge here, then, is an insight into the real nature of the cosmos.... 'Utterance of knowledge' may therefore quite properly be understood as a word spoken under inspiration giving an insight into cosmical realities and relationships.'³⁷ On the other hand, Dunn perceives a 'broad parallel' between wisdom and 'revelation and grace,' and his later book on Paul's theology constructively relates these two gifts to Rom 12:6-8 in terms of a general gift of speech for 'prophecy, teaching, encouraging' in contrast to gifts which relate specifically to action.³⁸

"While his account of knowledge contains elements of conjecture for interpreting 12:8, Dunn makes the valid point that Paul's focus on the utterance or discourse of wisdom and knowledge suggests that the gift character of the Spirit's activation includes the moment and mode of their use: 'The charisma of God is no possession of man to be used at his will.'³⁹ However, in his earlier work he also argues, 'only in the act and moment for uttering it.'⁴⁰ I firmly agree that since utterances are speech-acts in time, the temporal dimension is fundamental to the character of the gift as gift. But in this early work Dunn too readily translates this into modern notions of 'spontaneity.' *In my view, these gifts are not given primarily in the moment of their use, but for such a moment.* Part of the sovereignty of God and of God as Spirit consists in his giving gifts for the common advantage of all which find visible expression at the right moment of pastoral timing. But this in no way contradicts the notion of a trained, habituated disposition, shaped and nourished by the Holy Spirit for use at the moment of God's choice. This is different from popular assumptions about 'flashes of insight' into this or that particular situation. While the text does not exclude this, it offers no evidence for it.⁴¹

"Bittlinger tends to overlook the specific issues which concern wisdom and knowledge in the Corinthian situation. Nevertheless, his link with Jesus' promise of the Spirit to provide intelligible or articulate utterance in difficult situations, such as that of persecution, provides a convincing allusion to pre-Pauline traditions of the words of Jesus.⁴² Our earlier comments suggest that this would apply especially to the articulation of the gospel. However, Bittlinger's attempts to distinguish this from 'the word of knowledge' remain more speculative and less contextually determined.⁴³ His comments about the situational dimension of utterance serve to underline our observation about God's choice of timing of the use of gifts, which have molded the believer's disposition to respond to situations in appropriate ways. This relates the gift of utterance to holiness and to Christlikeness, as we should expect if they are Spirit-given.

"Senft views both as 'gifts of theological reflection.'⁴⁴ This is a helpful counter-balance against ad hoc notions of spontaneous intuition, but it offers only one component within the larger framework explored here. We must not neglect the weight of scholarship, which emphasizes the reflective and dialectic nature of the gift as a habit of mind or a bestowed skill. Thus Banks interprets λόγος γνώσεως as the gift of 'understanding the Old Testament, Christian tradition, and the capacity to expound them correctly.'⁴⁵ But H. Schürmann insists that as a 'gift of the Spirit' who works in the depths of the human heart the phrase denotes 'pneumatic understanding, from the depth of the human spirit, directed more toward the practical.'⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the rediscovery of a wisdom-related rationality embedded in historical and practical life which

the slight difference relates to divinely provided insight into the Gospel (σοφίας) and divinely understanding of how the Gospel impacts life (γνώσεως).

Another tendency of modern interpreters is to read either the rationalism of the Enlightenment into both of these as theological reflection or as creative spontaneity based on the model of pietism and Romanticism. That the action of the Spirit comes either from reflection that can explain coherently or from spontaneously in making the utterance is a false dichotomy dictated by eisegesis rather than by exegesis. Paul draws no such artificial distinctions. His agenda is very different.

The syntactical arrangement of vv. 9-10 group these closer to one another:

ἐτέρω πίστις

ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι,

ἄλλω δὲ χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων

ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι,

ἄλλω δὲ ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων,

ἄλλω [δὲ] προφητεία,

ἄλλω [δὲ] διακρίσεις πνευμάτων,

ἐτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν,

ἄλλω δὲ ἔρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν

to another faith

by the same Spirit

but to another grace gifts of healings,

by the same Spirit

but to another workings of powers,

but to another prophecy

but to another discernments of spirits

to another different kinds of tongues

but to another interpretation of tongues.

All of these assume the core clause expression at the beginning: ᾧ διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος δίδοται, *to one through the Spirit has been given....* The contrastives are set up with

ᾧ μὲν // ἄλλω δὲ (v. 8);

ἐτέρω // ἄλλω δὲ, ἄλλω δὲ, ἄλλω δὲ (vv. 9-10a);

has emerged since the 1960s in such writers as H.-G. Gadamer, B. Lonergan, A. MacIntyre, and Paul Ricoeur may help us here.⁴⁷ They may save us from allowing our exegesis to be shaped by imposing upon the text an illusory alternative: either abstract rationalist reflection based on the model of Enlightenment philosophy or an interactive search for creative spontaneity based on the model of pietism and Romanticism. This passage poses no such false alternative. Paul does not seek the wisdom of the Sophists, but neither does he disparage practical reflection and judicious evaluation.⁴⁸ Gifts of articular communicative utterance may draw on wisdom and knowledge from God especially when this serves both 'the common good' of all and the proclamation of the cross. (This is a far cry from some modern notions about coded messages for the welfare of individuals.)

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 941-944.]

ἑτέρω // ἄλλω δὲ (v. 10b).

Thus in vv. 9-10, πίστις is set in contrast to χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, προφητεία, and διακρίσεις πνευμάτων (1//4). Also γένη γλωσσῶν with ἑτέρω is set in contrast to ἑρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν as an additional grouping (1//1). This structure should not be overlooked in the exegesis. The three pronouns ὅς, ἄλλος, and ἕτερος carry nuances of meaning in this kind of usage that are virtually impossible to preserve in translation.

(v. 8): To one individual, ὃς, comes λόγος σοφίας, articulate speaking with divine insight. But ἄλλω, to another, comes λόγος γνώσεως, articulate speaking with divine understanding. The μὲν...δὲ adds contrast, while ὃς and ἄλλω highlight commonality, which is then directly stated in κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, by the same Spirit. Speculation on the difference between σοφίας and γνώσεως is both endless and largely useless. Whatever the slight difference between the two may be, it is little more than “twiddle Dee & twiddle Dum” in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. In both instances the Spirit of God provides perception of the things of God that can be explained helpfully to the entire community of believers.

(vv. 9-10): Here ἑτέρω, to another, stands in contrast to ἄλλω, to another, which is repeated four times. Thus these four entities stand in contrast to the first one in the listing. That is, πίστις, faith, stands in contrast to χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, grace gifts of healings; ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, enablings of powers; προφητεία, prophecy; and διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, discernments of spirits. The ἑτέρω and ἄλλω pronouns highlight contrast between the two. The unity idea comes with the ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, by the same Spirit and ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ πνεύματι, by the one Spirit, which repeats κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα, according to the same Spirit in v. 8.²⁷ A pair of real challenges emerge here in

²⁷“Interpreters differ in placing emphasis on unity or on diversity in this chapter. But Dale Martin, Harrington, and Lategan argue convincingly that in these verses, at least, Paul places his emphasis on the unity of source which lies behind a diversity of phenomena. In spite of G. Wright’s arguments that Paul here portrays God as a God of diversity, Martin observes, ‘Thus in 12:4–11 Paul continually stresses unity in diversity in order to overcome divisiveness owing to different valuations being assigned to different gifts, with tongues as the implied higher-status gift.’¹ Lategan argues that the body imagery which expresses a careful balance between unity and diversity here undergoes revision and qualification in the light of the same Spirit ... the same Lord ... the same God (vv. 4–6) in order to stress that the diversity is secondary to the unity.² The cohesive bestowal of the gifts ensures their fundamental unity. Thus both contextually and theologically the unity constitutes the major emphasis in vv. 4–11, since ‘building’ provides the cohesive goal and purpose of the gifts, whatever their variety. Harrington stresses unity of source where Lategan stresses unity of goal and Martin underlines the unity of community. The ‘one source’ is not only the one Spirit (12:1–3), but God as giver of grace through Christ and the Spirit.³ Hence the Corinthian elitist talk of πνευματικῶν (12:1) is transposed by Paul into unifying

the effort to grasp what Paul is talking about.

First, what does πίστις in this context reference? Normally πίστις inside the NT means a faith surrender of oneself to Christ as Saviour and Lord. But the contrastive context of its usage here means that πίστις has a different meaning. Clearly it moves beyond what is required of all Christians since it is something given to ἑτέρω, another, i.e., one Christian in distinction from others.

But what is that ‘beyondness’?²⁸ Paul does not speak about χαρισμάτων (12:4). Collins also argues that ‘the same Spirit’ holds the unit together, and the principle finds a parallel in Rom 12:6–8 and in Paul’s own example as one who constantly alludes to grace.⁴⁷ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 928–929.]

²⁸“It is universally agreed, or virtually so, that in this verse πίστις, faith, cannot therefore refer to saving faith, or to appropriation of salvation by grace through faith, since Paul explicitly attributes to the Spirit the apportioning of this gift ἑτέρω, i.e., to someone who is different from, or other than, certain Christians or even the majority of believers. It is a specific gift reserved for specific persons. By definition, therefore, it cannot designate that faith through which all who are believers (cf. Paul’s semantic opposite to believer as ἄπιστος, 7:13) are indeed ‘believers’ or Christians. Bruce observes: ‘not the saving faith which is basic to all Christian life, but a special endowment of faith for a special service (cf. 13:2b),’ while Collins calls it ‘something different from the faith that characterizes all believers.’⁵¹

“This admirably sums up the point. But some wish to be more specific. Conzelmann thinks that it should be linked to the next two of the nine gifts: ‘accordingly, not faith, but apparently the ability to perform miracles (13:2) and thus akin to the χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, gifts of healing.’⁵² Fee offers an intermediate proposal: ‘It probably refers to a supernatural conviction that God will reveal his power or mercy in a special way in a specific instance.’⁵³ Bittlinger acknowledges that this gift is not ‘saving faith,’ but then appeals to instances (e.g., Hebrews 11) which are offered as paradigms of faith in general.⁵⁴ According to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all faith entails a willingness to act or to venture in the present on the basis of a reality which has yet to become fully visible when it finally occurs. Thus Luther defines saving faith as ‘a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life upon it a thousand times. This confidence in God’s grace ... makes men glad and bold....’⁵⁵ But this is no different from the notion of staking one’s life on God’s promise; whether it be on the model of Abraham in Rom 4:13–25 or of Noah, Abraham, and Moses in Heb 11:6–29. We must resist the temptation to make ‘saving faith’ so passive a gift that anything bold or trustful is associated with this specific gift. A distinction here remains essential.⁵⁶ Schatzmann thus speaks of ‘charismatic faith’ (following Hasenhüttl) but adds: ‘provided it does not imply a relegation of justifying faith to a lesser degree of spirituality.’⁵⁷ This may perhaps include ‘a mysterious surge of confidence.’⁵⁸

“Much exegesis becomes speculative because the verse is read through the lens of modern Western individualism. In a community situation, certain specific persons often come onto the scene as ‘gifted’ with a robust confidence that becomes supportive for the entire community. This may or may not presuppose some

specify what this is; he only sets it in contrast to the following four categories of grace giftedness. The rather useless speculation of commentators trying to give greater preciseness to the idea of πίστις only shows us what it isn't via speculation. The community contribution aspect of this divine blessing may be the key to a very generalized sense of πίστις as an unusual level of living in absolute dependence upon God that one typically finds among a few members of the congregation. Their example inspires the rest to greater levels of commitment and trust in God to order their lives.

One the other side of the πίστις contrast stands four grace blessings: χαρίσματα ιαμάτων, ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, προφητεία, and διακρίσεις πνευμάτων. Note that three of the four are double references with both nouns in the plural. Only προφητεία is in the singular. The use of the plural with the core noun of the pairs, χαρίσματα, ἐνεργήματα, διακρίσεις takes the abstract noun idea of grace, enablement, discernment and expresses them as concrete expressions rather than just an abstract concept. These are specific actions by believers for the benefit of the entire community²⁹; not resident powers vested into the life of individual believers.

The ideas in the four specified actions are not as problematic for understanding. **χαρίσματα ιαμάτων. First, ιαμάτων, of healings, is interesting.**³⁰ The noun specific situation of crisis. The second problematic factor is a dualistic worldview which places each gift either too readily in the 'supernatural' *Deus ex machina* category or else views it too naturalistically and reductively as merely an enhanced natural capacity. It seems unwise and unnecessary to impose onto Paul dual models of 'natural' and 'supernatural' which fell into two only after the rise of English Deism and mechanistic world-views around the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth century. We must at the same time leave the door open to include inexplicable, prodigious acts of faith, such as 'faith to move mountains,' whatever the metaphorical status of this image (Matt 17:20; 1 Cor 13:2). However, rather than focus on the category of miracle, it is more helpful to consider the conceptual entailments of faith in the God who is Almighty and sovereign in relation to his own world. This links faith here with λόγος γνώσεως (v. 8).⁵⁹ We shall next consider issues about healing, but this will bring us back to further questions about faith (see below).⁷⁷

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 944–946.]

²⁹Very likely this emphasis on concrete action toward others in need inside the community of believers serves to highlight the contrastive structure with πίστις which is vertical in core meaning and benefits others by example over against interactive ministry actions as stressed in these four items.

³⁰"This gift of various kinds of healing does not appear in the comparable samples of gifts in Rom 12:3–8 and Ephesians 4:11. Indeed, the specific noun ἴαμα, healing, occurs in the NT only here and in 12:28, 30, although the cognate verb ἰάομαι occurs nineteen times in the Gospels (including twelve times in Luke), four times in Acts, and once each in Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter. The verb does

ἴαμα is only found here (3x) in all of the NT: vv. 9, 28, 30. Paul never uses the verb form ἰάομαι that is used some 33 times mostly in the gospels in reference to Jesus' actions. Neither does Paul use the other terms θεραπεία / θεραπεύω having to do with curing diseases in ancient Greek. It is not listed in any of the three other so-called gift lists.³¹ In the first century perception

not occur in Paul. The main alternative word for to heal, θεραπεύω, occurs some forty times in the Gospels and Acts, but not in Paul, and elsewhere in the NT only twice (in Rev 13:3, 12). Under the semantic domain of healing, Louw and Nida list only ἰάομαι, to heal, to cause a change from an earlier state, to cure; ἴαμα (only in 1 Cor 12:9, 28, 30); ἴασις (only in Luke 13:32 and Acts 4:22, 30); θεραπεύω (discussed above); and certain special uses of καθαρίζω (e.g., of a leper, Matt 8:2), and ἐγείρω (as a metaphorical extension of restoration, e.g., Jas 5:15).⁶²" [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 946.]

³¹"With the exception of 1 Cor. 12:9, 28, and 30, Paul appears not to refer to healing at all in his epistles, except implicitly in 2 Cor 12:8, where he writes that three times he prayed that God would remove his thorn in the flesh or sharp physical pain (σκόλοψ τῆ σαρκί ... ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ), but rather than a χάρισμα of healing God gave him ἡ χάρις μου as his sufficiency (ἄρκει σοι), leaving his weakness (ἀσθενεῖα) without special healing. We discussed above issues about Paul's illness with reference to the hypotheses of Dibelius, Deissmann, and Schweitzer (see above on 2:3, I came to you in weakness ...). Collins argues that Paul 'does not claim for himself the gift of healing.'⁶³ On the other hand, Turner subsumes 'healings' within Paul's claim to preach 'with 'signs and wonders' (Rom 15:18, 19; cf. 1 Thess 1:5) ... 1 Cor 2:2–5.'⁶⁴ (See further below, toward the end of this section.)

"Nevertheless, other parts of the NT associate healing either with God's sovereign choice alone or sometimes with the special kind of faith to which the first part of this verse alludes. Jas 5:15 declares that 'the prayer of faith (ἡ εὐχή τῆς πίστεως) will save (σώσει) the sick or ill person, and the Lord will restore him to health (ἐγερῆ αὐτόν).' Hence Allo, Senft, Kistemaker, and Lange associate the special faith of v. 9a with kinds of healing (v. 9b).⁶⁵ Bruce, Héring, and Barrett offer virtually no comment on healings, presumably believing that everything is self-evident. Schrage refers the use of the plural to traditions of healings performed by Jesus.⁶⁶ But if the majority associate healing with the faith cited in the first part of the verse, and if this faith is a sovereign gift given to specific, chosen persons and not to all believers, Paul may not expect that all believers who need various kinds of healing will necessarily manifest the gift of faith with which healing may be associated. This is given to ἐτέρῳ, a different person, or another. Fee's comment that the manifestation of the gift is given to the healer, not to the healed, leaves this principle intact.⁶⁷ Moreover, if faith is said to be a condition for healing, this makes it awkward that the special faith is given to ἐτέρῳ, and χαρίσματα ιαμάτων to ἄλλῳ. It is not necessarily the healer who receives the gift of special faith.

"This underlines the corporate rather than individual dimension of these gifts and of Paul's understanding of the apportionment of the Holy Spirit to the church. There is a place for efficacious corporate faith within the community which may influence the effectiveness of the entire community. In other words, to cite Mof-

of disease and cures one should not ever read a post Enlightenment mindset that distinguishes between 'natural' and 'supernatural' enter into the exegesis of this text.³² That God can and does work through hu-

fatt's understanding of the gift of faith, 'an indomitable assurance that God can overcome any difficulties and meet any emergencies' may be granted to a specific individual in such a way that this radiant confidence in God's grace and sovereignty may pave the way for another to advance processes of healing, and yet another to be restored.⁶⁸ Even so, we must not forget that such counter-examples as Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' and probable problems with health (1 Cor 2:3-5; 2 Cor 12:8; Gal 4:15) indicate that the final decision lies with God's sovereign choice. Would Paul entirely provide warrant for Max Turner's principle about 'expecting' healing as joyful anticipations of 'the holistic nature of God's eschatological salvation' in the light of his eschatology in 1 Cor 4:8-13?⁶⁹

"The plural, which implies various kinds of healings, should also be given its full scope. The kinds may appear to include sudden or gradual, physical, psychosomatic, or mental, the use of medication or more 'direct' divine agency, and variations which are not to be subsumed in advance under some stereotypical pattern of expectation.⁷⁰ From within the Pentecostal tradition even if W. R. Jones perceives these nine gifts of vv. 8-10 to be hallmarks of Pentecostal doctrine, nevertheless Donald Gee declared that kinds of healings should 'not preclude' what he called 'the merciful and manifold work of medical healing.'⁷¹ Bengel, too, insists that while these gifts in vv. 9-10 include the miraculous, they do not thereby exclude 'natural remedies' (per naturalia remedia).⁷² It is indeed doubtful whether Conzelmann's mere allusion to hellenistic parallels of miraculous healings as listed in G. Delling's *Antike Wundertexte* assists us in understanding this verse.⁷³ Godet, Meyer, Robertson and Plummer, Goudge, Carson, and Schatzmann confirm the point initially drawn from Edwards that the plural denotes various kinds of healings enacted in a diversity of ways to address a variety of conditions, and not a uniform stereotypical ministry performed by a permanently endowed 'healer.'⁷⁴

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 946-948.]

³²"Healers are given varied gifts at varied times for varied tasks, and we should not impose a post-eighteenth-century dualism of 'natural' and 'supernatural' upon the ways in which God chooses to use, or not to use, regular physical means.⁷⁵ As the Pentecostalist writer Donald Gee points out in relation to the Pastoral Epistles, in 1 Tim 5:23 Paul (or a Pauline writer) enjoins Timothy to gain healing of the stomach by drinking wine rather than the more dubious water supply but in 2 Tim 4:10 he leaves Trophimus sick at Miletus.⁷⁶ The illness of Epaphroditus is also mentioned (Phil 2:27).

"Parry reminds us that 'this is the only passage where S. Paul refers to these 'gifts of healing'.'⁷⁷ Hence it remains all the more surprising that many writers offer virtually no comment whatever on this phrase. Even Fee, subsequent to a relatively brief comment in his commentary, adds little in his more recent volume of around a thousand pages on the Holy Spirit in Paul's Letters. He writes: 'Gifts of Healings. What this refers to needs little comment.'⁷⁸ He then adds that for Jesus, Paul, and the early church, healing of a physical nature was a 'regular expectation' largely, or at least 'in part,' based on 'OT promises that in a Messianic age God would 'heal' his people.'⁷⁹ Although he concedes that 'healing' also refers to salvation, Fee places weight on Matthew's use of Isa 53:4 as a

'promise for physical healing' in Matt 8:17, supposedly to shed light on the meaning of 1 Cor 12:9. At Corinth, however, the modern visitor has only to witness the astonishing display of body parts recovered from the Temple of Asklepios, the Greek god of healing, to begin to understand the importance of prayers for 'supernatural' healing by a god in the daily life of Corinth.⁸⁰

"At a minimum, however, the issue is far more complex than Fee and several other writers allow. In a Ph.D. thesis (1993) David Petts allows that for Matthew himself the healing miracles of Jesus are perceived as a fulfillment of Isa 53:4: 'he bore our infirmities.' But, writing from within a Pentecostal tradition, Petts nevertheless demonstrates that any universal 'claim' by believers to be covered by, or to participate in, the atonement of the cross remains of a different order in kind from requests for healing which may (to use Fee's phrase) be 'expected,' but are certainly not always granted.⁸¹ The very fact that the gifts of the Spirit are apportioned out differently to one and to another, and that their bestowal and use is temporally conditioned by God's sovereign choice, precludes any precise parallel from being drawn.

"Moreover, no 'gift' can be claimed unless it is promised. Reconciliation with God and justification by grace constitutes a universal promise to all who appropriate it through acceptance or 'through faith' in the Pauline writings. No such universal promise relates to various kinds of healings, subject to fallible human judgments about the 'promises' which may be suggested in religious consciousness or personal experience. That these gifts are sometimes (rightly or wrongly) perceived as promises by given communities or individuals need not be denied. But the authentication of such suppositions partly depends on the corporate spread of other gifts in the church, such as teaching, wisdom, and discernment.⁸²

"An exegetical scrutiny leaves open the possibility of gifts of various kinds of healings in whatever mode, through whatever instrument or human agent, and at whatever time God may choose, as one of many specific gifts (*χαρίσματα* *ιαμάτων*). Perhaps it is no accident that *χαρίσματα*, which is otherwise omitted in connection with the other gifts in this list, appears explicitly here. Tertullian and Cyril of Alexandria make particular play of the connection between these gifts (including healing) and the anointing of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in the Spirit's sevenfold apportionings within the framework of Isa 11:1-3.⁸³ This serves further to modify any simplistic view of healing. On one side, as Tertullian and Cyril stress, Christ is raised by the Father as Lord and 'has dominion.' The fallenness of the fallen world with all of its ills stands under his sovereign victory as crumbling in its power. Yet on the other side, Christ's victory entailed the acceptance of constraints and the limitations of flesh-and-blood vulnerability within the created order. Hence eschatological timing becomes one factor: when is victory complete? The relationship between participation (sharing Christ's sufferings as a reflection of identification with Christ in his redemptive work) and substitution (Christ wins the victory on behalf of his people) constitutes another factor. Hence Paul stresses the role of the Spirit as a sovereign given, who works unfathomable designs which cannot fully be penetrated until that design is complete at the last day (1 Cor 2:10-16; 4:5).

"This christological and eschatological perspective is found in Augustine and in Basil, who relate the Spirit's gifts primarily to the purposes of God in Christ in terms of the process of salvation for the world.⁸⁴ The advance of the gospel in the power of the Spirit steadily transposes a variety of evils into goods, and gifts of knowledge, wisdom, healing, and prophetic utterance belong to this holistic, cosmic context of gospel transformation. They are

mans including doctors in effecting 'healing' is a bottom line affirmation here. In a community perspective, rather than an individualistic one (cf. James 5:13-18), the prayer of one for another can be used by God to effect healing, within the framework of the sovereign will of God. In stark contrast to the myriad of secret 'incantations' necessary in the Corinthian the Temple of Asklepios where the priest / priestess had to use the correct one to bring about healing of individuals seeking help at the temple, God's power is not couched in such nonsense. Inside the community of believers who are blessed of God can be found a divine cure for every kind of illness through the simple prayer of the individuals in the community.

If the first category of *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων* didn't have enough controversy built into it, the situation doesn't get any easier with the subsequent three categories.³³

not individualistic universes of self-contained reality.⁸⁵ It is difficult to exaggerate how much part of a post-Enlightenment modern world-view some of the popular religious literature is, when dualistic 'laws of the supernatural' are spuriously applied as supposed exegesis. As Peter Mullen observes, Francis McNutt's claim that "it is always God's normal will to heal," together with 'eleven reasons why God does not always heal,' is in a very different world from Paul's.⁸⁶ The very notion of God's 'normal will' owes more to scientific notions of regularity than to the unfathomable depths of Paul's Ὡ βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ: ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ (Rom 11:33).

"The Pauline context of Christology, eschatology, and corporate 'building' is well articulated in the Joint Statement "Gospel and Spirit," documented in K. McDonnell (ed.), *Presence, Power, Praise*.⁸⁷ On the gift of healings the statement declares: "All true wholeness, health, and healing come from God. We do not therefore regard 'divine healing' as being always miraculous. We also look forward to the resurrection, knowing that only then shall we be finally and fully freed from sickness, weakness, pain and mortality [cf. 1 Cor. 15:44 and comment on this view below]. At the same time we welcome the recovery by the Church of a concern for healing ... but also wish to express caution against giving wrong impressions and causing unnecessary distress through (i) making it appear that it is sinful for a Christian to be ill; (ii) laying too great a stress and responsibility upon the faith of the individual who is seeking healing..."⁸⁸ The statement appears to reflect the exegetical arguments presented above."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 948–951.]

³³"Each phrase has, alas, to be translated into terms which already presuppose a particular interpretation of no less than six terms or phrases, each of which bristles with controversial exegetical possibilities and judgments. Unless we specify a variety of options for the translation above, all that we can do is to set forth the arguments for the various alternatives and explain why we have reached the conclusions implicit in the above translation." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 952.]

The second grouping, *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*, has often been understood as referring to miracles, but this is not clear from the language Paul uses.³⁴ By

³⁴"On *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων* Schrage points both forward to 12:28 and backward to the use of the term *δύναμις* as a word related to salvation elsewhere in the epistle.⁸⁹ It is usually translated as the **working of miracles** (NRSV, NJB, AV/KJB, Barrett, in effect Collins) or as **miraculous powers** (REB, NIV, Moffatt). The RV margin recognizes that miraculous is not explicit in the Greek, which it renders workings of powers. Needless to say (we hope), deeds of power (which stresses the plural of *δύναμις* and the place of this gift among deeds of action [healings] as against words of utterance [utterance relating to 'wisdom,' discourse relating to 'knowledge']) does not exclude the miraculous, but neither does it narrowly specify it as the entire content and range of these deeds of power. The mere use of the plural alone does not guarantee that the word designates only the miraculous. On the other hand, as Barth urges throughout *The Resurrection of the Dead*, in this epistle power (whether singular or plural) characteristically designates what is effective against any obstacle or constraint because it is validated by God in contrast to human aspirations, which may fail.⁹⁰

"We have already discussed the meaning of *ἐνεργήματα* (see above on v. 6). The link with the genitive *δυνάμεων*, however, remains disputed. Many assume that it is a subjective genitive, workings of powers, which, in abstraction from the considerations discussed above on vv. 6–10, would imply that only workings of miracles fully avoids tautology. But Calvin among the Reformers, Hodge among post-Reformation writers, and H. Thielicke among modern theologians follow a very widespread patristic tradition of interpretation in regarding *δυνάμεων* as an objective genitive. Calvin doubts whether it means power to effect miracles: 'I am however inclined to think that it is the power (virtutem) which is exercised against demons and also hypocrites.'⁹¹ Rightly he views *ἐνεργήματα* as effective working (cf. above) and more speculatively compares Paul's bringing of judicial blindness on Elymas the magician (Acts 13:11) and Peter's juridical speech-act which led to the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). Hodge takes up this theme, and Thielicke similarly understands this gift of the Spirit as 'authority over the powers.' He recognizes that only relatively rarely does *δύναμις* mean forces of evil, but considers that the use of the plural here (which is unusual in the NT) is 'used of ungodly forces ... a power given *over the powers*' (his italics), and compares the reference to "handing over to Satan" in 1 Cor 5:5.92

"It remains open whether *δυνάμεων* is intended to be read as an objective or a subjective genitive. Collins rightly makes room for the term activities in his translation the activities of working miracles, but the text leaves open whether these powers or deeds of power are restricted to the 'miraculous' or simply may include the miraculous where otherwise they would not be effective ones.⁹³ Our proposed translation, therefore, allows for all these possibilities, except that while in formal grammatical terms deeds of power assumes technically a subjective construction of the genitive, in terms of content it allows room for the force of the phrase advocated by Calvin, Thielicke, and many early Fathers. Hence our translation is by no means reductionist or critical of the possibility of what we think of as 'miracle,' but it avoids pre-judging and narrowing the scope of terms which convey a broader semantic range than is implied by all of the major English versions.

"On these matters patristic evidence and arguments deserve serious attention. Chrysostom perceives both overlap and contrast with healings: 'He who had a gift of healing used only to do

cures; but he who possessed ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων used to punish also ... even as Paul imposed blindness and Peter brought death' (Acts 13:11; 5:1–11).⁹⁴ Ambrose (c. AD 397) includes the power to cast out demons, or to perform 'signs': *potestatem dari significat in ejiciendis daemoneis, aut signis faciendis*.⁹⁵ Similarly, Cyril of Alexandria understands this gift as ἐξουσίαν κατὰ πνευμάτων ἀκαθάρτων ὥστε ἐκβάλλειν αὐτά.⁹⁶ But in addition to giving its meaning as 'casting out unclean spirits,' Cyril quotes the words of the Gospels to extend the list to 'healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out demons: freely you have received; freely give' (Matt 10:8)⁹⁷ Theodoret remarks succinctly that this χάρισμα, for which request is often made, is instantiated 'in depriving Elymas of his sight and the death of Ananias and Sapphira.'⁹⁸ Thomas Aquinas differentiates healings (*possit sanare infirmitatem*) from the broader *operatio virtutum* which ranges from the redemptive act of dividing the sea (Exod 14:21) or even halting the sun (Josh 10:13) to God's working miracles through the Spirit in the church (Gal 3:5).⁹⁹ Grotius also speaks here of *potestas puniendi*....¹⁰⁰

"On close inspection of the primary patristic and medieval texts, the reason for an emphasis on powers over the powers of evil appears to emerge largely to differentiate a subcategory of gifts of effective action from the curative effects of healings. They remain linked to the plural δυνάμεις in the broad sense of mighty works which also serve as signs in the Gospels and in Acts (e.g., Matt 11:21, 23; 13:58; Mark 6:2; Luke 10:13; Acts 8:13). But the Gospels also use the plural δυνάμεις for the powers of heaven (Matt 24:29; par. Mark 13:25; Luke 21:26). The singular form usually denotes the effective power of God in Paul (Rom 1:4–16; 1 Cor 1:18, 24; 2:4, 5; 4:20; 6:14), but in the Gospels and in Paul the singular may denote authority or force as well as divine power (Mark 9:1; 12:24; Luke 5:17; 9:1; 1 Cor 15:24; 2 Cor 1:8; 6:3), or even serve as a circumlocution for God himself (Matt 26:64; par. Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 1:8; 6:8). Mighty works are (i) unusual and visible in their intensity and general unexpectedness; (ii) fully effective in achieving their purpose; and (iii) pointers to or signs of some greater salvific reality. Miracles, by contrast, raise issues about world views and relations to natural means concerning which δυνάμεις remain more open-ended, presupposing simply the almighty sovereignty of God both over, in, and through his creation.¹⁰¹ In what these acts consist in 12:10 corresponds 'to the wants of different situations,' which may or may not include 'judgments on unfaithful Christians or adversaries, such as Ananias or Elymas.'¹⁰²

"Among specific studies of 'power' in the modern period, C. H. Powell writes separate chapters on 'Acts of Authority,' 'Dynamis and Miracle,' and 'Power in Cross and Resurrection,' while developing overlapping themes entailed in δυνάμις and δυνάμεις.¹⁰³ Prior to the cross, the promises of God appeared to point to 'days of God's power' in the sense of portents that would visibly vindicate faith and waiting.¹⁰⁴ But in and through the cross, power, and even deeds of power, became transposed into that which made actively effective the loving and salvific purposes of the heart of God, as revealed in Christ's acceptance of constraints and renunciation of force and spectacle in his messianic temptations. Commenting on the grain of wheat which falls to the earth and dies in order to bring life (John 12:24), Powell declares: 'At no point is the difference between the concept of power in Old Testament and New so pronounced.'¹⁰⁵ We therefore find in 1 Cor 12:10 a dialectic between the power which is effective but cruciform in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and in most of this epistle, and some continuity with visible 'signs' to which δυνάμεις often but not always alludes. However, we have

the translation "enablings of divine expressions of power" the idea is set forth that God at various times chooses to work in unusually powerful ways in their service to the community as a whole. This has nothing to do with demonstrations of 'raw power' such as a magician would have his audience assume. Often God works in quiet, almost unnoticed ways to produce a divine impact upon a congregation through certain individuals who are deeply committed to Him. At the end, everyone in the congregation acknowledges that God has worked powerfully through certain individuals to bless His church.

The third contrastive divine blessing is *προφητεία* which is seen in a unitary manner rather than in a diverse way as per the plural others in this listing.³⁵ Al-

noted above (esp. on 1 Cor 1:18–2:5) that authentic 'signs' indeed reflect the cross and are derived from a christological foundation.

"As an accommodation to tradition and Synoptic usage we translate *actively effective deeds of power* (i.e., mighty works); but this may already concede too much to expectations of the spectacular.¹⁰⁶ Dunn recognizes the difficulty of assessing how much weight should be given to the meaning of δυνάμις in the plural in the Synoptic Gospels for an exegesis of Pauline texts, especially 1 Corinthians 12.¹⁰⁷ Anticipating Wolff, he concedes that Paul perhaps thinks here of exorcisms: 'yet demon possession as such does not feature prominently in Paul's thought (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20, 21; Eph. 2:2); he thinks rather of spiritual powers in heaven operating through the (personified) power of sin, law and death, and behind the pagan cults and authorities.... Liberation from their dominion comes only through the power of the Spirit.'¹⁰⁸ But freedom from such dominion is the heritage of all believers; not simply a gift for some. It is therefore essential to regain the collective and corporate framework of these gifts 'to some ... to another.' Specific human agents (not all) may receive a particular gift from the Spirit to advance the gospel against oppressive forces, for the benefit of all.

"Although he rightly designates such gifts as 'visible' in operation or effect, I see no grounds for Dunn's assumption that they are also 'a nonrational power.'¹⁰⁹ This would undercut much that has been observed concerning the interpretation of 12:6–10, including the discussions in footnotes. The term suprarational might be more acceptable. We must remind ourselves again that for Augustine and many of the early Fathers such gifts as λόγος σοφίας and λόγος γνώσεως constituted knowledge of things human and divine, closely connected with rational reflection on transmitted teaching. Similarly ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων concerns effective deeds which actively operate with power, whether rational or suprarational, whether to overcome spiritual or earthly forces of opposition, and whether by means of self-sacrifice and the witness of an outstanding life or by some more spectacular and (in the modern sense) "miraculous" working. The victorious Christ, who was nevertheless crucified and raised, bestows through the Spirit a gift of victory which may draw its power both from the pattern and reality of the cross (with all its constraints and 'weakness') and from the pattern and reality of the resurrection."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 952–956.]

³⁵"The Greek for **to another, prophecy**, is ἄλλω προφητεία.
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though widely twisted in modern times into some kind of Christian fortune telling, the blessing of προφητεία simply means that God opens up an understanding of Himself and His ways to individuals in the church so that they can deeply grasp how God works in this world. This is then articulated clearly to the community in their desire to better know God and His ways. In 14:26, Paul defines προφητεία as containing four separate items and probably more. Biblical prophecy has virtually nothing to do with chronological time. Rather, it has everything to do with bridging the great chasm between this time bound world and the world of God in heaven. The one blessed with προφητεία has been granted access into this world of God in heaven so that understanding of who God is and how He works is granted in limited fashion to then be communicated to His people. The requirement of the προφήτης, prophet, is to articulate that understanding to God's people. Paul in preaching the Gospel to the Corinthians is a prime example of a biblical προφήτης.

The final set is in this grouping is **διακρίσεις πνευμάτων** (v. 10b). Here is defined various skills in recognizing whether preaching and teaching the Gospel is authentic or false. It has close connections to John's similar emphasis in 1 John 4:1-3,

1 Αγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 2 ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, 3 καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν· καὶ τοῦτο ἐστίν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστίν ἡδη.

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this

What was **prophecy** in the NT? Bittlinger uses the well-known catchphrase: 'Prophecy is not in the first instance foretelling, but rather forth-telling—light for the present.'¹¹⁰ The address to a present situation retains an expected strand of continuity with prophet and prophecy in the OT, and, as Bittlinger adds, in the NT as well as in the OT prophets may often allude to past and to future events insofar as they shed light on the present or entail promise as a basis for present action or understanding. Rev 1:3 refers to John's apocalyptic discourse as "this prophecy" (cf. also Rev 19:10; 22:10, 19; 1 Tim 1:18; 4:14; 2 Pet 1:19; 1 Cor 13:2). Yet much else which is claimed about NT prophecy remains too often speculative. Barrett, untypically without offering any evidence for the claim, suggests that NT prophecy, especially in 1 Cor 12:10, 'was uttered in ordinary though probably excited, perhaps ecstatic, speech.'¹¹¹ Although he alludes to 1 Cor 14:1-5, his exegesis of these verses (or on 11:4, 5) adds little or nothing to our understanding of prophecy here." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 956.]

you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

Again much useless speculation about details here could fill up a library room. Some simple points need to be remembered. First, the plural noun διακρίσεις comes from διάκρισις with just 3 NT uses (Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 10:10; Heb. 5:14). The verb form διακρίνω is used some 23 times in the NT. Both the noun and the verb are compound forms (δια + κρίσις; δια + κρίνω) with κρίνω / κρίσις as the root forms.³⁶ The etymological idea of διάκρισις and διακρίνω is to analyze something through to a conclusion.³⁷ Often this means distinguishing whether something is good or bad, e.g., Heb. 5:14.³⁸ Here the idea clearly is distinguishing between those preachers speaking authentic words from God and those who are projecting purely human ideas.

The plural form πνευμάτων from πνεῦμα is used three times in all of Paul's writings: 1 Cor. 12:10, πνευμάτων, spirits; 1 Cor. 14:32, πνεύματα προφητῶν, spirits of prophets; Rom. 14:32, πνεύματα δαιμονίων,

³⁶ The wide ranging use of this word group is clear with a listing of the related forms used in the NT: κρίνω, κρίσις, κρίμα, κριτής, κριτήριον, κριτικός, ἀνακρίνω, ἀνάκρισις, ἀποκρίνω, ἀνταποκρίνομαι, ἀπόκριμα, ἀπόκρισις, διακρίνω, διάκρισις, ἀδιάκριτος, ἐγκρίνω, κατακρίνω, κατάκριμα, κατάκρισις, ἀκατάκριτος, αὐτοκατάκριτος, πρόκριμα, συγκρίνω. [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:921.]

³⁷For Paul's use of the verb διακρίνω in 1 Corinthians see 4:7; 6:5; 11:29, 31; 14:29. The general sense assessing something or someone by drawing a conclusion with either good or bad traits prevails in these uses.

³⁸"Since the simple κρίνω already means 'to sunder,' 'to separate,' δια-κρίνω is originally a stronger form (cf. dis-cerno). Much used, the word took on many senses.¹ The LXX uses it for several terms, mostly for ψῶ and ἡ7.² In the NT it does not occur in its original spatial sense, only in the fig. 'To make a distinction between persons,' Ac. 15:9: God has made no distinction between (us) Jews and the Gentiles; also 11:12.3 'To distinguish,' 1 C. 4:7: Who has distinguished you (as compared with others)? 11:29: μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα, 'because he does not distinguish the body of the Lord (from ordinary bread).'⁴ 'To distinguish between persons' gives the further sense 'to judge between two,' 1 C. 6:5 διακρίνειν ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ5 (here a tt. in law),⁶ and 'to assess,' used of a thing, Mt. 16:3: τὸ πρόσωπον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, as well as a person, 1 C. 11:31: ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν,⁷ or without obj., 1 C. 14:29.⁸ The mid. διακρίνομαι (with pass. aor.) means 'to contend,'⁹ Jd. 9: τῷ διαβόλῳ διακρινόμενος, Ac. 11:2: διεκρίνοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν (Peter) οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς, or 'to doubt.' This meaning, which is not known prior to the NT, occurs at Mk. 11:23; Mt. 21:21; Jm. 1:6; 2:4; R. 4:20; 14:23; Ac. 10:20.10" [Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 3:946-947.]

spirits of demons. The basic sense references that which is inside a person and guiding his speaking. And it focuses on content of speaking rather than manner of speaking.

Thus the blessing of God here in διακρίσεις πνευμάτων is the insight to recognize whether what is being spoken comes from God or not.³⁹ One should note that this insight is not limited just to spoken words but also includes assessment of actions by the individuals about whether they correctly represent God or not.

The final set (v. 10c) is ἐτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλω δὲ ἔρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν, *to another various kinds of tongues; but to the other explanation of the tongues*. Although commonly understood as referring to glossolalia, a dominate mistake is made in ignoring Paul's label here of γένη γλωσσῶν, *species of tongues*.⁴⁰ γένη γλωσσῶν is repeated in v. 28. In 14:10, γένη φωνῶν refers to different kinds of sounds found in the world, some with no meaning but others containing understandable meaning. The common meaning of γένος specifying descendant, family, nations etc. stresses that these variety of γλωσσῶν possess a common origin, even though distinct from one another.⁴¹

³⁹“All this belongs to a different world from popular appeals to use this gift to arbitrate in small-scale controversies between individuals in local communities, or minor variants between traditions of interpretation. Wolff concludes that whether the gift concerns *discerning* and *testing* or (with Dautzenberg and Merklein) explaining and classifying what is at issue is the *genuine effect of the Holy Spirit*, in continuity with such passages as 2 Thess 2:1–2 (not being unsettled by ‘some prophecy’ that the day of the Lord has already come”); and 1 John 4:1 (‘do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God’).¹⁸⁹ In other words, is a ‘spiritual’ claim one which comes from the Holy Spirit?” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 969–970.]

⁴⁰“Too much literature seeks to identify glossolalia as ‘one thing’ when Paul specifically takes pains to refer to different species.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 970.]

⁴¹“A cluster of generic characteristics mark off tongues from prophecy: in one context, the contrast between articulate speech and unintelligible sounds (14:2b, 5, 7–9, 11, 19); in another context the contrast between being addressed to God and being addressed to other human persons (14:2a; 14:15); in yet another context the distinction between communicative discourse in the ordinary public domain and something so exalted as to be associated with angelic utterance (13:1); in one more context capable of making some believers feel like exiles or strangers ‘not at home’ in the community of believers (14:23a) and repellent to unbelievers (14:23b); in other situations that which benefits the tongue-speaker and for which he or she can give thanks (14:4a, 5a, 18). Any generalizing definition will founder on semantic contrasts which constitute counterexamples. On the other hand, one or more of the above characteristics or family traits give adequate grounds for the use of tongues, provided that they are ‘given’ by the Holy Spirit

The Greco-Roman background for γένη γλωσσῶν cannot be ignored. Paul is addressing this phenomena in the context of the almost universal practice of γένη γλωσσῶν in the non-Christian world of Corinth.⁴² The very diverse patterns of ecstatic speech in the various religious traditions clearly provides a basis for Paul's label. And yet Paul here alludes to what he assumes is legitimate communication with the divine over against the pseudo-communications in the pagan traditions at Corinth.

What should be understood is that γλώσσα at the figurative level of meaning as here alludes to a linguistic communication between two individuals. And for these two parties it is intelligible communication, although bystanders may or may not understand what is being said. All through Paul's world stood the idea that communicating with deity was possible. But in the Greco-Roman side, it was only possible when one could speak the language of the deity, which was a non-human language. Different deities spoke their own individual languages. In these religious traditions, only select priests and priestesses were granted the ability to communicate with their patron deity in his or her language. This functioned in gathered assemblies of worshippers in the temples as validation of the individual priest/priestess by the deity. An interpretation of this communication may or may not have been given to the assembled worshippers. When provided, it normally was given by the same priest or priestess who supposedly communicated with the deity in its non-earthly language. Out of this background comes influence upon some of the Corinthian believers who felt that believers should be able to communicate with God in a non-human language.⁴³

and not self-induced.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 971.]

⁴²“Certainly the main thrust of Christopher Forbes's warnings against assuming that tongues denotes ecstatic speech on the basis of overly selective and unrepresentative examples of ‘inspired speech’ in Graeco-Roman texts should be heeded and accepted. The instances of irrational frenzy described by Euripides concerning the Dionysiac cult in *The Bacchae* and similar phenomena concerning the frenzied antics of the Sibyl in Virgil's *Aeneid*, often familiar from classes in school should not be taken as models for an understanding of 1 Corinthians 12–14 (see above on 1 Cor 12:2).¹⁹⁵ Forbes suspects the approach of history-of-religion writers since Reitzenstein of special pleading, and his wide review of primary sources in Graeco-Roman literature entirely vindicates his scepticism.¹⁹⁶” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 971.]

⁴³I share a personal experience while pastoring in Germany. In the initial worship service in June 2008, tongues were spoken dur-

But communicating with God is very different than with Zeus et als. Christian prayer makes the fundamental assumption that such communication is available to all of God's people, not to just a select few religious leaders. But what language does God speak? His communication with Jesus at His baptism was via Aramaic as the synoptic gospel accounts make clear. But is this God's language, or is God merely accommodating Himself to the human language of the individual(s) He speaks to? Most certainly the latter is the case.

A related question is What is the language of Heaven? It is almost certain to not be Aramaic! Some argue that Paul's reference to the 'tongues of angels,' *ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων* in 13:1 is in view here with Paul's label of γλωσσῶν.⁴⁴ But Paul's phrase

ing the worship service that was being video taped. Some months later I received a copy of the DVD of the worship service and discovered what had happened. About the same time, I happened to watch a DW German broadcast centering on witchcraft practices in east Africa. When the attempts of a witch doctor to excise a demon of sickness from a young boy were played in the TV documentary the sounds of his incantations over the boy sounded strangely familiar. To my amazement, they corresponded almost exactly with the supposed speaking in tongues by west African individuals in that initial worship service at the church in Germany. The sounds were virtually identical -- one coming from a east African pagan witch doctor and the other from a west African church member. A sound mapping software would have tracked out the two sets of sounds as virtually identical. I learned a lot about glossolalia from that.

⁴⁴Ellis and Dautzenberg argue for this view, and Witherington and Barrett express sympathy with it. The main argument in its favor rests on whether Paul (or Corinth) was influenced by the role of angels in apocalyptic or in Qumran, most especially by the Testament of Job (first century BC) and by what weight we give to enigmatic references about 'rapture' in 2 Cor 12:1-5 (esp. 2 Cor 12:4), to 1 Cor 13:1, and to 1 Cor 14:2, 28.²⁰⁶ In Testament of Job 48:1-50:3 Job's enraptured daughters 'no longer mind the things of earth but utter a hymn in the angelic language ... to God according to the angels' psalmody ... speaking in the language of the heights.... She spoke in the language of the Cherubim ...'; cf. Jubilees 25:14; Testament of Judah 25:3; 1 Enoch 40 and 71:11; and 4 Macc 10:21. Barrett as well as Ellis and Dautzenberg alludes similarly to 1 Cor 13:1, viewing 'unintelligible' speech as heavenly.²⁰⁷ This citation of Testament of Job 48:1-50:3 and 1 Cor 13:1 is not new. Heinrich Weinel expounded this theory in 1899 (partly against Reitzenstein here) on the death of their father as one daughter sings to God 'in the hymnology of angels'; the second, in the language of the 'Archontes'; the third daughter in the speech of the cherubim.²⁰⁸

"This view is criticized by Allo, who argues that this slides more readily into the traditions of the Montanists than that of Paul and the Fathers.²⁰⁹ Turner sets out several objections to the 'tongues of angels' view, most notably that Paul would not have implied that 'they belong only to our pre-resurrection childhood.'²¹⁰ Grudem points out, also, that tongues of angels in 1 Cor 13:1 is at once correlated with human tongues in the same phrase. Quite properly, as we have argued already above, Grudem rejects Ellis's understanding of the plural πνεύματα as angelic powers. In 14:32, e.g., he rightly understands the Greek to mean not 'spirits of the prophets,'

taken seriously in its context alludes to highly eloquent and persuasive speech whether coming from human or heavenly sources. The best speaking imaginable without ἀγάπη is harsh and detestable talking. He is not alluding to glossolalia with this term.

Clearly the phenomena on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is unrelated to what Paul was dealing with at Corinth. At Pentecost, the miracle was the miracle of hearing in human languages. That is, Peter spoke to the gathered crowd in Aramaic but the sounds of Aramaic miraculously turned into a wide number of different languages when entering the ears of the listeners. No ecstatic speech⁴⁵ of any kind was present or used

but 'manifestations of the Holy Spirit at work in prophets.'²¹¹ We may also add that the notion of angels' speech as being among that which passes away at the parousia (13:8) would be most curious. This is one of the least plausible proposals. Other reasons for the unintelligibility and transcendent, God-directed nature of tongues more readily suggest themselves, especially on the analogy of 'sighs too deep for words' (Rom 8:26)."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 972-973.]

⁴⁵The label of ecstatic speech as a label for this phenomena traces back to the church father Tertullian in his combating the influence of Montanism toward the end of the second century:

Exponents of this view often begin with Tertullian. In *Against Marcion*, 5, Tertullian takes his reader through 1 Corinthians as a whole, beginning with wisdom and the cross (5:5), moving on through issues of the Spirit and ministerial "building" (5:6), marriage, and idol foods (5:7), to women and prophecy, the Eucharist and spiritual gifts (5:8), prior to considering the resurrection (5:9, 10) and 2 Corinthians (5:11-12). Hence while it is a valid criticism to associate his comment about ecstatic utterance with his Montanist period, on the other hand Tertullian approaches the subject both as a contextual exposition and to demonstrate (against Marcion) the continuity of these themes with their roots in the OT. Thus he sees the root of all the spiritual gifts in the messianic anointing prophesied in Isa 11:1-3 and dispensed by Christ (Eph. 4:8 relates, in his view, closely to 1 Cor 12:4-11). After expounding or enumerating the gifts, Tertullian concludes with a contrast between Marcion and authentic inspiration from the Spirit of God: "Let Marcion produce a psalm, a vision, only let it be by the Spirit in an ecstasy, that is, a rapture, whenever 'interpretation of tongues' has come to him (Lat. dumtaxat spiritualem, in ecstasi, id est amentia, si qua linguae interpretatio accessit)."²⁶¹

It is Tertullian, therefore, not simply "the vocabulary of NT scholarship in our era," who introduces the term *in ecstasi* and even the explanatory *id est amentia* in the context of *linguae interpretatio*. *Amentia* usually means madness (in Cicero, Ovid, and others) and can also come to mean folly (in Horace) because it also means "being out of one's mind."²⁶² Admittedly most of *Against Marcion* must be dated around AD 207, which marks the point at which Tertullian began to fall under the spell of Montanism. However, he did not formally join a Montanist sect until six years later: Forbes calls

on that occasion. Something similar is the case with Cornelius (Acts 10:46) and the disciples of John at Ephesus (Acts 19:6).

What Paul asserts then with *γένη γλωσσῶν* (12:10) is the blessing of various individuals being able to communicate with God in non-human language expression. It does not inherently imply the necessity of being in some state of ecstasy before such communication can take place. This was the pagan model for glossolalia that Paul rejects. The experience of communicating with God like this stands apart from prayer which uses human language to communicate with a God who understands all human languages. Instead this relates to what Paul describes in Rom. 8:26-27, where the Holy Spirit is the communication channel between the believer and God when the desires etc. in the believer go beyond human language words, what Paul calls *στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις*.

Although some link this speaking of non-human words to liturgical words or phrases perhaps spoken in poetic or exalted musical rhythms, e.g., *הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה*, *halelu-yah*,⁴⁶ one should be highly skeptical of such connec-

this still “his pre-Montanist days.”²⁶³ Yet Forbes calls attention not to Tertullian’s use of *in ecstasi* or *amentia* but to his witness to the continuing existence of glossolalia. He also alludes to Tertullian, Apology 18, where the context is “translation” of the LXX.²⁶⁴ In his Montanist period he wrote a treatise *On Ecstasy*, which has not survived.²⁶⁵

Among modern writers, those who take seriously the nature of tongues as ecstatic speech include especially J. Behm, H. Kleinknecht, S. D. Currie, N. I. J. Engelsen, H. W. House, and in modified form M. E. Boring, L. T. Johnson, as well as a number of other writers. Behm does draw on arguments about common patterns between hellenistic and Christian phenomena. He writes: “Paul is aware of a similarity between Hellenism and Christianity in respect of these mystical and ecstatic phenomena.”²⁶⁶ But he does not restrict his argument to hellenism. He alludes to “the ecstatic fervor” of Hebrew prophets in 1 Sam 10:5–7; cf. 19:20–22, 1 Kings 18:29, 30; 2 Kings 9:11.²⁶⁷ On the other hand, he identifies a different tradition in Acts 2:4–13, which he regards as more “linguistic.” Behm and Kleinknecht both allude to Plato’s notion of “mantic” prophecy in Timaeus 71e–72a, and Kleinknecht also appeals to parallels with oracular speech at Delphi.²⁶⁸ The latter issue is taken up by Currie, while Engelsen argues that Paul was the first to conceive of a distinction between inspired ecstatic speech and inspired intelligible speech. Forbes has little difficulty in showing that the arguments of all of these writers embody a lack of precision and selectivity in the use of Graeco-Roman sources.²⁶⁹

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 981–982.

⁴⁶“A close association of these idioms not only with poetry and liturgy, but also with music and rhythmic songs of praise belongs, for Heinrici, to the ‘various kinds of tongues’ which differ from straightforward, distinctly articulated, intelligible prose forms of traditional or ordinary language.”²⁵² The connection between rhyth-

tions.⁴⁷

Paul’s later discussion in chapter fourteen will throw more light on the idea, although largely with a de-emphasizing of its practice in the gathered community in favor of an individual devotion to God outside of the gathered community in worship.

But as an individual communication with God, it does relate to a non-human communication with God that has legitimacy in limited circumstances.⁴⁸ The *γένη*

mic music and the language of divine worship appears in Greek literature from earliest times.²⁵³ Heinrici then quotes the kind of material in Plato and Virgil alluding to the Sibyl and the Pythia about which Forbes has recently formulated the criticisms noted above.²⁵⁴ However, he does not depend on a history-of-religions background. On the contrary, his fundamental approach is linguistic, and he is no less concerned to cite Aristotle on language and grammar to support his case.²⁵⁵ Allo commends Heinrici for avoiding the history-of-religions assumptions found in Reitzenstein and in Weiss.²⁵⁶

“It is almost universally agreed that reference to modern Pentecostal and charismatic phenomena cannot be used as an exegetical test for proposed interpretations of Paul and Corinth. This would be to presuppose the validity of one specific tradition of interpretation in a circular fashion. However, the modern phenomena do have at least marginal relevance on the *prima facie* plausibility of provisional suggestions. In this context C. G. Williams’s discussion of Pentecostalist phenomena is of interest. He quotes H. Horton’s description within Pentecostalism of ‘rising from understood words and rhythms to mystic words and rhythms.... It is marrying mystic meanings and mystic cadencies in a glorious rhapsody of adoring worship.... Words and music soar infinitely beyond the compass of mere understanding.’²⁵⁷”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 979.]

⁴⁷“A third proposal concerns tongues as archaic or novel verbal idioms, usually with music, poetry, and rhythm (Bleek and Heinrici). This offers a halfway house between ‘languages’ and ‘inspired utterance’ in its approach. Bleek noted that Greek grammarians often used *γλῶσσα*, tongue, to denote archaic words or dialects, provincial idioms, or, as in the present context, probably a mixture of ancient, quasi-Semitic liturgical words or phrases, perhaps spoken in poetic or exalted rhythms.²⁴⁶ In spite of the recent work of Forbes, appeal was made to precedents in oracular speech in hellenistic religion. Bleek argues the case in detail and takes up a point of departure already noted by J. G. Herder and J. A. Ernesti.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 978.]

⁴⁸“Gerd Theissen has produced one of the most incisive and innovative treatments of tongues available in any language in his major study *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*. He argues that tongues are ‘the language of the unconscious which becomes capable of consciousness through interpretation.’²⁸² In his chapter ‘Tradition Analysis’ relevant to 1 Corinthians 12–14, however, he does defend certain specific ways tongues relate to ecstatic states. It is extremely disappointing that neither Forbes nor Turner sees fit to address this very important work with seriousness since The-

γλωσσῶν alludes to different levels of such communication. And the ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν alludes to being granted understanding of the meaning of such communication. Thus this phrase should be interpreted in light of the later statement in 14:13, Διὸ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω ἵνα διερμηνεύη. **Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret (them).**

Of significance is that Paul sets off ἐτέρω γένη γλωσσῶν, ἄλλω δὲ ἐρμηνεῖα γλωσσῶν in 12:10 from the preceding groupings. The others define interaction in the gathered community of believers at Corinth. Although this latter set was at the time being practiced in the gathered assemblies, Paul's discussion in chapter fourteen makes it clear that this is only barely possible and that this phenomena should be done by the individual outside the gathered assembly.⁴⁹

Thiessen also works firsthand not only with Euripides, Virgil, Plato, and Philo but also with apocalyptic and Paul as well as social psychology. Turner has pleaded for such skills.²⁸³ In Euripides, *The Bacchae*, e.g., 'unconscious aggressive impulses develop in the ecstatic state and overcome deeply rooted moral inhibitions' which result in the death of Pentheus at the hands of his mother.²⁸⁴ Thiessen discusses the classic work of E. R. Dodds on this subject. Similarly, in Plato, *Phaedrus* 265A, ecstasy entails 'divine release from the customary habits,' while in *Ion* 533D–535A inspiration entails 'being put out of one's senses.'²⁸⁵ To be filled by God (enthusiasm) entails relinquishing one's own thoughts to make room for God (Plato, *Ion* 534E). Philo takes up this 'ecstatic filling' from Plato. 'The light of God shines when human light sets' and thus 'divine possession and madness fall upon us' (Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres* 263–65).

"Although he notes Origen's insistence that this view is not 'Christian,' Thiessen traces themes in 1 Corinthians 12–14 which allow him to see elements of both angelic tongues (Testament of Job 48:1–3; 49:2; and 50:2) and ecstatic utterance as aspects included in various species of tongues.²⁸⁶ Nevertheless, he agrees with those who regard this as no more than a starting point for further inquiry, in which radical differences between the three respective stances of Paul, Corinth, and the hellenistic world clearly emerge."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 984–985.]

⁴⁹"Glossolalia, therefore, makes 'unconscious depth dimensions of life accessible,' which may involve 'reassumption of a more primitive level of speaking' to which many at times regress as 'a return to egocentric use of language' and is likely to constitute 'socially learned behavior.'³¹⁰ Thiessen appeals to 14:4, 20 (cf. 13:11; 14:21). We must postpone further comments until our exegesis of 14:2–38. However, we shall see that it lends further plausibility, over against a publicly reinforced, learned behavior which becomes a socially public habit, to Paul's triple strategy: first, to establish a hierarchy of gifts based on Christomorphic service to others and love for others; second, to 'privatize' glossolalia in the home (as both Thiessen and Wire stress); and, third, to encourage prayer for the gift of articulating buried longings, yearning, and emotions. Paul does not appear to endorse a view found in some modern churches that public tongues-speech is attractive and melodious; again, assumptions of a one-to-one match between

In summing up this emphasis (vv.4-11) in v. 11, the basic stress is placed upon the collective unity of the community where God through His Spirit has provided the diversity of skills and gifts for the community to thrive: πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαιροῦν ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βούλεται. **All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.** The diversity of divine blessings comes out of God's choosing, not that of the members of the community. The divine intent is for each blessing to be used to build up the entire community. It has no connection with calling attention to a supposedly superior skill that a few have that elevates them to a higher level of spirituality. This attitude at Corinth has produced the divisions and elitist thinking that the apostle has consistently condemned all through the letter body.⁵⁰

Lessons from the body, vv. 12-31. Paul now turns to the analogy of the human body in order to underscore his emphasis upon unity in the midst of diversity. This will subsequently be an important theme later on in the prison letter of Eph. 4:1-16, written some five to

ancient and modern phenomena remain speculative. Meanwhile, Paul see tongues as a genuine gift of the Spirit which can help the individual, but subject to the three factors outlined above. Rom 8:26–27 should be kept in mind." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 988.]

⁵⁰One must not overlook both the collective rather than individualistic orientation of Paul's world. Added to this and deeply embedded in it was the intense social stratification of society. As Plato defined it in his Republic, every person has an allotted στάσις in life. Survival of society depends upon each person fulfilling that role. Add also to these layers the passionate craving for social 'networking' in that structure. Business success, one's sense of individual worth etc. all depends upon establishing formal friendships within the patronizing framework of first century society. It is no surprise that what John labels as worldliness in 1 John 2:16 was considered virtue in the secular world of Corinth: ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, **the passion for the flesh, and the passion of the eyes and the pride of life.** Paul sensed from the report by Chloe's people that too many of the Corinthians were still caught up in this worldly thinking. It was draining the spiritual life from the church and needed to be stopped.

Modern western culture often does some of the same dumb things but they come out of its individualism in which a strong emphasis upon being competitive and achieving victory over others is nourished in a highly unhealthy and culturally destructive manner. Such wrong thinking permeates virtually every aspect of modern western society. Success is defined by always coming out 'on top of the pile.' Whether sports, whether business operation, whether size and value of one's home, whether the size and salary of the church being pastored etc. -- in virtually every aspect of modern life this anti-God kind of thinking dominates society. The evidence of this in our world is the same as it was for Paul's world: strife and factions in our society, including the church.

seven years after this letter to the Corinthians and with a slightly different emphasis.⁵¹

⁵¹“Few terms have undergone so many twists and turns in the history of Pauline scholarship than body and body of Christ. At first sight the logic of Paul’s argument clearly develops the theme of unity-with-diversity (Lategan) or diversity-in-unity (Fee) already established in 12:4–11. The so-called ‘weak’ must not feel that if they happen not to have received certain gifts, they are somehow not a genuine part of the body: ‘If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less part of the body’ (12:15). Paul reassures those who are anxious about comparisons with supposedly more ‘gifted’ members, and underlines their role, status and welcome. On the other side, he rebukes “the strong” who seem to think that only those of similar social status and similar spiritual gifts are “real” Christians: ‘The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’ ...’ (12:20–21). Deluz observes, ‘Having spoken to those who have an inferiority complex, Paul now turns to those who are convinced that they know best and want to get everything into their own hands.’⁷¹ With Mitchell, this argument concerning mutuality and reciprocity is identified by J. Smit as ‘the deliberative genre’ with its appeal to advantage (cf. 12:7, πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον) for the whole body (see above).²

“Yet an earlier era of Pauline scholarship from A. Schweitzer to J. A. T. Robinson suggested that Paul uses far more than a metaphor or analogy. For them, μέλη πολλά and ἕν σῶμα are ὁ Χριστός (12:12). Schweitzer writes: ‘In the whole literature of mysticism there is no problem comparable to this of the mystical body of Christ. How could a thinker come to produce this conception of the extension of the body of a personal being?’⁷³ He adds: ‘All attempts to distinguish in the relevant passages between the personal (historical) and mystical body of Christ are initially doomed to failure. The obscurity was intended by Paul.’⁷⁴ On this basis a number of writers, especially in English Anglo-Catholicism from the 1920s to the 1950s, spoke frequently of the church as ‘the extension of the incarnation’ or of ‘no Christ without the Church ... his mystical body.’⁷⁵ J. A. T. Robinson sees the origin of Paul’s identifying the Christian community with Christ’s raised body in his conversion experience: ‘Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ (Acts 9:4–5; 22:7–8). The resurrection body of Christ is revealed ‘not as an individual, but as the Christian community’ (Robinson’s italics).⁶ Certainly, for Robinson, the language of members must be disengaged from the modern meaning of members of a social group.

“Thus the ecclesiological-pastoral emphasis of Deluz and most of the older modern commentators became transposed into a rhetoric which depended not on analogy or metaphor with body as such, but specifically with Christology. No one must disinherit or tear away limbs of Christ, and no subgroup can claim to be ‘the whole Christ.’ But from 1955, with the work of E. Best, followed in 1964 and 1971 by that of D. E. H. Whiteley and others, these approaches of Schweitzer and Robinson were deemed to overpress their approach, and perhaps to fail to attend sufficiently to the context of argument in 1 Corinthians (Best) and ‘to complicate’ at least as much as ‘illuminate’ Paul’s arguments (Whiteley).⁷ Not least, Robinson appealed too readily to a ‘Hebraic’ cast of mind and paid little attention to any Graeco-Roman background. Käsemann’s later work attacks the kind of approach explored by Robinson and Schweitzer, even if his earlier work was marred by overattention to gnosticism.⁸ Best allows that Paul offers a christological foundation for his argument, but returns to a dialectic between diversity (gifts in the church) and unity (Christ).⁹ Where more recent writers associate unity with ‘rhetoric,’ however, Best draws on ‘corporate

personality’ in the OT. On the other hand, recent writers continue to engage with Robinson’s approach alongside that of Käsemann. Schrage, e.g., gives space to their ecclesiology.¹⁰

“We need not trace every twist and turn since Best and Whiteley. A more recent emphasis is represented most constructively and distinctively by M. M. Mitchell and D. B. Martin, who perceive this not simply as a rhetoric of belonging, harmony, and unity-in-diversity, but as a term or turn of phrase loaded with a political history.¹¹ However Paul may have wished to utilize the language for theological purposes, it would be heard by the addressees as language traditionally used to argue for unity on the basis of a hierarchical political structure. However, earlier commentators had also noted the Graeco-Roman background. Thus Heinrici (1880), e.g., cites ‘among the parallels’ the parable or allegory of Menenius Agrippa’s address to the rebel workers in Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 2.32; Cicero *De Officiis* 1.35; Marcus Aurelius, 4.40; 7.13; Seneca, *Epistles* 95, among Latin writers alone.¹² Best had examined such sources, together with Käsemann’s hypothesis about gnostic influences, but had concluded: ‘the presence of the metaphor in Greek culture is not the occasion of Paul’s description of the Church as ‘Body of Christ.’¹³ However, for Mitchell and Martin the history of the term as sociopolitical rhetoric is what leads them to a new appraisal of the impact of its background.

“Margaret M. Mitchell, with Collins and Wolff, traces back the use of the term body as a rhetorical appeal for harmony and interdependence in political life from the fifth and fourth centuries BC (including Plato’s Republic) through to the first and second centuries AD (including Dio Chrysostom’s Orations).¹⁴ The parallels with detailed parts of the imagery in Paul in the late first-century writers Plutarch and Epictetus are especially noteworthy. Plutarch cites the interdependence and mutual benefit of the eyes, ears, hands, and feet of the body (cf. 1 Cor 12:15, hands and feet; 12:16–17, eyes and ears).¹⁵ Epictetus speaks of the mutual advantage (τὸ συμφέρον, 1 Cor. 12:7) of the harmonious function of the whole body.¹⁶ Mitchell notes that even in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (c. 30 BC) personifications of the parts of the body occur, as in 1 Cor 12:15–16, ‘If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not the hand, I do not belong to the body.’ ...’¹⁷ She concludes, ‘Paul’s uniformity of use of this metaphor with ancient political writers applies even to the details.’¹⁸ In 1 Corinthians, she urges, the image in 1 Corinthians 12 looks back directly to the main proposition or rhetorical thesis of the epistle, namely, what she perceives as a polemic against factionalism in 1:10. The theme of σχίσμα (1:10) is explicitly taken up in 12:25 as the climax of the application of the body image. This use of body is a common rhetorical topos, or a set example for the purpose. The emphasis falls on unity (with Martin and Lategan, against Fee).

“Dale B. Martin not only endorses Mitchell’s arguments, but presses them further. Both the human body and the political body are ‘a hierarchy, with different members (... classes) assigned by Nature to positions in the body and to particular roles.’¹⁹ ‘Homonoia speeches always assume that the body is hierarchically constituted and that illness or social disruption occurs when that hierarchy is disrupted.’²⁰ A locus classicus is thus the use of the body topos by Livy, who places it on the lips of the Senator Menenius to persuade the plebeians, who have gone on strike, to return to work.²¹ The active members or limbs (the workers or plebs) fail to feed the belly (patres or governing classes). But if the belly dies, the whole body dies. Hence, Martin concludes, the topos is a typical ‘high-status’ argument for each to have a proper place within a conservative system. Polybaenus (c. AD 162) likewise uses the

In this unit, three natural subunits of emphasis surface: a) vv. 12-13, an introductory assertion of the analogy of the human body to the community of believers; b) vv. 14-26, the inner dependence of the body upon all its parts; and c) vv. 27-31, the direct application of the analogy to the Corinthian community of believers. Out of this discussion comes several important spiritual principles that the Corinthians were missing due to their dependence upon worldly thinking rather than upon God's thinking.

a) vv. 12-13, the analogy. 12 Καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ μέλη πολλὰ ἔχει, πάντα δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος πολλὰ ὄντα ἓν ἐστὶν σῶμα, οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστός· 13 καὶ γὰρ ἓν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

In order to drive home his point on unity in the midst of diversity, the comparison of the local community of believers to a human body gives Paul a persuasive point of emphasis. It is simple to understand; it is legitimately relevant and applicable; it creates an unforgettable mental image about the nature of the community of believers.

One should remember that the figure of a human body with stress on its various parts was commonly used in the Greco-Roman literature of Paul's time for emphasizing a unity-in-diversity theme for various social organizations, as well as human society itself.

topos for 'ideological' purposes.²² Martin has not yet stated his conclusions about how Paul applies this ideological rhetoric. Paul utilizes it, in a sense, to turn it upside down, just as he turns a status system upside down in 1:18–2:5.²³ But this is the appropriate point of departure for an exegesis of our passage.

“An archaeological display at the museum of ancient Corinth provides an unforgettable presentation of an extensive collection of terra-cotta models of disjointed, isolated parts of the human body found on the site of the Asklepieion. G. G. Garner is among those who have drawn attention to the significance of this collection for our appreciation of Corinthian attention to body parts in this context, although his speculative suggestion that the Temple of Asklepios (Asclepius) might have suggested to Paul the metaphor of 'disjointed' parts is unlikely in view of the use of the metaphor widely in ancient literature.²⁴ Collins is on safer ground in calling attention to the collection to underline the self-awareness of 'members of the body' at Corinth to which the cult of Asklepios contributed.²⁵”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 990–994.]

	12.12	γὰρ	Καθάπερ τὸ σῶμα ἓν ἐστὶν καὶ
486		μέλη πολλὰ ἔχει, δὲ	
			πολλὰ ὄντα
487		πάντα τὰ μέλη τοῦ σώματος...ἐν ἐστὶν σῶμα,	
			οὕτως καὶ
488		ὁ Χριστός (ἐστὶν)·	
	12.13	γὰρ	καὶ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι εἰς ἓν σῶμα
489		ἡμεῖς πάντες...ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Τουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι,	
			καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα
490		πάντες...ἐποτίσθημεν.	

So his analogy was not new or unheard of by his first century readers. But Paul utilizes this figure of speech to stress the theme in connection to the community of believers at Corinth. The earlier modern tendency to inject into Paul's words here some kind of mythical universal body called Church utterly misses what Paul is talking about.

Paul here is continuing the emphasis on σχῆμα first put forth in 1:10 and then explicitly picked up in 12:25 again. The putting of value on the spiritual welfare of others in the community above one's own 'rights' due to the superior role of brotherly love undergirds and is re-enforced by his analogy of the body here. The collective life and spiritual health of the local community of believers is at stake here. One must resist any temptation to read some kind of deep theology into this text! It is simple, yet profound; commonly used, but uniquely applied to the Christian community at Corinth.

The single Greek sentence here in vv. 12-13 sets up the analogy of the body to the Christian community. As illustrated in the above diagram, the human body (#s 486-487) is then compared to the Christian community established in Christ (#s 488-490) as explicitly stated by οὕτως καὶ, *so also*. The initial γὰρ in v. 12 links this sentence to the previous one in vv. 8-11 as a justifying declaration. The second γὰρ in v. 13 links statements #s 489-490 to #488 as a justifying declaration. The one Christ has a wide diversity of differing individuals brought into His community in the pictures of immersion and drinking.

At this point the obvious theme of unity-in-diversity would not have particularly challenged the elites

at Corinth. No one at Corinth had an issue with there being one Christian community with members from a widely diverse set of backgrounds. Notice how cleverly Paul sets this theme up in statement #489 especially. On top of ἡμεῖς πάντες...ἐβαπτίσθημεν is the emphasis on oneness: ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα, in one Spirit into one body. Then on the bottom side of ἡμεῖς πάντες...ἐβαπτίσθημεν comes the emphasis upon diversity: εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, whether Jews or Gentiles whether slaves or free. Thus Paul has his readers in agreement with his analogy at this beginning point. No one in the church there could have argued with Paul over this, since it was obvious in every one of the house church groups as they came together in meeting.

The controversy with the Corinthians is thus going to emerge in how Paul amplifies and explains the analogy as validating his principle of brotherly love over one's personal rights. His opponents would have argued that unity comes by everyone acknowledging the superior role of some over that among the rest of the members. For them, unity is a hierarchial structured unity of superiors and inferiors. This was essentially the very way the surrounding Corinthian society was organized and functioned. Therefore it should be the same inside the church. But Paul's amplification is going to take the exact opposite direc-

tion, much to their consternation. He will literally turn their culturally gained 'wisdom' on its head with the divine wisdom of how God wants His people to function. Another example of the 'foolishness' of God's wisdom.

In modern church life, this unity-in-diversity may not always be so obvious. Most

modern western congregations are rather homogenous in their make-up. They are often white, middle class congregations with little or no racial diversity. Most everyone thinks similarly and lives a very similar lifestyle. Having been a part of two international Baptist churches in Germany and Costa Rica (2008-2015) has been a delightful and often challenging experience for me. These congregations are conglomerate mixtures of many races, economic backgrounds, language and

culture diversity etc. Only the common, shared commitment to Christ could bring such a group into existence! No human rationale could produce such a group. This is much closer to the Christian community at Corinth. Understanding the challenges at Corinth to get the members to affirm genuinely the unity-in-diversity theme functionally and not just theoretically is much easier for me now.

b) vv. 14-26, Inner dependence of body parts. First comes the figurative jealousy between some body parts, vv. 14-16. This is followed by the illogic of one body part becoming the entire body, vv. 17-19. Finally, the emphasis on the need of every body part for the functioning of the body is stated, vv. 20-26.

i) vv. 14-16, Jealousy among the body parts, 14 Καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλά. 15 ἐὰν εἴπῃ ὁ πούς· ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ χεῖρ, οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; 16 καὶ ἐὰν εἴπῃ τὸ οὖς· ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὀφθαλμός, οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; **14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.**

12.14	γὰρ	Καὶ	
491	τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν μέλος		
	ἀλλὰ		
492	πολλά (ἔστιν).		
12.15		ἐὰν εἴπῃ ὁ πούς·	
			ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ χεῖρ,
			οὐκ εἰμὶ
			ἐκ τοῦ σώματος,
493	οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν	ἐκ τοῦ σώματος;	
12.16	καὶ	ἐὰν εἴπῃ τὸ οὖς·	
			ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ ὀφθαλμός,
			οὐκ εἰμὶ
			ἐκ τοῦ σώματος,
494	οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν	ἐκ τοῦ σώματος;	

Paul's initial readers must have become alerted to something different in this analogy as he applied it to their church. He begins with an emphasis on diversity with the first statement as an introductory topic statement: Καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν μέλος ἀλλὰ πολλά. For the body is indeed not one member but many. This is self-evident. A physical body has multiple parts: hands, arms, legs, eyes, ears etc. No intelligent person would

or could argue this this.

But what does this imply? Vv. 15-16 contain the first implication of this multiplicity of parts to a body: 15 ἐὰν εἴπη ὁ πούς· ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι χεῖρ, οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; 16 καὶ ἐὰν εἴπη τὸ οὖς· ὅτι οὐκ εἰμι ὀφθαλμός, οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; 15 *If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.*

With a pair of parallel third class conditional sentences formed as rhetorical questions, Paul makes his first application using a personified foot and ear.

ἐὰν εἴπη ὁ πούς· ὅτι...

καὶ ἐὰν εἴπη τὸ οὖς· ὅτι...

The foot claims to not be a part of the body since it is not the hand: οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος.... The ear makes the same claim since it is not the eyes: οὐκ εἰμι ἐκ τοῦ σώματος.... Paul's conclusion in the apodosis is the same for both illustrations: οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος; That is, this claim to not belong does not alter the reality that both the foot and the ear are just as much a part of the body as the hand and the eye.

For the supposed 'inferior' church member to assume that he/she is not a part of the church because of who they are does not in any way alter the reality of their being a legitimate part of the church. This also applies to any member who may view them this way as well. One's status as a member of the community of believers is determined by God's action, not by anyone's own view or actions. God saved them and made them a part of the community of His people. Human attitudes cannot alter that reality at all. Certainly not by the elites frowning down upon the others in the church trying to make them think they don't belong.

Modern churches need to learn this point made by Paul. Too often today the homogenous nature of a congregation pushes it to seek out only certain kinds of folks to be a part of the church.

ii) vv. 17-19, the essential multiplicity of the body, 17 εἰ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ὀφθαλμός, ποῦ ἢ ἀκοή; εἰ ὅλον ἀκοή, ποῦ ἢ ὄσφρησις; 18 νυνὶ δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο τὰ μέλη, ἐν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι καθὼς ἠθέλησεν. 19 εἰ δὲ ἦν τὰ πάντα ἐν μέλος, ποῦ τὸ σῶμα; 17 *If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be?*

The second point made by Paul with his analogy comes in vv. 17-19. It extends the logic expressed in the first point of vv. 15-16. It reflects a form of the an-

12.17	εἰ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα (ἔστιν)
ὀφθαλμός,	
495	ποῦ (ἔστιν) ἢ ἀκοή;
	εἰ ὅλον (ἔστιν) ἀκοή,
496	ποῦ (ἔστιν) ἢ ὄσφρησις;
12.18	δὲ
	νυνὶ
497	ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο τὰ μέλη,
	ἐν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν
	ἐν τῷ σώματι
	καθὼς ἠθέλησεν.
12.19	δὲ
	εἰ ἦν τὰ πάντα ἐν μέλος,
498	ποῦ (ἔστιν) τὸ σῶμα;

cient *Reductio ad absurdum* pattern of argumentation.

First, comes a pair of rhetorical questions referencing the eye and the ear:

εἰ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα ὀφθαλμός, ποῦ ἢ ἀκοή;

εἰ ὅλον ἀκοή, ποῦ ἢ ὄσφρησις;

The common point made is that for a body to be a body it cannot be reduced down to a single function. This would make it a body no longer.

Next in v. 18, Paul brings divine creation of the body into the discussion: νυνὶ δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο τὰ μέλη, ἐν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ σώματι καθὼς ἠθέλησεν. *But now God placed the members, each one of them in the body just as He desired.* The bottom line reality is that God created the diversity of the body members according to His wishes.

This leads back to the topic sentence declaration (v. 14) in v. 19: εἰ δὲ ἦν τὰ πάντα ἐν μέλος, ποῦ τὸ σῶμα; *But if every thing were one member, where is the body?* Diversity is a creation of God in His design of the human body. Thus it cannot be denied.

Another important lesson here needs to be learned by modern churches: we must value diversity in the church as the product of God's actions. Human nature asserts that things go smoother when everybody thinks alike and functions alike. Perhaps some truth in it exists in human based organizations. But such is never to be the attitude found inside the community of believers! God doesn't create churches according to human standards but by His own plan.

iii) vv. 20-26, the essential value of every body part, 20 νῦν δὲ πολλὰ μὲν μέλη, ἐν δὲ σῶμα. 21 οὐ δύναται δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμός εἰπεῖν τῇ χειρὶ· χρεῖαν σου οὐκ ἔχω, ἢ πάλιν ἢ κεφαλὴ τοῖς ποσίν· χρεῖαν ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔχω· 22 ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὰ δοκοῦντα μέλη τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενέστερα ὑπάρχειν ἀναγκαῖά ἐστιν, 23 καὶ ἃ δοκοῦμεν ἀτιμότερα εἶναι τοῦ σώματος τούτοις τιμὴν περισσοτέραν περιτίθεμεν, καὶ τὰ ἀσχήμονα ἡμῶν εὐσχημοσύνην περισσοτέραν ἔχει,

24 τὰ δὲ εὐσχήμονα ἡμῶν οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει. ἀλλ' ὁ θεὸς συνεκέρασεν τὸ σῶμα τῷ ὑστερουμένῳ περισσοτέραν δούς τιμὴν, 25 ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνῶσιν τὰ μέλη. 26 καὶ εἴτε πάσχει ἐν μέλος, συμπάσχει πάντα τὰ μέλη· εἴτε δοξάζεται [ἐν] μέλος, συγκαίρει πάντα τὰ μέλη. 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now the emphasis shifts from diversity to unity with the image of the body still providing the figurative basis for Paul's expression. The opening statement (v. 20) signals this shift of emphasis: *vũn δὲ πολλὰ μὲν μέλη, ἐν δὲ σῶμα.* But now there are many members but one body.

This reality suggests profound implications which Paul expresses in vv. 21-26. These are structured in three Greek sentences: vv. 21-24a, 24b-25, and 26.

First (v. 21), the supposed 'superior' body members -- eye & head -- cannot deny the importance of the supposed 'inferior' members of the hand and the foot: οὐ δύναται δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς εἰπεῖν τῇ χειρὶ· χρεῖαν σου οὐκ ἔχω, ἢ πάλιν ἡ κεφαλὴ τοῖς ποσίν· χρεῖαν ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔχω· Now the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

One should note the randomness of Paul's selection of body parts for his illustrations all through this larger passage. The 'superior' and 'inferior' parts are chosen randomly, not logically. Such patterns prohibit

any linkage of any body part to a particular role inside the church, e.g., the head with the pastoral leader. The problems at Corinth weren't connected to ecclesiastical organization of the house church groups. They were more profound spiritual issues.

Second (vv. 22-24a), the opposite is the reality for both the body and the church at Corinth: 22 ἀλλὰ πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὰ δοκοῦντα μέλη τοῦ

12.20 δὲ
 499 πολλὰ (ἐνι) μὲν μέλη,
 500 ἐν (ἐνι) σῶμα.
 12.21 δὲ
 501 οὐ δύναται ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς εἰπεῖν τῇ χειρὶ·
 502 ἢ κεφαλὴ (οὐ δύναται εἰπεῖν) τοῖς ποσίν·
 12.22 ἀλλὰ
 503 πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὰ δοκοῦντα μέλη τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενέστερα ὑπάρχειν ἀναγκαῖά ἐστιν,
 12.23 καὶ
 504 αὐτοῖς τιμὴν περισσοτέραν περιτίθειμεν,
 505 καὶ τὰ ἀσχήμονα ἡμῶν εὐσχημοσύνην περισσοτέραν ἔχει,
 12.24 δὲ
 506 τὰ εὐσχήμονα ἡμῶν οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει.
 ἀλλ'
 507 ὁ θεὸς συνεκέρασεν τὸ σῶμα
 12.25 τῷ ὑστερουμένῳ περισσοτέραν δούς τιμὴν,
 ἵνα μὴ ᾖ σχίσμα
 ἐν τῷ σώματι
 ἀλλὰ
 ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων
 --- τὸ αὐτὸ...μεριμνῶσιν τὰ μέλη.
 12.26 καὶ
 508 εἴτε πάσχει ἐν μέλος,
 συμπάσχει πάντα τὰ μέλη·
 509 εἴτε δοξάζεται [ἐν] μέλος,
 συγκαίρει πάντα τὰ μέλη.

σώματος ἀσθενέστερα ὑπάρχειν ἀναγκαῖά ἐστιν, 23 καὶ ἃ δοκοῦμεν ἀτιμότερα εἶναι τοῦ σώματος τούτοις τιμὴν περισσοτέραν περιτίθεμεν, καὶ τὰ ἀσχήμονα ἡμῶν εὐσχημοσύνην περισσοτέραν ἔχει, 24 τὰ δὲ εὐσχήμονα ἡμῶν οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει. *But much more, the seemingly weaker members of the body are indispensable, and those members we suppose to be less honorable we should be giving these abundantly more honor, and our weaker members should have greater respect and praise.*

Here is where the ‘rubber hit the road’ with the Corinthian elites. If a person doesn’t take proper care of the so-called ‘weaker’ body parts, he will discover in illness just how indispensably they are to his well being. This principle for the human body applies to the life of a church equally so. Here was the heart of the Corinthian failure. Paul earlier spelled it out in the discussion of τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων (8:1ff.; note the repetition of some of that language here) with his emphasis on the superiority of brotherly love over claiming one’s rights. His use of the analogy of the body as interpreted here challenges that same elitist mentality among some in the community. The church should be paying close attention to its supposed ‘weaker’ members and giving them the respect and attention they deserve from their contributions to the life of the church. The church could not exist without them and what they contribute.

Third (vv. 24b-25), this greater attention to the weaker members stems from God’s actions toward them and thus must be copied by the members of the church: ἀλλ’ ὁ θεὸς συνεκέρασεν τὸ σῶμα τῶ ὑστερουμένῳ περισσοτέραν δούς τιμὴν, 25 ἵνα μὴ ᾗ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνῶσιν τὰ μέλη. *But God has structured the body by giving greater honor to those less capable, so that no factions occur in the body but so that the members receive the same care from one another.*

Contrary to human organizations with their embedded ‘pecking order’ of importance for their members, the community of God’s people is designed and intended by God to be a ‘level playing field’ where no member stands above the others. By this design the issue of σχίσμα that was plaguing the church at Corinth is resolved and even prevented. The superiority of Paul’s earlier principle ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, *Knowledge puffs up but love builds up* (v. 8:1) is validated by the analogy of the human body.

What is clear is that all socially based distinctions among people must be shed at the front door of the church. And under no circumstances can the church create any new set of distinctions for those on the inside. All of these distinctions are completely contrary to the wisdom of God. The factionalism seriously hurting the Corinthian church has but one solution: all its members must shed their worldly thinking and adopt God’s way of thinking.

c) vv. 27-31, the community as a body. 27 Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους. 28 Καὶ οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρῶτον ἀποστόλους, δεύτερον προφήτας, τρίτον διδασκάλους, ἔπειτα δυνάμεις, ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν. 29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μὴ πάντες προφῆται; μὴ πάντες διδάσκαλοι; μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις; 30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων; μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν; μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν; 31 ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. *27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*

12.28 Καὶ

511 οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς
| ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ
πρῶτον ἀποστόλους,
δεύτερον προφήτας,
τρίτον διδασκάλους,
ἔπειτα δυνάμεις,
ἔπειτα χαρίσματα
ἰαμάτων,
ἀντιλήψεις,
κυβερνήσεις,
γένη γλωσσῶν.

512 12.29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι;

513 μὴ πάντες προφῆται;

514 μὴ πάντες διδάσκαλοι;

515 μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις;

516 12.30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων;

517 μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν;

518 μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν;

12.31 δὲ

519 ζηλοῦτε τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα.

Now Paul comes to a summary and explicit application of his analogy to the Christian community at Corinth. Up to this point the amplification of the body analogy has pointed to spiritual principles for the church. But here he clearly puts the application on the table before the Corinthians. The use of the second person plural Ὑμεῖς (v. 27) and ζηλοῦτε (v. 31a) pull these statements

together as a literary unit.⁵²

In typical fashion he first (v. 27) lays down a general principle that serves as a foundation for expanded expression: Ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐστε σῶμα Χριστοῦ καὶ μέλη ἐκ μέρους. *And you yourselves are Christ's body and members individually.* Both unity and diversity are pulled together again by this statement.

The diversity aspect is then expanded with a listing of different ministry roles in the life of a church (vv. 28–30).⁵³ Several issues need sorting out in order to clearly understand Paul's ideas here. First, what does πρῶτον, *first*, ... δεῦτερον, *second*, ... τρίτον, *third*, ... ἔπειτα, *then*, ... ἔπειτα, *then*, ... signify?⁵⁴ To assume a priority ranking

52 “D reads ἐκ μέλους in place of ἐκ μέρους, and the Vulgate follows this, to mean member joined to member. But against κ, A, B, C, this is ‘obviously a mistake in copying or dictation.’⁹⁵

“Collins sees vv. 27–31a as a distinct epistolary unit, with vv. 27 and 31a in the second person plural.⁹⁶ The syntax of the verse fittingly combines singular and plural. Our translation adds **your-selves**, which is not strictly in the Greek (although it is emphatic) because it is difficult otherwise to signal in English that ὑμεῖς is plural. NJB's *Christ's body is yourselves* reverses the subject and predicate. We follow Luther, Meyer, Weiss, and Conzelmann in understanding ἐκ μέρους to mean *for his own part*, or *for his or her part*.⁹⁷ The phrase means separately, or part by part, and the usual translation *individually* (NRSV; cf. AV/KJV, in particular; RV, severally) is not wrong. However, the argument has been self-involving: what is my part/their parts in the body? Hence Weiss's for his own part conveys a nuance which REB's *each of you* does not quite capture, while NJB goes rather too far beyond the Greek with *Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole*. In this respect, this verse ‘ties all the preceding pieces together.’⁹⁸ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1012–1013.]

⁵³“28 This verse is an exegetical and lexicographical minefield. These key questions loom large: (1) do πρῶτον ... δεῦτερον ... τρίτον ... ἔπειτα ... ἔπειτα ... denote gradations of rank, importance, or indispensability, or simply ways of checking off a long list? (2) While the meaning of ἀποστόλους ... προφήτας ... δυνάμεις ... ἰαμάτων, and γένη γλωσσῶν ... has been discussed in detail above, we have yet to examine more fully διδάσκαλοι, ἀντιλήμψεις, and κυβερνήσεις. (3) Why does Paul in some cases use abstract nouns denoting the various activities involved, while in other instances he appears to use adjectival titles for persons who perform specific functions or (some argue) offices? (4) Finally, how are we to understand the syntax which relates to οὗς μὲν ... when the contrastive δέ never appears and the construction appears to proceed differently?” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1013.]

⁵⁴“(1) Does the enumeration or sequence imply any kind of ‘ranking’? F. F. Bruce argues that enumeration first ... second ... third ... ‘mark these out as exercising, in Paul's estimation, the three most important ministries. In Eph 4:11 these are also enumerated, together with evangelists, in the order (a) apostles, (b) prophets, (c) evangelists, (d) pastors and teachers, as given by the ascended Lord to equip his people ‘... for building up the body of Christ.’⁹⁹ In the same vein, Grosheide argues that prophets are

second to apostles because, although both proclaim the gospel, ‘their office is not ... as universal as that of the apostles’ and hence ‘not as important.’¹⁰⁰ Robertson and Plummer perceive apostles as ‘the first order in the Church,’ since elsewhere in Paul and in Acts it is an essential qualification for the apostolate to have seen the raised Lord (1 Cor. 9:1, 2; 15:7; cf. Acts 1:8, 21–23).¹⁰¹ Dunn concedes that apostles represent in Paul a wider circle than the Twelve, but believes that they still constitute a special group of ‘founder members’ who are personally commissioned on the basis of such passages as Rom 1:5; 11:13; 1 Cor 3:5–10; 9:1, 2; 15:7–11; Gal 1:1 and 1:11, 15–17).¹⁰² The apostles are first not least in the sense that the church does not ‘raise up’ its apostles, but responds to the apostolic witness. A term like ‘church founders’ might be implied, although Paul asserts categorically that Christ alone is the foundation. Among the most recent commentators, Lange offers a similar evaluation to that of Bruce: ‘Paul begins with the three most important functions of proclamation: first of all, the apostles; second, prophets, third, teachers.’¹⁰³

“Other commentators tend to imply a ranking of some kind which is less explicit. Barrett shares with Bruce and Lange the view that ‘this threefold ministry of the word is, according to Paul, the primary Christian ministry. By it the church is founded and built up. Other activities ... can occupy only a secondary place.... The numerical sequence is pursued no further.’¹⁰⁴ Senft, however, is emphatic that the difference between the list in 12:8–10 and the structure of this list ‘is of extreme importance: it clearly sets out the specifically Pauline conception of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. vv. 4, 5)’ as against ‘the Corinthian definition of ‘pneumatic’ traits’ in 12:8–10.¹⁰⁵ As in Rom 12:6–8, when Paul looks back retrospectively to his Corinthian experience, he places the emphasis on a gradation of ‘what edifies’ the church as a whole, where service (as he will explicate in 1 Corinthians 13) becomes the touchstone of importance and ministerial character. Like Conzelmann, Senft urges that ‘the chief forms of service’ are deliberately listed first.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Allo argues that ‘the adverbs ‘firstly’, ‘secondly’, ‘thirdly’ are to be understood with all the force that they can have: that which is the first....’¹⁰⁷

“To those who know at first hand of the work of ‘the judicious Richard Hooker’ it may come as no surprise to learn that he interprets this verse in terms of a ‘middle’ position. The ‘Apostles [are] first because unto them was granted the revelation of all truth from Christ immediately.’¹⁰⁸ Prophets, he argues, had ‘some knowledge’ of the same kind, and teachers are necessary to build and to instruct. But otherwise ‘nothing is meant but sundry graces, gifts and abilities which Christ bestowed,’ and Paul does not have in general view ‘questions about degrees and offices of ecclesiastical calling.’¹⁰⁹

“The single strong argument against an ‘order’ of priority or necessity lies in Martin's incisive argument that Paul has used a rhetoric of political hierarchy only in order to turn it upside down. But this argues for oneness of status and for interdependency of function. Hence the more ‘egalitarian’ interpretations of Godet and of Fee have limited, although perhaps relative, value. Godet asserts: ‘All have their part to play’; all of the gifts have dignity and value.¹¹⁰ However, when Fee denies that any of these gifts or roles are ‘ranked,’ this is not strictly the case.¹¹¹ The comments of Bruce, Dunn, Senft, Hooker, and Schrage remain valid, and interestingly come from Brethren, Methodist, French-language Protestant, Anglican, and German Protestant writers respectively. But perhaps more still should be said. If Martin is correct about his ‘reversals’ (and he surely is), should we not give due weight to Chrysostom's

of these ministry roles is difficult to justify, since such an assumption of priority of certain ministries reflects the views of the elites which Paul consistently denounces throughout this discussion.

The essentially twofold grouping here where ἔπειτα repeated twice sections out the last two sets of items from the first three items.⁵⁵

12.28 Καὶ
 511 οὓς μὲν ἔθετο ὁ θεὸς
 | ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ
 | *πρῶτον ἀποστόλους,*
 | *δεύτερον προφήτας,*
 | *τρίτον διδασκάλους,*
 | ἔπειτα δυνάμεις,
 | ἔπειτα χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις,
 | κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν.

What seems to me to be Paul's intention here is to set forth in the first three items the basic ministry roles designed to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to each community of believers. The remaining items center on ministry actions to benefit the members of the community through service actions. The numbering of πρῶτον, *first*, ... δεύτερον, *second*, ... τρίτον, *third*, ... highlights the importance of the communicating of the Gospel to each community of believers. Paul here underscores his consistent point all along that the church must be built exclusively upon God's way of thinking and not human wisdom. Interestingly Paul himself ful-

assertion 'Because they thought highly of themselves in respect of the tongue, he [Paul] sets it last everywhere. For the terms 'first' and 'secondly' are not used by him at random, but in order by enumeration to point out the more honourable and the inferior.'¹¹²

"If this should be thought to reflect only a later patristic reading, we may note that in his discussion of the role of presbyters within the church (c. AD 185) Irenaeus places their ministry among that of the prophets and teachers in Paul's list, observing that 'God has placed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers' because an authentic ministry of presbyters must be apostolic, i.e., founded on, and derived from, the apostles.¹¹³ For patristic writers the list is far from random in sequence, whether we consider Origen, Augustine, or others. Indeed, Augustine propounds to Pelagius the ingenious view that no single individual can possess the full range of the gifts of the Spirit (or the body rhetoric would collapse) except apostles, since we can find instances of each gift in Paul's apostolic ministry.¹¹⁴"

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1013–1015.]

⁵⁵One should note in this same discussion the very different previous listing in 12:8-10 where the items listed are generally broader and more generalized in nature. Only minor overlapping of items between the two lists occur. This listing in 12:8-10 somewhat compares to the one in Rom. 12:6-8 which was written while Paul was in Corinth at the end of the third missionary journey. This listing in 12:28-30 corresponds in the first three items only to the later listing found in Eph. 4:11, which has also εὐαγγελιστάς, evangelists. Additionally, the Ephesian list combines pastor and teacher into one item: τοὺς ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους. .

filled all three of these roles in his ministry of proclaiming the Gospel. These items must not be understood as mutually exclusive roles of ministry. They all accent the communicating of the Gospel as the heart of God's wisdom revealed from Heaven in contrast to human wisdom used by the Corinthians and thus creating the massive problems in the church. That ἀποστόλους is listed first is completely expected since the human channel of that divine revelation came exclusively through the Twelve and Paul as apostles. The use of διδασκάλους catches special attention due to the very limited use of this word group in Paul's major writings.⁵⁶ The functional difference in apostolic Christianity between προφήτας and διδασκάλους is very minimal, if existent at all. Only in modern Enlightenment perspective is there much difference ascribed to preacher and teacher in a religious setting.

The repeated use of ἔπειτα seems to set off somewhat δυνάμεις, *deeds of power* from the following listing of χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων, ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, γένη γλωσσῶν. *gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues*. The natural meaning of ἔπειτα in this kind of listing is 'next' in the sense of logical sequence. These come after what is listed first. No clear logical reason emerges for listing δυνάμεις distinct from the remaining ones, apart from the possibility that it is intended as an umbrella term covering those items subsequently listed. Some of these items have already been listed by Paul in vv. 8-10: χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων; δυνάμεις / ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων; and γένη γλωσσῶν. New on this second listing by Paul are ἀντιλήμψεις and κυβερνήσεις. The most natural sense

⁵⁶ "Teachers (ἔθετο ὁ θεός ... τρίτον διδασκάλους). Again, it is not entirely clear on what basis Dunn draws a firm distinction between 'charismatic' and 'spontaneous' teachers who taught 'particular teachings' (Dunn's italics, 1 Cor 14:6, 26; Rom 12:7) and a 'noncharismatic sense' of 'a body of teaching' (Rom 6:17; 16:17).¹¹⁸ The verb διδάσκω, *to teach*, occurs only five times in the four major epistles (Rom 2:21; 12:7; 1 Cor 4:17; 11:14; Gal 1:12); the noun διδασχῆ, *teaching*, only four times (Rom 6:17; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:6, 26, with the related διδασκαλία only in Rom 12:7 and 15:4); and finally διδάσκαλος, *teacher*, in Paul only in Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28–29 (cf. also Eph 4:11; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11; 4:3).¹¹⁹ Dunn's contrast becomes difficult to sustain in the narrow range of examples in Romans, 1 Corinthians and Galatians, and even more difficult on the basis of a wider lexicographical survey of hellenistic sources.¹²⁰ Barrett observes, 'Presumably they [teachers] were mature Christians who instructed others in the meaning and moral implications of the Christian faith (cf. Gal. 6:6); possibly (as some think) they expounded the Christian meaning of the OT.'¹²¹ Fee comments that 'all attempts to define this ministry from the Pauline perspective are less than convincing since the evidence is so meagre.'¹²² [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1016.]

of ἀντιλήψεις here is defining various expressions of administrative support or help.⁵⁷ The community of be-

⁵⁷“There are three clear choices in the translation and meaning of the word in 12:28. Either it means (i) helpful deeds (as in BAGD and Dunn) in the most vague and general sense; or it means (ii) the help and support for those in need traditionally associated in later church history with the ministry of deacons (as in Grimm-Thayer, Chrysostom, Calvin, Meyer, Heinrici, and Lange) (but against J. N. Collins); or (iii) its context in the rhetorical function of body means support in the sense in which in modern cultures we speak of support staff, i.e., in the plural kinds of administrative support (as, in effect, Robertson and Plummer). In actual practice this was broadly (pace J. N. Collins) the work of the seven appointed to serve (διακονεῖν) in Acts 6:2–6. The Twelve express the wish to devote themselves to preaching and to prayer while the church set aside seven with Greek names to support or assist the apostles, partly (with J. N. Collins) for mission, but also (against J. N. Collins) to administer the funds set aside for the support of Aramaic-speaking and Greek-speaking widows in the earliest organizational development witnessed in Acts (on Collins, see above under 12:5 and 5–11). In our judgment this gift is coupled with κυβερνήσεις exactly because both concern practical administrative tasks essential in any concept of the body as both a sociopolitical and a theological entity. Margaret Mitchell makes this point forcefully for κυβερνήσεις.

“Dunn follows BAGD’s meaning helpful deeds, but rejects administration on the grounds that it presupposes that all too soon the churches had become ‘administrative structures.’¹³³ But the development of the church in Acts 6:1–6 shows how all too readily an issue about whether funds were fairly administered arises from the very first, and the apostles concede that they are too busy with ‘the real work’ to be sidetracked into administration (!). Even if this is treated (with Conzelmann and Haenchen) as a mere later ‘reading back,’ anyone familiar with the funding and management of even the smallest, most informal, most ‘charismatic’ group throws up questions about ‘what was agreed’ or how we go about ‘implementing what was decided.’ It is unthinkable that Corinth as a church needed no infrastructure within weeks of its coming into being, and that those who are willing and able to organize such matters fairly and efficiently are among the most necessary kinds of help which both church and leaders need and which certainly require special gifts or *χαρίσματα* of the Spirit. Thus Robertson and Plummer rightly urge that this gift of ‘general management’ belongs with the next, and Conzelmann renders ‘administration.’¹³⁴

“Finally, the second meaning, advocated by Grimm-Thayer, Chrysostom, and Meyer, should certainly be included within the third, and Chrysostom provides an unexpected link with recent sociological scholarship. Stating that ‘to help the weak’ is certainly a gift of God, Chrysostom instantiates the support of a patron (προστατικὸν εἶναι).¹³⁵ The nouns *προστάτης* and *προστάτις* cover the range of helper, protector, patron, and patroness. Such a person, Moulton-Milligan show, is often an officeholder in many references among the papyri, and certainly combines help with patronage.¹³⁶ Perhaps Paul is here saying not only that good management skills are a gift of the Spirit, but also that those who could support people or work as patrons had a God-given task, as long as (like the other gifts, including prophets and tongues) the gift was not abused and used for self rather than for others.¹³⁷ Heinrici sums up the matter: God’s gift provides the wisdom, ability, and power to give the needed assistance.¹³⁸ Here any notion that every charisma must be ‘spontaneous’ reaches its greatest height of absurdity.”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*:

lievers always needs folks skilled in organizing things.

Then comes κυβερνήσεις with its translation challenges as well.⁵⁸ In the background of this term stands

A Commentary on the Greek Text, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1019–1021.]

⁵⁸“Finally, we translate κυβερνήσεις as **the ability to formulate strategies**. To be sure, κυβερνήσεις in the singular often means leadership. Collins understands the term to denote *leaders* with ‘some kind of directive activity.’¹³⁹ Hence the plural, *forms of leadership* (NRSV), is broadly acceptable on grounds of Greek lexicography and reflects AV/KJV’s and RV’s *governments*. But is this translation sufficiently context-specific, given the nuances of the word in various texts? One aspect, namely the one discussed under (f), is expressed by NIV’s *administration*, and it is useful, if not entirely adequate, to find this component underlined in the NIV. It is utterly without warrant for Fee to comment that ‘administration skills’ ... is probably a far cry from what Paul had in mind.¹⁴⁰ Again, the more a person longs to preach and to teach, the more conscious he or she becomes of the need for others to give structural support (e.g., who will ‘follow up’ what events, and when, and has it been done?) however primitive the structures or small the community.

“Fee is entirely correct to point out, however, that the additional nuance of steersman or pilot is important (cf. Acts 27:11; Rev 18:17), with the emphasis on guidance (Prov 1:5; 11:14; 24:6, LXX).¹⁴¹ Collins calls it ‘a nautical metaphor.’¹⁴² But Margaret Mitchell calls attention to an aspect of this point which Fee leaves aside. The term, she agrees, ‘is a common metaphor for rulership in antiquity,’ but in the context of a rhetoric of concord there comes into prominence ‘the ship captain and his task to keep a ship afloat’ amid rocks and shallows of ‘factionalism.’¹⁴³ Here she draws especially on the research of E. Hilgert.¹⁴⁴ Plato appeals to the role of the pilot or helmsman alongside his body rhetoric in *The Republic* on the harmony of the city-state.¹⁴⁵ Dio Chrysostom notes that by the latter half of the first century the image of the κυβερνήτης or steersman had become a topos, or standard example in rhetoric, in appeals for unity and concord.¹⁴⁶ Dio himself uses the analogy of a failed attempt by a leader to bring about sociopolitical harmony with the work of an inept pilot (κεβερνήτης).¹⁴⁷ Mitchell compares application of κυβερνήσεις in 1 Cor 12:28 to directing ‘the ship of state’ in such a way that its ‘governance structure’ keeps it from falling apart or foundering.¹⁴⁸

“This is based on more solid research than the pejorative judgment about ‘administration’ which we have noted above. It has nothing to do with more modern individualist notions of ‘seeking personal guidance,’ and it is more specific than ‘leadership.’ It refers to the ability to formulate strategies which will pilot the ship of the community through the choppy waters of strife and status-seeking within, and dangers and potential persecutions without. It is a gift for strategic statesmanship to see the larger picture (the pilot’s charts) and to use pastoral sensitivity to ‘steer through’ the sins and follies which threaten shipwreck of any church community from time to time. This combines Conzelmann’s ‘administration’ with H. W. Beyer’s interpretation of the word in this verse as ‘gifts which qualify a Christian to be a helmsman to his congregation, i.e., a true director of its order and therewith of its life.... No society can exist without some order and direction.’¹⁴⁹ Weiss also speaks of ‘order,’ but the term strategy better combines piloting and leadership.¹⁵⁰ Again, there is no thought of ‘spontaneous’ guidance. As Lange observes, ‘The quality of a gift of the Spirit

the idea of a ship's captain who possesses navigational skills sufficient to keep the ship afloat especially in stormy seas. The plural form here underscores various expressions of such guidance skills. The pair of terms ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις, listed together and distinctly from the other items, stresses individuals in the house church groups who possessed divine insight into organizing and leading the group through any set of difficulties that might come along. These skills are not the exclusive possession of the group leaders, the πρεσβύτεροι.

The sets of rhetorical questions in vv. 29-30 underscore the same principle of diversity as stressed in the analogy in vv. 14-19:

- 29 μὴ πάντες ἀπόστολοι;
μὴ πάντες προφῆται;
μὴ πάντες διδάσκαλοι;
μὴ πάντες δυνάμεις;
30 μὴ πάντες χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων;
μὴ πάντες γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν;
μὴ πάντες διερμηνεύουσιν;
29 Are all apostles?
Are all prophets?
Are all teachers?
Do all work miracles?
30 Do all possess gifts of healing?
Do all speak in tongues?
Do all interpret?

The inadequacy of the above NRSV translation is apparent when viewed with the Greek text. These are not open ended questions as the NRSV might imply. The use of μὴ with each question underscores the idea that **not all are ---, are they?** Paul expects his readers to agree that not all have the same grace endowment from God. That is, great diversity in the life of the church is obviously present. Notice also some randomness in the selection of the items. Especially that ἀντιλήμψεις, κυβερνήσεις above are missing here, and that διερμηνεύουσιν is added here but not listed above. His emphasis on unity-in-diversity is reaffirmed, but with the idea of the uniform value of all the endowments since they all come from God to the believers.⁵⁹

depends for Paul not on its coming from some ecstatic form, but on its source from God's Spirit and grace and its function of serving.¹⁵¹ The Spirit gives 'practical insight' especially for 'the inner life of the community' (Heinrici).¹⁵²

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1021-1022.]

⁵⁹“Witherington draws on Dale Martin’s helpful work to bring the chapter to a forceful conclusion. He writes: ‘It takes all kinds of parts to make up a body. To think otherwise is to criticize God, because, as v. 18 indicates, it is God who has placed the various members in the body.... No particular body member can devalue another or declare it to be of no worth.... D. B. Martin rightly con-

One point that should be obvious in these listings is that no one item to one person is intended by Paul at all. His own ministry exemplifies the use of most of these divine endowments at different times in his own ministry. God may choose to cluster numerous items in one person, while granting just one or two to others. This is clearly Paul’s underlying assumption here. His point is clear. Inside the community of believers God grants His blessings in sufficient variety to all members so that with each member contributing the work of the Gospel can advance. And even more importantly, no single item or small group of items have greater value and importance than the rest. Here was the downfall of the Corinthian community. They followed human wisdom that prioritized these items with a lot of emphasis upon the supposed superiority that came with some of the items. Paul counters with God’s wisdom that places equal value upon each item and see each one as a divine endowment given by His sovereign choice. Thus the common benefit to the entire community is the important aspect.

In verse 31, Paul ends this part of the discussion with an admonition and a promise: ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα. Καὶ ἔτι καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι. **But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.**

The admonition seems at first glance to contradict the emphasis on the equal value of each endowment from God. But rhetorically, the apostle closes with an admonition that resonated well in the ears of the Corinthian elites: **seek the greater gifts.** But his promise signals that the ‘greater gifts’ were not anything like what these elites in the church anticipated.⁶⁰

cludes that Paul’s use of body imagery is at variance with the usual use.... Paul uses it to relativize the sense of importance of those of higher status, making them see the importance and necessity of the weaker, lower status Corinthian Christians ... the ‘less presentable’ members.¹⁵⁴ But to see the point fully, we must bear in mind that in 4:1-13 it emerges clearly that for the Corinthians ‘high status’ gifts were the triumphalist ones of exultation and visible, demonstrative ‘success’; the apostles were ‘dirt,’ struggling in the arena while the Corinthians sat in seats of honor and watched their bloodied humiliation.¹⁵⁵ Is it exultation in the Spirit or humiliation with Christ which identifies Christ’s body? Is it self-edification or edification of others? Only when Paul has reflected on the meaning of love for the other (12:31-13:13) and applied it to the assembled church (14:1-40) will he then go on to show the timing and nature of true ‘spirituality’ and of triumphant victory in the Spirit (15:1-58). Even 15:58 returns to ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν, which is οὐ κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1023-1024.]

⁶⁰“We noted above the arguments of Collins for viewing 12:27-31a as a rhetorical unit, with v. 31b beginning the argument of ch. 13. However, the most significant study of this important

	13.10	δὲ	ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον,
545			τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται.
	13.11		ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος,
546			ἐλάλουν
			ὡς νήπιος,
547			ἐφρόνουν
			ὡς νήπιος,
548			ἐλογιζόμην
			ὡς νήπιος·
			ὅτε γέγονα ἀνήρ,
549			κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.
	13.12		γὰρ
550			βλέπομεν
			ἄρτι
			δι' ἐσόπτρου
			ἐν αἰνίγματι,
			δὲ
			τότε
551			(βλέψομεν) πρόσωπον
			πρὸς πρόσωπον·
			ἄρτι
552			γινώσκω
			ἐκ μέρους,
			δὲ
			τότε
553			ἐπιγνώσσομαι
			καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.
	13.13		δὲ
			Νυνὶ
554			μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη,
			τὰ τρία ταῦτα·
			δὲ
555			μείζων τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη.
556	14.1		Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην,
			δὲ
557			ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά,
			δὲ
			μᾶλλον
558			(ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά)
			ἵνα προφητεῦητε.

The very short, concise statements that dominate the expressions after the first three introductory declarations (#s 521-523), are more compacted than the usual writing pattern for First Corinthians, although a comparison of the entire document in [block diagram](#) reflects a general preference for shorter, more Hebraistic thought expressions than for longer Hellenistic style expressions.⁶¹ Unanswerable is how much this is due to Paul and how much of it reflects the style of his writing secretary.

What the above diagram dramatically visualizes are

⁶¹A comparison of [the block diagrams](#) just of Galatians and 1-2 Thessalonians with 1 Corinthians graphically illustrates this distinctive difference in the Corinthian letter.

the repetitive patterns inside the passage: the lengthy ἐάν clauses with the negative apodosis in the declarations #s 521-523; the two positive affirmations (#s 524-525) followed by the series of negative affirmations (#s 526-532); the contrastive pair in #s 533-534) followed by the series of πάντα declarations (#s 535-538); the four contrastives on the strength of love (#s 539-542) followed by the series of justifying declarations introduced by γὰρ (#s 543-545); the comparison between childhood and adulthood (#s 546-549) followed by a series of justifying declarations (#s 550-553); and concluded with a return to the permanence of love (#s. 554-555). The literary craftsmanship here is outstanding.

Surely this caught the attention of the Corinthians knowledgers who felt Paul inferior to them and their understanding of spiritual reality. By demonstrating his commanding knowledge of the Greek of his day, his case for the superiority of love over personal rights gained added persuasiveness. One can deeply love God and others, and be highly intelligent at the same time!

How to properly group these sets of declarations is another challenge. The paragraphing patterns of most translations see a threefold pattern: vv. 1-3, 4-7, and 8-13. But as the block diagram illustrates, one should be very cautious about this, for the transition points are not nearly so well marked as the threefold outline might imply. For example, the first declaration of #521 functions primarily as an introductory topic sentence setting the tone for the entire passage. But the threefold use of ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω clearly links 521 to 522-523. Also the couplet expression in #s 533-534 (v. 6) both concludes the previous set and just as importantly sets up the following series (#s 535-538). The clearest thematic shift surfaces in #539 with its emphasis on the lasting quality of love in contrast to knowledge etc. But #s 539-553 represent a mixture of themes woven together rather than a single theme being developed. The bottom line is that the content of chapter thirteen will not naturally fit into a post Enlightenment kind of outline. It is first century thinking, not twenty-first century thought. How to best preserve that first century mind to a twenty-first century audience is the real dilemma here.

Let's take each distinctive grammar set one by one and see better what Paul is trying to communicate.

vv. 1-3, 1 Ἐάν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχῳ ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. 2 καὶ ἐάν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ ἐάν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναί, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, οὐθέν εἰμι. 3 κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἐάν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχῆσωμαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω,

οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι. 1 If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

By using the third class condition sentence in which the protasis sets up a possible but not likely to happen scenario. Three such inner related scenarios are set up:

The protasis, pt. 1:

Ἐὰν ταῖς γλώσσαις τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαλῶ καὶ τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω,... If with the tongues of men I speak and of angels, but love I do not possess....

καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω προφητείαν καὶ εἰδῶ τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν καὶ ἐὰν ἔχω πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάναί, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, And if I have prophesy skills and I know all mysteries and all knowledge and if I possessed faith so that I could move mountains, but love I do not possess....

κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχῆσωμαι, ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω, and if I give away all my possessions and if I give my body so that I can boast, but love I do not possess...

The three scenarios present first what seemed to be a major issue at Corinth: speaking with human eloquence as a mark of superiority and, even better, speaking with such eloquence so as to seem angelic. Whether the issue here is glossalalia or not is doubtful. Paul may possibly be hinting at such but his main focus is upon human eloquence of speaking that is taken as a indication of superiority. This is the very opposite of Paul's presentation of the Gospel at Corinth as he states in 2:1, Κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἦλθον οὐ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας καταγγέλλων ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. But these kinds of supposed marks of superiority were what the elites at Corinth put greatest value on.

The second scenario is related with its emphasis upon possessing προφητείαν, preaching skills; τὰ μυστήρια πάντα καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γνῶσιν, knowledge of all mysteries and of all understanding; πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν possession of faith sufficient to move mountains. Connected to extraordinary communication skills is also extraordinary insight and understanding of spiritual reality coupled with outstanding levels of commitment to God. Here is emphasized the source of understanding that provides the content for the outstanding communication.

The third scenario centers on exceptional self-

sacrifice that would be the validation of the other two scenarios: κἂν ψωμίσω πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μου καὶ ἐὰν παραδῶ τὸ σῶμά μου ἵνα καυχῆσωμαι, and if I give away all my possessions and if I hand over my body so that I can boast.... Here is extraordinary religious devotion within the Jewish / Christian framework of benevolence and willingness to suffer martyrdom. Such concrete actions of religious commitment would be viewed as ultimate validation of genuine devotion to God.

In these three scenarios Paul pictures the supposedly ideal believer, at least ideal in the minds of many at Corinth. Outstanding communication skills, extraordinary spiritual insight, and unselfish commitment to others and to God. What more could the community ask for in its quest to be deeply spiritual?

The protasis, pt. 2: ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω is the common contrastive aspect of each scenario. In light of the earlier axiom, ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, knowledge puffs up but love builds up (8:1), Paul dramatically calls attention to the one missing element that nullifies the spiritual value of all these extraordinary abilities. The problem in these three pictures is centered on the individual believer achieving recognition as being superior because of what he possesses. What is missing is genuine devotion to others and to God.

The use of ἀγάπη for love by Paul is very intentional.⁶² At its heart is an unselfish giving to benefit others. The Corinthian elites did not understand or accept the core premise of ἀγάπη. But for Paul, all of the extraor-

⁶²“At least two themes determine a distinctive theological emphasis which the word itself carries in 13:1–13. First, love represents ‘the power of the new age’ breaking into the present, ‘the only vital force which has a future.’⁴⁰ Love is that quality which distinctively stamps the life of heaven, where regard and respect for the other dominates the character of life with God as the communion of saints and heavenly hosts. The theologian may receive his or her redundancy notice; the prophet may have nothing to say which everyone else does not already know; but love abides as the character of heavenly, eschatological existence.

“Second, as we have noted, love (ἀγάπη) denotes above all a stance or attitude which shows itself in acts of will as regard, respect, and concern for the welfare of the other. It is therefore profoundly christological, for the cross is the paradigm case of the act of will and stance which places welfare of others above the interests of the self. Here Moltmann and Jüngel rightly relate this to the self-giving grace of the cruciform, Christomorphic God. We cannot read the Johannine ‘God is love’ onto Paul, but in fact it is already there in Paul, and the biblical exegete has no need to compromise the distinctive witness of each biblical source or tradition. It lies at the heart of Paul’s theology of grace, and hence by means of these considerations Nygren’s points carry indirect weight for 13:1–13. Nygren’s work has particular value for the emphasis of v. 5 (see below).”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1035.]

dinary accomplishments defined in the three scenarios have no value for Christians when ἀγάπη doesn't stand behind and underneath them. For pagans yes, but for believers no. The phony wisdom gained from the surrounding world had completely misled these Corinthians church members. But with profoundly eloquent words Paul seeks to correct them with true wisdom from God.

The apodosis: Each scenario (=protasis) has a conclusion labeled an apodosis.

γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχῳν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. **I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.**

οὐθέν εἰμι. **I am nothing.**

οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι. **I gain nothing.**

Each conclusion is appropriate to the thrust of the scenario, but all three reach the same essential conclusion that without ἀγάπη all the skills and accomplishments humanly possible have no value before God.

With the first scenario emphasizing extraordinary communication skills the conclusion takes on a special irony bordering on sarcasm.⁶³ The language of χαλκὸς

⁶³“Every word of the entire clause which makes up the apodosis of the conditional provides much interest: γέγονα χαλκὸς ἤχῳν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον. The general sense is clear enough: ‘No matter how exalted my gift of tongues, without love I am nothing more than a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. This value judgement is meant to be shocking.... It is not the gift of tongues that is only a resounding gong ... but I, myself’ (Carson).⁴² But each word or phrase invites detailed comment.

χαλκὸς ἤχῳν is the subject of a research article by W. Harris under the title “‘Sounding Brass’ and Hellenistic Technology.”⁴³ Harris discusses the phenomenon of acoustic resonance systems to which Vitruvius alludes in his work *On Architecture* (c. 30 BC). Material of bronze (χαλκός) was constructed in such a way as to amplify sound by functioning as an acoustic resonator or resonating acoustic jar, rather than as some kind of musical instrument or gong. Hence ἤχῳν means sounding in the sense of sound producing: not of pitching a sound. This matches uses of ἠχέω to mean not to pitch sound, but to transmit and to resonate sound, e.g., the roar of the sea or thunder. Paul uses the continuous present participle (Himerius, *Orations* 40; Ps 45:4, LXX; cf. the noun ἠχῶ, sound, in Wis 17:18).⁴⁴ ἠχῳν therefore does not make ἀλαλάζον redundant, but conveys the notion of endlessly continuing resonances which have no musical pitch.

“Vitruvius, Harris demonstrates, speaks of resonating jars or bronze vases, which were placed in niches around the periphery of an auditorium. Such a system seems to have operated at Corinth in the second century BC, although the Roman governor Lucius Mummius later had them removed and sold to raise public funds. Harris concludes that whether or not the Corinthians replaced ‘the acoustic amplifying system,’ Paul’s readers would know of resonating acoustic bronze jars used to project the voices of actors on stage and music.⁴⁵

“William W. Klein supports and develops Harris’s view, against virtually all the standard translations and commentaries.⁴⁶ *Noisy gong* occurs in NRSV, NASB, Goodspeed, and Moffatt, while *gong* is found with a different adjective (resounding gong) in NIV, and (*gong booming*) in NJB. Neither *clanging bronze* (Barrett) nor *blaring brass* (Phillips) conveys the primary notion of

resonance, although Knox’s *echoing bronze* comes near, and AV/KJV’s *sounding brass* (followed by Collins) is not a bad translation. Klein notes that Lenski and Grosheide view it as an instrument, and Moffatt’s suggestion that it was a gong used in pagan temples, especially in the cults of Dionysius and Cybele, has attracted wide support.⁴⁷ This last suggestion, however, has been vigorously and strenuously rejected by C. Forbes, partly with reference to Klein’s study.⁴⁸ Klein infers: (a) that we must relinquish the supposed temple context of pagan religious ecstasy; and (b) that tongues without love are still, however, merely ‘a reverberation, an empty sound coming out of a hollow, lifeless vessel.’⁴⁹

“Klein agrees with virtually all lexicographers and commentators that κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον denotes ‘a musical instrument.’⁵⁰ I can find no evidence for R. L. Laurin’s assertion that it ‘referred to metal castagnettes’ (our modern castanets); K. L. Schmidt includes an article on it in TDNT arguing for cymbal, but the word occurs only here in 13:1 within the whole of the NT.⁵¹ It derives from κύμβη, a hollow vessel or hollow dish, and denotes a shallow, metallic rounded dish, which is struck against its partner to give out a resounding note. In the LXX it translates Heb. מִצְלִיטַיִם (*metsiltaim*) from the verb צָלַל (*tsalal*) to clash, crash, clang, which verges on the onomatopoeic (mainly 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, e.g., 1 Chron 13:8). Although the AV/KJV image of a tinkling cymbal is the subject of mirth, it is just arguable that in 1 Kings 18:6 the term atypically refers to a three-cornered instrument such as a triangle, while Zech 14:20 might denote bells.⁵² For the bells of a harness might include bosses, and cymbals also could have bosses. Modern musicologists distinguish the crotal, which goes back thousands of years and is a thick metal plate, from the modern orchestral cymbal, which is of Turkish origin. The crotal had ‘a definite pitch’ and could be hit head-on (unlike the modern orchestral cymbal) or struck by a club or hammer.⁵³ This latter method may account for the singular a cymbal here. (If so, *clash*, NJB, is questionable.)

“Paul couples with κύμβαλον the adjective ἀλαλάζον. This also is onomatopoeic from the tradition of wailing loudly in lament. Like ἠχῳν it is technically a present participle of continuous action rather than an adjective. The verb ἀλαλάζω means to wail loudly in its only other occurrence in the NT (Mark 5:38). A lexicographical search reveals that, according to the occasion (and the agents?), loud noise and the action of continuous reverberating can be either majestic and splendiferous (Ps 145:4, 5, LXX), bringing together τύμπανον, probably kettle drum, and κύμβαλον, crotal or (broadly) cymbal, with ἀλαλαγμοῦ, sonorous or intrusive, invasive and self-important (BAGD interpret the verbal form τυμπανίζω to mean ‘to torture with the τύμπανον’).⁵⁴

“This issue becomes controversial in a further recent study by T. K. Sanders, which seeks to reevaluate all previous interpretations of this verse, on the basis of the meaning of ἀλαλάζον and the work of Klein. Sanders argues that the Greek participle ἦ, (translated above and elsewhere as or) means rather than. He proposes the meaning: I have become only a resonating acoustic jar rather than a flourish of cymbals.⁵⁵ Sanders accepts and defends the empty, noisy, negative character of mere resonating acoustic jar. But he rejects the view that ἀλαλάζω refers in most cases to a loud wailing: ‘the interpretation of κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον as discordant cacophony is inconsistent with the discriminating tastes of antiquity.’⁵⁶ He therefore turns his attention away from the two pairs of adjectives and nouns to explore ἦ as ‘a particle denoting comparison,’ which is ‘equivalent to the English ‘than.’⁵⁷ He concedes that either *or* or *than* is in theory a possible translation, but concludes that since κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον is more likely to denote ‘a sound which was

ἤχῳν ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον clearly alluded to the ecstatic speech of the temple priests and priestesses in their supposed taking with deity in the language of the deity. These musical instruments and sounds were an integral part of this ritual in virtually every temple in Corinth. What to the pagan worshipper was a good sound is for the believer a Christian practice covering over paganism at its core. This is the case with extraordinary eloquence in communication whether in human languages -- Paul's main point here -- or whether the phony claim to communicating with God in non-human language.

The second apodosis in v. 2, οὐθέν εἰμι, I am noth-

pleasant to Paul's readers,' than is the obvious 'solution' to speculations about χαλκός and ἀλαλάζον.⁵⁸ The cry ἀλαλαί, he urges, appears in the LXX as one of joy and enthusiasm (e.g., when the walls of Jericho fall, Josh 6:20; when David triumphs, 1 Kings 17:24; cf. Ps 42:2; 65:1; 80:2; 97:4, 6). This accounts for the translation proposed by Collins: I have become sounding brass rather than a resounding cymbal, with the latter viewed as a metaphor 'for harmonious sound.'⁵⁹

"The argument of Todd Sanders is innovative and ingenious and deserves respect. He uses Hatch-Redpath, Josephus, other sources, and works on music in the ancient world.⁶⁰ But his thesis fails to take adequate account of three factors and a fourth consideration. First, the Graeco-Roman converts who prized 'wisdom,' 'speech,' 'rhetoric,' and social position, even though many spoke with tongues and all were exposed to the OT as the church's scripture, would be unlikely to regard the crash of cymbals as the height of their ambition. To be sure, they are triumphalist (4:8), but to build the rhetorical focus of a carefully designed didactic poem on an introductory contrast between acoustic bronze and reverberating cymbals, even celebratory, festal, 'good' cymbals, hardly accords with the rhetorical and lyric weight of all the other images and contrasts. Second, what is majestic and impressive in one context (especially, as we noted above, the louder cymbals and kettle drums) becomes, as the lexicographers rightly have it, 'torture' in another context. When the Queen opens the Church of England General Synod in Westminster Abbey, one's spirit may soar with the decibels of the organ's thunder, while the same level of decibels would for some be sheer torture coming from a local amateur music group. To identify 'good' contexts does not mean that noise is always good. Third, to interpose a logical disjunction of a reflective nature in one line of this rhythmic stanza places too much cognitive weight on a supposed pause in the flow.

"The alternative proposed by Harris and Klein leaves no difficulty. For the fourth factor is that to which D. A. Carson drew our attention (noted above).⁶¹ Paul is not simply saying that if love is absent, tongues are hollow and mere noise. He is suggesting that in cases where a tongues speaker might be without love in his or her lifestyle, the persons themselves would have become merely a resonating jar or a reverberating cymbal.⁶² The perfect tense γέγονεν in place of an expected future suggests: 'look at what such a person would have become.' Empty, noisy reverberations go on and on. In Yorkshire idiom in the north of England, they are 'now't but wind and rattle.'"

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1035–1039.]

ing, stands in contrast to these extraordinary possessions of knowledge and faith. To have such skills without ἀγάπη nullifies all of these skills.

The third apodosis in v. 3, οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι, I gain nothing, appropriately nullifies both the extreme benevolence and self-sacrifice of the individual when such actions are not motivated by and founded on ἀγάπη.

Thus with brilliant eloquence Paul challenges profoundly the worldly wisdom of the Corinthian elites who left ἀγάπη out of their Christian life.

Vv. 4-5. 4 Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ, [ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται, 5 οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, 4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

Even though vv. 4-7 is comprised of a single Greek sentence, this compound sentence has several groupings internally. The organization of the first two sets is visible via a block diagram:

524	^{13.4} Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ,
525	χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη,
526	οὐ ζηλοῖ,
527	[ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται,
528	οὐ φυσιοῦται,
529	^{13.5} οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ,
530	οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς,
531	οὐ παροξύνεται,
532	οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν,

Declarations 524-525 are positive while 526-532 are uniformly negative. The textual evidence for including [ἡ ἀγάπη] in # 527 is only slightly compelling with strong mss evidence for omitting it; thus the [] to indicate uncertainty.⁶⁴

The pair of positive affirmations about ἀγάπη stress its enduring and compassionate aspects. One should note that the qualities set forth here are done as action verbs in the Greek but mostly translated as passive adjectival traits. Important meaning is lost in this way fo

⁶⁴Evidence for omitting: B 33. 104. 629. 1175. 2464 lat sa boms; Cl Ambst

Evidence for including: (P⁴⁶) ⋈ A C D F G K L Ψ 048. 0243. 81. 365. 630. 1241. 1505. 1739. 1881 M sy

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 543.]

translating the original text.

Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ means simply **Love endures**. That is, ἀγάπη stands over the long picture. It is not momentary, spasmodic, or hit and miss. χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη means **Love shows kindness**. It's action in expression rather than just an attitude. Also notice the literary device for bundling these two qualities together as a unit:

**Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ,
χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη,**

The next series lists off things that love does not do. These are not listed in any particular sequence or order.

οὐ ζηλοῖ, Love does not express envy or jealousy. That is, it is sincerely interested in others.

[ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται, Love does not go about bragging and boasting of its own importance and accomplishment.

οὐ φυσιοῦται, Love does not puff itself up with an exaggerated claim of personal importance. This figurative expression gets at the idea of arrogance.

οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, Love does not behave itself unseemly. Positively speaking, it minds its manners. It never 'pushes the envelope' just to show that it can. The English translation "rude" is only a part of the idea.

οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, Love does not center its attention on itself and what it can do. This has some connection to the first item, οὐ ζηλοῖ, via the linkage of the two verbs ζηλώω and ζητέω.

οὐ παροξύνεται, Love does not allow itself to be provoked or irritated by others. It remains calm and under control.

οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, Love does not keep count of evil actions done against it, looking for an opportunity to get revenge.

Both the positive and the negative qualities of ἀγάπη address huge failures of the Corinthians. The factions, the elitest attitudes etc. addressed by Paul in the church reflect a gross failure to understand the true nature of ἀγάπη. The pagan wisdom which some in the church were still working off of considered most of these qualities to be signs of weakness and inferiority rather than strength and superiority. But their worldly wisdom had deceived them severely.

Vv. 6-7. 6 οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· 7 πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει. 6 **it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.** 7 **It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

This latter part of the sentence continues the general thrust of the first part. But Paul does something here in v. 6 that has parallelism with other transition points in the passage, namely v. 4, 8, 11.

Here this antithetical pair in v. 6 close out the nega-

tives and set up another set of positives:

533 ^{13.6} οὐ χαίρει
ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ,
δὲ
534 συγχαίρει τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·

First, οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, finishes out the negatives with **Love does not rejoice at evil actions**. It finds no pleasure with evil actions taking place. Second, the opposite typifies ἀγάπη: συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, **Instead Love rejoices together with Truth**.

Here one must remember the biblical definition of truth in contradiction to the modern idea with its Aristotelian roots. The pagan idea of ἀλήθεια is first of all an abstraction which sees consistency between ideas A and B. This consistency constitutes truth. Biblically, however, ἀλήθεια is God and what flows from His being and actions, as Jhn 14:6 clearly sets forth. Human actions that match those of God are true. If they don't match, then they are false and constitute ἀμαρτία. Thus ἀλήθεια in the wisdom of God is dynamical, interactional, and personal.

Thus Paul uses συγχαίρει denoting shared rejoicing between two individuals. Now what actions etc. can God and the believer with ἀγάπη rejoice together over? The four qualities in v. 7 provide a listing of shared rejoicing:

πάντα στέγει, **Love endures all things**. Both God and the believer in ἀγάπη put up with all kinds of nonsense and hostility. Love in its endurance reflects God's love.

πάντα πιστεύει, **Love shows confidence in others**. Both God and the believer in ἀγάπη express a basic confidence in others. Here again ἀγάπη at work in the believer reflects God's ἀγάπη by seeing the 'glass half full' rather than 'half empty' in the lives of others. It in no way implies naivety, but instead denotes a fundamental respect for the worth and value of others.

πάντα ἐλπίζει, **Love is completely confident**. The idea of ἐλπίζω is confidence in things to come. Both God and the believer in ἀγάπη possess complete confidence in things to come, since all things lay under God's control and are planned out in advance.

πάντα ὑπομένει. **Love holds up under the load of all things**. The idea of ὑπομένω and στέγω at the beginning is very close. This serves to make the first and last traits something of book ends to the listing. Both God and the believer in ἀγάπη possess the strength to endure the weight of all things that put pressure upon us.

Quite marvelously then in ἀγάπη we can rejoice together with God in all things that are encountered in life on this planet. And this divine quality about ἀγάπη lays

the foundation for the affirmations that follow.

Vv. 8-10. 8 Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει· εἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνώσις, καταργηθήσεται. 9 ἐκ μέρους γὰρ γινώσκομεν καὶ ἐκ μέρους προφητεύομεν· 10 ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται. 8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. 9 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 10 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

Again, in v. 8 Paul somewhat follows the pattern of v. 6 with a positive followed by negatives:

539	^{13.8} Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει· δὲ εἴτε προφητεῖαι,
540	καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλῶσσαι,
541	παύσονται· εἴτε γνώσις,
542	καταργηθήσεται.

The contrast is between the permanency of ἀγάπη in distinction to the temporary nature of the three other items: προφητεῖαι, γλῶσσαι, and γνώσις. All three are limited to earth bound experience and have no role to play in Heaven through eternity. This stands in stark contrast to ἀγάπη which stands in place throughout eternity. Notice in the diagram the cleaver way that special emphasis is placed on the limitations of προφητεῖαι, γλῶσσαι, and γνώσις (#s 540-542) over against ἀγάπη (#539) by the unusual grammar structure used by Paul here.

The idea of πίπτει is literally to fall down. Figuratively, the derivative idea which is the use here, carries the idea of failing and collapsing in weakness and lack of substance. Thus ἀγάπη as a dynamic presence of God shaping our posture toward others will stand up and last as long as God does! This point is underscored with the emphatic negative οὐδέποτε with the English language force of ‘never ever.’

In dramatic contrast, however, stand the three items of προφητεῖαι, γλῶσσαι, and γνώσις. προφητεῖαι καταργηθήσονται, prophecies will come to nothing. That is, they will become completely irrelevant and of no value. Why? First, because προφητεῖαι are a glimpse not into the future but into the heavenly order and provide morals with glimpses of who God is and what He does. When we move into the eternal order at the end of time, such glimpses will be replaced with face to face encounter with God. No need then for προφητεῖαι!

In the same manner γλῶσσαι, παύσονται, tongues will cease. In the eternal order, all those in Heaven will speak God’s language in communicating with Him directly, rather than through revelation from Him to those

on earth.⁶⁵ No need for English, Spanish, German, Chinese et als. in Heaven.⁶⁶ We will be outfitted in the resurrection body with the language of God in Heaven which all believers in Heaven will possess. Just one language in Heaven, which completely reverses the tower of Babel experience in Gen. 11:1-9. Notice especially v. 1, “Now the whole earth had one language and the same words,” and v. 7, “Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.”

Just as knowledge, the lack thereof, in Gen. 1:7 was an issue in this early period, the need of experiential based understanding about God will come to an end as well: γνώσις καταργηθήσεται. We will be directly

⁶⁵“Tongues will evaporate as readily as tears when a resurrection σῶμα allows the believer to come face to face with God without the limitations and hidden conflicts of the mode of this present life in its earthly σῶμα. There is no need for them to be brought to an end; their cause will have disappeared. Interpersonal communication represented by the term language (singular) in contrast to either languages (plural) or glossolalia is not said to cease at the eschaton.¹⁸¹” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1061–1062.]

⁶⁶“Reformation, post-Reformation, and modern theology have tended to obscure the major thrust of Paul’s concern by imposing two questions onto Paul’s agenda which he did not envisage. Calvin discusses the difficulty caused by some writers in the medieval Western tradition who attempt to appeal to this verse to legitimize the notion that the departed saints pray for the present living.¹⁸² If love is permanent and eschatological, they argue, the concern of those who have died for those who follow them remains active. But huge assumptions about the logic of time and postmortal consciousness prior to the resurrection and last judgment are to be made if this inference is to be drawn, as Calvin implies. In particular I have endeavored elsewhere to develop Gilbert Ryle’s distinction between the logic of the participant (first-person logic) and the logic of the observer (third-person logic) in ways which apply to this issue.¹⁸³ In first-person terms Paul states elsewhere that to be with Christ is the believer’s ‘next’ experience after death (Phil 1:23); but in terms of third-person ‘observer’ logic, i.e., in terms of cosmic, not existential, description, the dead achieve raised awareness when, like a sleeping army, they are awakened by the last trumpet (1 Cor 15:52). The sleeping army is raised to its feet. The permanence of love hardly addresses the issues of prayers by or for the departed.

“Similarly, if it be tongues, these will cease hardly addresses the debate between Reformed and neo-Pentecostalist writers about ‘tongues will cease’ after the close of the canon or at a given stage of individual or historical maturity. Here Paul states that, like prophetic preaching and ‘knowledge,’ they will become redundant at the last day. As Carson observes, too much discussion of this issue directs us away from Paul’s main point.¹⁸⁴ This issue must be determined on other grounds than exegetical discussions of this verse.”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1062.]

in His presence with no limitations on our understanding of Him imposed by the former earth bound existence.

In vv. 9-10 a rationale (γὰρ) for these declarations is given by Paul

	13.9	γὰρ	
		ἐκ μέρους	
543		γινώσκωμεν	
		καὶ	
		ἐκ μέρους	
544		προφητεύομεν ·	
	13.10	δὲ	
		ὅταν ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον,	
545		τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται.	

Notice the 1-2-3 sequence and that γλῶσσαι, considered less important, is omitted by Paul. The omission also comes due to the illogic of ἐκ μέρους, *in part*, being applied to γλῶσσαι, as opposed to a clear logical connection to both γινώσκωμεν / γνώσις and προφητεύομεν / προφητεῖαι. Additionally the first and the last of the previous declarations are governed by καταργηθήσεται, the same verb used in v. 10.

In the first two declarations (# 543-544), the limitation of knowing God and receiving revelations from Him in this earthly life are given as the basis for their coming to an end. When that terminus point is reached is defined by the indefinite temporal clause ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, *but whenever the end may come*. Clearly he is talking about the end of human history and the ushering in of the eternal order of things. Note that he doesn't speculate about when this may happen. Putting a date on it is irrelevant. Knowing with certainty that it is going to happen in God's timing is the critical point. Thus when that moment occurs, προφητεῖαι, γλῶσσαι, and γνώσις will become irrelevant and no more be needed by God's people.

Vv. 11-12. 11 ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος, ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος, ἐλογιζόμην ὡς νήπιος· ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου. 12 βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην. 11 *When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.* 12 *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.*

Again the literary structure of declaration (v. 11) followed by a justifying statement (v. 12; γὰρ) follows the same literary pattern as in vv. 8-10.

The initial declaration is set up differently, however. The compound sentence introduces a contrast between childhood and adulthood with two definite tem-

	13.11	ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος,
546		ἐλάλουν
		ὡς νήπιος,
547		ἐφρόνουν
		ὡς νήπιος,
548		ἐλογιζόμην
		ὡς νήπιος·
		ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ,
549		κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου.
	13.12	γὰρ
550		βλέπομεν
		ἄρτι
		δι' ἐσόπτρου
		ἐν αἰνίγματι,
		δὲ
		τότε
551		(βλέψομεν) πρόσωπον
		πρὸς πρόσωπον·
		ἄρτι
552		γινώσκω
		ἐκ μέρους,
		δὲ
		τότε
553		ἐπιγνώσομαι
		καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.

poral clauses:

ὅτε ἤμην νήπιος, *when I was a child* (v. 11)

ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, *when I became an adult* (v. 12).

At this point Paul reaches back to the earlier criticism of the Corinthians in 3:1ff., *Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνους, ὡς νηπίους ἐν Χριστῷ. And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.* By this point in time they should have moved beyond spiritual infancy into spiritual mature living. But they hadn't and thus the explosion of all of the problems in the community of believers at Corinth. Central to their 'stunted' growth spiritually was their failure to grasp and apply the principle of ἀγάπη. The continued reliance on the worldly thinking and values rather than switching over to the θεοῦ σοφία had blinded them to the critical importance of ἀγάπη.

Thus Paul turns in vv. 11-12 to the personal *testimony* using the first person frame of reference to describe what every rational human being would clearly recognize about normal human life. In early childhood, which νήπιος designates, child like patterns prevailed:

ἐλάλουν ὡς νήπιος, *I was speaking like a child*

ἐφρόνουν ὡς νήπιος, *I was thinking like a child*

ἐλογιζόμην ὡς νήπιος, *I was reasoning like a child*

Such is entirely normal for a pre-school youngster. Nothing is wrong, except that the natural focus in that stage is inward and on one's own self. During that stage ἀγάπη plays very little role. At least, there is very

minimal comprehension of what it is.

But in adulthood, with ἀνὴρ alluding to a male at least in their middle to late twenties in the Greco-Roman world of Corinth and at least 30 years in Paul's Jewish heritage, to continue to function as a νήπιος would signal serious developmental problems for the individual. Thus Paul's point becomes ὅτε γέγονα ἀνὴρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου, *when I became a man I put an end to these childlike ways*. Speaking, thinking, and reasoning now must be done at an adult level.

Clearly implied in this *testimonium* is that many in the Corinthian church were still trapped in spiritual childhood level, even after three or four years of opportunity for growing into spiritual maturity. Serious problems in the church were the product of this failure to grow, as Paul has repeatedly affirmed in the various issues treated in the letter body. In the Proem of 1:4-9, Paul eloquently put before the Corinthians what was possible through spiritual growth as God intends. But it all depended upon their learning to think and function in θεοῦ σοφία, *God's wisdom*. Absolutely critical was learning the divine wisdom in the principle of ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, *knowledge puffs up but love builds up* (8:1). This had not yet happened widely among the members of the Christian community. The mildly accusatory tone of this *testimonium* would hopefully nudge them toward making this transition from σοφία τοῦ κόσμου, *worldly wisdom*, to θεοῦ σοφία, *God's wisdom*.

In the justifying (γὰρ) declarations of v. 12, the shift is made over to the first plural that becomes more inclusive of his readers: βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθη, *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known*.

The rationale here for the statements in v. 11 in particular, and in general for vv. 8-10, amplify the contrast between the 'partial' now (ἄρτι) and the 'complete' then (τότε). This was first explicitly introduced in v. 10 with ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ τὸ τέλειον, *but whenever the end may come*. To a large extent v. 12 explains the meaning of τὸ ἐκ μέρους καταργηθήσεται, *the partial will come to an end*, in v. 10b. Very important to note is the inner connectedness of Paul's thought not just through chapter thirteen, but with everything said in the letter leading up to this emphasis on ἀγάπη.⁶⁷

First is the first person plural assertion, and then following comes the first person singular assertion. Both sections in this compound sentence with four main clauses in the Greek plays of the temporal ἄρτι,

⁶⁷If Paul was using a piece of 'pre-formed Christian tradition' here in chapter thirteen as several commentators maintain, then he substantially customizes it to fit the situation at Corinth. He has clearly 'made it his own' with how the chapter is shaped.

now / τότε, then distinctions.

13.12	γὰρ
550	βλέπομεν
	ἄρτι
	δι' ἐσόπτρου
	ἐν αἰνίγματι,
	δὲ
	τότε
551	(βλέπομεν) πρόσωπον
	πρὸς πρόσωπον·
	ἄρτι
552	γινώσκω
	ἐκ μέρους,
	δὲ
	τότε
553	ἐπιγνώσομαι
	καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθη.

The dual theme of seeing (βλέπομεν) and knowing (γινώσκω / ἐπιγνώσομαι) reach back to the core emphases of προφητεῖαι, γλῶσσαι, and γνῶσις in v. 8ff. In this life we see and know spiritual reality only partially. Note that the βλέπομεν relates to both προφητεῖαι especially and γλῶσσαι also, as visionary revelation from God. This statement in particular picks up the partial emphasis on γινώσκομεν and προφητεύομεν in v. 9.

The ἐκ μέρους in v. 9 now becomes δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, *through a mirror in dimness*. The precise reference is not entirely certain in its referencing of a mirror,⁶⁸ although the application of the figure of speech

⁶⁸“Corinth was well known for the production of good quality bronze mirrors, by the standards of the day. Although Robertson and Plummer correctly observe that the custom of frequently producing concave or convex mirrors led to ‘somewhat distorted reflexion,’ nevertheless to describe the resulting image as puzzling, obscure, or enigmatic would be to overstate their relative inadequacy by modern standards.²¹² Polished bronze can offer quite reasonable images, even if, as the AV/KJV’s **darkly** suggests, a deterioration of brightness is entailed. But this does not express Paul’s main point, as Héring, Senft and Fee argue.²¹³ At best it would allow the translation indistinctly, which BAGD regard as possible.²¹⁴

“Tertullian believes that ἔσοπρον can denote a semitransparent, translucent pane of horn through which vague shapes on the other side can be perceived.²¹⁵ But ἔσοπρον normally means mirror in hellenistic Greek, and its material is polished metal, ideally polished bronze. If these mirrors yielded only puzzling reflections, it is difficult to understand why there was a lively trade for the purpose of ‘looking at one’s face in a mirror’ (Jas 1:23; cf. Josephus, Antiquities 12.81; Philo, De Migratione Abrahami 98).²¹⁶ On the other hand, BAGD’s inclusion of indistinct means ‘soft focus.’ Barrett, Conzelmann, and others, however, retain the notion of obscure or enigmatic knowledge not on the basis of the properties of Corinthian bronze mirrors, but on that of a probable allusion to Num 12:8 in which God speaks clearly to Moses (LXX, ἐν εἶδει) but to others through riddles, or through obscure or enigmatic words (δι’ αἰνιγμάτων).²¹⁷ Conzelmann, Spicq, and Fishbane go further, detecting a wordplay in the Hebrew behind the Greek where

in this context is very clear. All that we know in this world about God and His ways is indirect knowledge given to us via revelation. As such it is always limited and never complete understanding.

Ironically Paul plays off the dominate Greco-Roman figurative idea of a mirror to refer to indirect knowledge. The knowledgers (8:1) at Corinth assumed a superior

the same form מראה (*mar'ah*) can be read to mean either clearly or mirror. Even if this does not provide evidence of a background, Conzelmann concludes, the notion of obscurity stands in contrast to face-to-face knowledge.

“Michael Fishbane develops these allusions to the Hebrew with reference also to Ezek 43 under the punning title “Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on Ezek 43:3, Num 12:8 and 1 Cor 13:12” (1986).²¹⁸ He identifies a triple wordplay on מראה (*m-r-h*) where Ezek 43:3 uses *mar'eh* and *mar'ot*, while Numbers 12 involves a pun on *mareh*, vision, and *mar'ah*, mirror. 1 Cor 13:12 is then a midrash on Num 12:8. This compounds the problem of whether διὰ means through, by means of, or (as in Greek syntax) both! Yet alongside this suggestion other backgrounds have been proposed. Since one usually views only oneself in a mirror, whereas Paul speaks of viewing reality or images of reality, Héring believes that he refers to the ‘magic’ mirrors used by sorcerers for ‘conjuring up in a mirror persons or scenes distant in space or time.’²¹⁹ Spicq believes that the connection with prophecy and the participation of children as a ‘medium’ render this just possible, but such a background seems insufficiently prominent to be introduced or presupposed without further explanation. Far more common in Graeco-Roman first-century thought is the use of mirror as a metaphor for indirect knowledge.

“Although only philosophical thinkers should be called ‘Platonists’ in the strict sense, and although even among philosophers Epicurean and Stoic philosophies were no less widespread than Platonism, Plato’s contrast between the indirect perception of an image and direct apprehension of Ideas lay behind much Graeco-Roman thought, however tacitly. Plato speaks of ‘a mirror which receives impressions and provides visible images’ (Plato, *Timaeus* 71B; cf. Philo, *De Decalogo* 105). Fee correctly perceives Paul’s use of the mirror metaphor to indicate indirect knowledge.²²⁰ Here the limitations, fallibility, and ‘interests’ of the observation and inference can lead to mistaken judgments and opinions. Senft sums up succinctly three conclusive arguments for this view: (i) the metaphor of a mirror more often denotes clarity than obscurity in ancient literature of the period (e.g., Cicero, *De Finibus* 5.22.61); (ii) mirrors are usually envisaged as instruments of self-knowledge (e.g., Philo, *De Iosepho* 16); and (iii) in the Platonic tradition ‘the mirror symbolizes indirect vision, which perceives only a reality which is derived, i.e., the image.’²²¹ Thus Philo, in particular, argues that we can compare and evaluate only ‘representations’ concerning which we can make mistakes (Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.2). Senft concludes: ‘It is evidently to this tradition that Paul’s text refers.’²²² However, he adds, Paul is not offering a theory of knowledge as such; Paul simply uses the imagery from this universe of discourse to underline the difference between present fallible understanding and future face-to-face knowing and being known. The metaphor, like all metaphors, is limited to making a particular point and should not be pressed.”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1068–1069.]

knowledge to that of the apostolic Gospel preached by Paul while ignoring the severe limitations on the idea of knowledge imposed by their Greek wisdom. Their reasoning then was illogical and subject to mistakes when measured against the standards of pagan wisdom in that day. Thus a biting tone permeates v. 12a. Paul’s referencing of this Greek metaphor should signal something important to these elitists in the church.

Now Paul shifts to the ‘then’ side with the declaration of τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, **but then face to face**. This figure of speech stresses knowledge derived from looking straight into the face of the other person up very close. It underscores the complete understanding of God that becomes available in Heaven to His people. Thus it is the opposite of the metaphor δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, **through a mirror in dimness**. All through the Bible the emphasis is repeatedly that our knowledge of Almighty God is very limited in this life. We only know about Him as He chooses to reveal Himself. But in the direct encounter with God in Heaven, our understanding of Him will be dramatically greater than is possible now.

Note how Paul puts all this together:

- 1) βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον·
 - 2) ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην.
- 1) **For we see now through a mirror in dimness, but then face to face;**
 - 2) **now I know in part but then I will know fully even as also I am known**

The shift to the singular in part 2) preserve the same ‘now’ and ‘then’ contrast but centers on knowing as a personal *testimonium*. Such a literary strategy as this always carried a mild rebuke to its readers for the speaker/writer is alluding primarily to his audience rather than to himself. In the close linkage of the two sections of 1) and 2) this becomes even clearer through the parallelism.

Thus Paul asserts dramatically the limited knowledge of God that anyone in this life can make is a rather pointed criticism of the knowledgers claim to a superior knowledge derived out of pagan wisdom rather than through divine revelation. But in eternity the extent of what we know about God will be measured by how well God knows us. This means we will know a whole lot more about God in Heaven than we can ever know in this life. The play on γινώσκω and ἐπιγνώσομαι especially makes this contrast.

V. 13. νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, τὰ τρία ταῦτα· μείζων δὲ τούτων ἡ ἀγάπη. **But at present remains faith, hope, love, these three, and the greatest of these is love.**

13.13 δὲ
 Νυνὶ
 554 μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη,
 τὰ τρία ταῦτα·
 δὲ
 555 μείζων τούτων ἢ ἀγάπη.

In his summarizing conclusion Paul turns to the present experiences of spiritual life on this earth. But very abruptly, he introduces a comparison of these three items πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη. The first two have not been a part of his discussion on ἀγάπη at all in this chapter. And the comparison stresses the eternal permanency of all three (μένει), while making the point as to ἀγάπη being the most important one of the three. As might be expected this has prompted all kinds of interpretive discussion over the centuries.⁶⁹

The combination of Νυνὶ with the present tense verb μένει underscores the eternal duration of these traits.⁷⁰ But verse thirteen clearly has the thrust also of a summarizing statement. As such, then how is it summarizing vv. 1-12? Especially when the contrast in

⁶⁹“13 This verse presents the notorious difficulty that Paul has spent the entire chapter expounding the eschatological permanence of love alone, only to conclude, apparently, that faith and hope also last forever. It would be easy to justify the theology of such a proposition. Just as love will never become obsolete, so where God is the living God his presence continues always to invite trust and confidence, as well as forward-looking hope in the living, ever-ongoing God who does new things, even in the perfection of heaven. But does such a thought, even if it coheres with Paul’s theology (which it does), also cohere with the immediate context (which is doubtful)?” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1071.]

⁷⁰“Before we list the standard explanations, we may note what is at issue in the translation. NRSV uncompromisingly translates νυνὶ δὲ μένει πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη as *And now faith, hope and love abide*. REB is even more explicit: *There are three things that last for ever: faith, hope and love*. (AV/KJV and RV are similar to NRSV.) But NJB and NIV allow for a different understanding: As it is, *these remain: faith, hope, and love* (NJB; NIV is virtually the same, *beginning And now ...*). We also propose (with Collins) there remain, since Paul’s syntax allows for two possible meanings. (i) One meaning is that of an eschatological assertion: these three abide or remain. (ii) The other is that of a logical summary providing the stage setting for v. 13b (as Parry urges): *So now* (logical use) *there remain, out of all the gifts and experiences compared and considered, faith, hope and love*. These are still on the table. But the greatest of these (for reasons which include, among other things, its eschatological permanence) is love.²³⁰ For translation, it is essential not to pre-judge by exclusion which of these two meanings Paul wishes to convey. Hence **remain** is preferable to *abide*, since without comment it allows for either or both meanings as the Greek μένει does. The singular of μένει may also suggest the list as a collective agenda.²³¹” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1071.]

these verses has been of love to tongues (v. 1), prophecy (v. 2) and benevolence (v. 3). Do faith and hope somehow connect to these three items? Clearly πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη in v. 13 transcend the temporal limitations of ταῖς γλώσσαις, προφητείαν, ψωμίσω etc. in vv. 1-3. Whatever possible connection between these two sets of traits and commitments that may have existed in Paul’s mind, it is very difficult to discern any legitimate link. Yet, it is not possible to ignore the summarizing nature of v. 13.

One possible partial solution to this dilemma is that *Paul*, with this declaration in v. 13, *underscores the eternal perspective*, i.e., the eschatological view of God, *in order to remind his readers that fussing over the prioritizing of the traits in vv. 1-3 ultimately loses sight of the eternal nature of values and things important*. These final items of πίστις, ἐλπίς, ἀγάπη, from an eternal view, have tremendous relevancy to the present in the life of the believer. Yet they alone continue to be relevant throughout eternity. And in that way of thinking, it is ἀγάπη that emerges as the most important of these three, since it alone reflects God’s posture, while πίστις and ἐλπίς as *commitment to* and *confidence in* God continue to reflect the believer’s posture not only in this life but throughout eternity as well. This way of interpreting Paul’s statement in v. 13 serves to underscore and re-enforce the major point of chapter 13, which is identical to what he declared earlier in 8:1: ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, *knowledge puffs up but love builds up*. In their elitism the ‘knowledgers’ at Corinth not only missed this eternal evaluation of ἀγάπη but reflect a serious failure of their claimed γνῶσις. Why? Their dependence on thinking out of their Greek culture (σοφία τοῦ κόσμου) rather than switching over to God’s way of thinking, i.e., θεοῦ σοφία (1:18-25) has blinded them to the eternal value of things.

Partitio 2, 14: 1-5. 14 Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε. 2 ὁ γὰρ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ θεῷ· οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια· 3 ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν. 4 ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ· ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ. 5 θέλω δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε· μείζων δὲ ὁ προφητεύων ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομὴν λάβῃ.

14 Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy. 2 For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and

consolation. 4 Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church. 5 Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

Just chapter twelve leads to the pinnacle of chapter thirteen, so also chapter fourteen now builds off that pinnacle to address the elitists' prioritizing of speaking a heavenly language as a sign of spiritual superiority:

Confirmatio / 12:7-30 / 14:6-33a
 Partitio / 12:4-6 / 14:1-5

These three chapters are closely linked together rhetorically and in content emphasis. To treat them as disconnected produces substantially false interpretations.⁷¹

The framework of chapter fourteen moves in the threefold pattern outlined as

- a) Partitio 14:1-5
- b) Confirmation 14:6-33a
- c) Conclusion 14:33b-40

Each section builds off the previous one while advancing the core idea a step further.⁷² Central to this chapter

⁷¹“The key to an accurate understanding of Paul’s arguments and declarations in this chapter [chap. 14] 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).” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1074.]

⁷²“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.’⁷¹ 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 (ἑαυτὸν 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 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 worshipping community, which necessarily entails the use of the mind (τῷ πνεύματι ... καὶ τῷ νοῷ, 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.

556 ^{14.1} Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην,
 δὲ
 557 ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά,
 δὲ
 μᾶλλον
 558 (ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά)
 ἵνα προφητεύητε.
 14.2
 γὰρ
 559 ὁ λαλῶν γλῶσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ
 ἀλλὰ
 560 - - - - - θεῷ - - - - - .
 γὰρ
 561 οὐδεὶς ἀκούει,
 δὲ
 562 πνεύματι λαλεῖ μυστήρια .
 14.3
 δὲ
 563 ὁ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ
 οἰκοδομῆν
 καὶ
 παράκλησιν
 καὶ
 παραμυθίαν .
 14.4
 δὲ
 564 ὁ λαλῶν γλῶσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ .
 565 ὁ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ .
 14.5
 δὲ
 566 θέλω πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις,
 δὲ
 567 (θέλω) μᾶλλον ἵνα προφητεύητε .
 δὲ
 568 μείζων (ἐστὶν) ὁ προφητεύων
 ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις
 ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη,
 /-----|
 ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομῆν λάβῃ.

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 ‘be-

is the theme of orderly worship as opposed to chaotic 'spontaneity.' Orderliness in public worship centers on understandable communication of the Gospel to the assembled group. Thus the primary role of προφητεία as Gospel proclamation takes precedence over the self-glorifying γλώσση, [speaking in some unintelligible heavenly language](#). Thus Paul bluntly condemns the importing of the pagan background into Christian worship that the Corinthian elitists were doing.

The internal structure of vv. 1-5 is made clearer by the block diagram on the previous page. Notice the succession of γὰρ conjunctions which provides justifying statements to what precedes. The rhetorical structure is a pair of admonitions (#s 556-558) followed by a series of justifying declarations to defend the core position of Paul primarily in the elliptical #558 of the superiority of prophecy over tongues. Statements 559 - 568 provide the rationale for Paul's preference of prophecy/preaching over tongues. These are set forth in two sets of statements: a) #s 559-560 and b) #s 561-568. Both make the same case of the superiority of preaching over tongues but in unique ways.

i) Admonitions, v. 1 Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην, ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε. [Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy.](#)

556 ^{14.1} Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην,
δὲ
557 ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά,
δὲ
μᾶλλον
558 (ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά)
ἵνα προφητεύητε.

Importantly, note the different verbs used here. For the most important blessing from God Paul says Διώκετε with the very intense meaning of going after love as the most important blessing from God. But for τὰ πνευματικά he uses ζηλοῦτε which has less intensity than Διώκετε.⁷³

ing 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)!"

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1074-1075.]

⁷³"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.'¹⁰ 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

Some tie v. 12a to the end of chapter 13, but this falsely distances the declaration from what follows by ignoring the single sentence structure in v. 12. To be more accurate, Διώκετε τὴν ἀγάπην links chapter 13 to the content of chapter 14 very tightly. It does sum up a major point of the apostle but one permeating the entire letter as his final exhortation in 16:14 underscores: πάντα ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ γινέσθω, [Let everything of yours be done in love](#).

The second and third admonitions in v. 12 return to the topic of τὰ πνευματικά which was first introduced by Περί δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν in 12:1. The established meaning in 12:1 of Spirit endowed blessings holds true here in 14:1 as well. This is more than 'gifts' as is falsely conveyed by many English translations here.

In picking up the theme of τὰ πνευματικά here in 14:1 Paul limits his discussion to a contrast of two of these divine blessings: ταῖς γλώσσαις and προφητεία while speaking to the setting of the gathered meetings of the house church groups in the city. The foundational principle of ἀγάπη in the community setting dictates that what emerges as most important is what benefits the collective group rather than any individual. For the apostle that is exclusively προφητεία and not γλώσσαι. It alone is what builds up the community: ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ (8:1).

Thus his admonition ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ πνευματικά, [and seek the Spirit endowed blessings](#), is modified by the elliptical μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε, [and especially so that you may preach](#). This adverbial purpose clause ἵνα προφητεύητε actually points all seeking of τὰ πνευματικά toward the single objective of communication clearly the Gospel to others. The building up of others produced by ἀγάπη finds its realization in the communicating of the Gospel to both the community and to outsiders, as Paul will affirm further into the discussion (cf. v. 6).

ii) Reasons for them, vv. 2-5 2 ὁ γὰρ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ θεῷ· οὐδεις γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια· 3 ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ

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.¹¹ But striving for love suggests as 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.¹² [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1082-1083.]

παραμυθίαν. 4 ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ· ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ. 5 θέλω δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε· μείζων δὲ ὁ προφητεύων ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομῆν λάβῃ. 2 For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church. 5 Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

14.2 γὰρ
 559 ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ
 ἀλλὰ
 560 - ----- θεῷ ----- ·
 γὰρ
 561 οὐδεὶς ἀκούει,
 δὲ
 562 πνεύματι λαλεῖ μυστήρια ·
 14.3 δὲ
 563 ὁ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ
 οἰκοδομῆν
 καὶ
 παράκλησιν
 καὶ
 παραμυθίαν ·
 14.4 ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ ·
 δὲ
 565 ὁ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ ·
 14.5 δὲ
 566 θέλω πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλώσσαις,
 δὲ
 567 (θέλω) μᾶλλον ἵνα προφητεύητε ·
 δὲ
 568 μείζων (ἐστὶν) ὁ προφητεύων
 ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις
 ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη,
 ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομῆν λάβῃ.

As outline above, vv. 2-5 contain sets of justifying statements for the admonitions of v. 1. These are arranged in two groups: a) v. 2a and b) vv. 2b-5. Plus, the second group grows out of the first group.

a) **First justification, v. 2a:** ὁ γὰρ λαλῶν γλώσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ ἀλλὰ θεῷ· For the one speaking in a tongue not to men is speaking but to God. Several aspects of this assertion need attention. First, it is an individual making oral sounds in **a tongue**, not in tongues (cf. 13:1). Note that the singular γλώσση (vv. 2, 4, 14, 27);

τῆς γλώσσης (v. 9); γλώσσαν (v. 26), while the plural γλώσσαις is used in vv. 5 (2x), 6, 19; [αἱ γλώσσαι, v. 22], 23, 39). Clearly here with the singular by γλώσση / γλώσσης / γλώσσαν, Paul alludes to the Corinthian practice of ecstatic speech.⁷⁴ The precise nature of the Corinthian practice represents a mixture of the pagan practice of the languages of the gods commonly practiced in Corinth in virtually all of the temples with the later Pauline depiction of a cry of “Abba” turned into ecstasy (cf. Rom. 8:26-27).⁷⁵ Remember that Paul was in Corinth when Romans was written some three or so years later. The Corinthian practice might be legitimate, but just as easily could represent paganism creeping into the Christian community. The initial impetus for the practice clearly originated in the pagan background of

the Corinthian Christians. Paul does not evaluate its legitimacy, that is, whether the one speaking is actually communicating with God or not. Rather, he lays down strict rules for its use which then signal that anything outside these rules represents paganism and is a fraud.

The plural uses come largely

⁷⁴“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.²⁴⁷ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids,

MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1085.]

⁷⁵**Rom. 8:26-27.** 26 Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξώμεθα καθὸ δεῖ οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερευτιγγάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις· 27 ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγγάνει ὑπὲρ ἡγίων.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but **that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words**. 27 And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirits intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

out of the earlier depiction of γένη γλωσσῶν, *varieties of tongues* (12:10). Contextually in chapter fourteen, the plural specifies multiple people speaking in individually distinct ecstatic speech or the different sounds made during ecstatic speech moments, with this latter view more closely aligned to the 12:10 reference of γένη γλωσσῶν given to a single person, the ἑτέρω.

Second, Paul, by how he structures the expression, emphatically stresses that such ecstatic expression is directed not to others present but exclusively to God. By definition ecstatic speech is not intended to benefit the gathered group, and thus the love principle severely limits, if not outright prohibits, the practice in assembled Christian worship. It is strictly an individual experience for one's private devotions to God. Here Paul hits hard the elitists' practice as a public demonstration of their superiority to the rest of the congregation. Their practice, in line with the pagan practices in the city, were calling attention to themselves, and God was not involved in the experience. Thus the phoniness of what they were doing was evident.

b) Second justification groups, vv. 2b-5. These are arranged as 1) vv. 2b-3; 2) v.4; 3) v. 5. They serve to amplify in greater detail the essential point of the first justification in v. 2a.

First the practical observation: οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια· ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ οἰκοδομὴν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν. *for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit. On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.*

When ecstatic speech takes place in the assembled group, no one else has a clue about what is being said. By its very definition, ecstatic speech is speaking a non-human language. Supposedly meaning is present, but only the divine deity to whom it is addressed can understand it. As Paul will later say, this meaning may not be understood even by the speaker. This was the universal understanding of such practice in Paul's world, whether Christian, Jewish, or pagan.

Thus ecstatic speech in no way builds up the group. Why? If it is legitimate ecstatic speech (as per Rom. 12:26-27 which πνεύματι here references), it λαλεῖ μυστήρια, *speaks mysteries*.⁷⁶ That is, it centers on

⁷⁶“In spite of Gundry's arguments about the regular use of γλῶσσα 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].’²⁹ Without any contextual indicator, γλῶσσα 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).³⁰ Although Chryso-

unknowable things by the rest of the group.⁷⁷ Therefore no benefit comes to them from hearing these unintelligible sounds of ecstatic speech. The principle of edifying love is thus violated, as was the case with the Corinthian elitists in their practice.

But, on the other hand, preaching the Gospel in intelligible human language can and should edify the group.⁷⁸ Important to notice is the clear antithetical con-

text 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.’³¹ 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 32.³² Many commentators before the 1950s were unduly influenced by a view of human personhood dominated by idealist or Cartesian dualism, and πνεῦμα 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**.’ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1086.]

⁷⁷“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.²⁵ 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.’²⁷ 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).’²⁸ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1085–1086.]

⁷⁸“Paul urges his addressees to strive for prophecy. His choice of vocabulary is important. In the Greco-Roman world ‘prophecy’ was a highly esteemed mantic experience characterized by trances and other ecstatic phenomena. Paul, however, carefully distinguishes prophecy from the gift of tongues. He may have done so in order to distinguish Christian prophecy from the ecstatic speech

trast between

ὁ λαλῶν γλῶσση οὐκ ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ... (v. 2)

ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἀνθρώποις λαλεῖ... (v. 3)

Paul intentionally contrasts the two actions rather than the status of each individual.⁷⁹ Tongues do not target

forms known throughout the Hellenistic world (cf. 14:22–24), where what Paul describes as speaking in tongues would have been subsumed within the category of prophecy.

“For Paul prophecy is a gift of the Spirit that is integral to the life of the church (12:28). It is the only gift that is cited in all four of his lists of charisms (12:10, 28, 29; Rom 12:6). It is the only gift of the Spirit that is cited in 1 Thess 5:19–20. In Paul’s enumerated list of charisms (12:28) prophecy is found in second place, after the apostolate and before teaching. Prophecy seems to be a gift without which the church cannot exist (cf. 14:22).

“Prophecy is a gift that Paul himself possessed (14:6). He frequently describes himself in terms that recall the biblical prophets. Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah seem to have particularly shaped his articulated vision of himself, as the allusions to Isa 52:15 in Rom 15:21; to Isa 49:1 in Gal 1:15; and to Jer 11:20 in 1 Thess 2:4 seem clearly to indicate. In the development of his ethos argument in 1 Corinthians Paul does not particularly exploit the model of the biblical prophets. In this letter Paul prefers to use cultural models and his exposition of what it means to be an apostle when he makes an argument based on his own prestige. It may be that scriptural allusions would not have been a particularly effective device to illustrate the stature of the apostle for a community that was largely Hellenistic.

“Prophecy, as the etymology indicates, is a matter of speaking on behalf of God, functioning in a sense as God’s spokesperson. In 14:3 Paul emphatically identifies exhortation as the characteristic function of prophecy. Two virtual synonyms, ‘exhortation’ and ‘encouragement,’ have in Greek an initial ‘p’ sound that links them to one another and to ‘prophecy.’ Paul speaks about exhortation and encouragement as the way in which the community is built up. In writing to the Thessalonians he had previously linked exhortation to the building up of the community (1 Thess 5:11; cf. 1 Thess 4:18). In 14:3 he identifies the building up of the community as the purpose to which prophecy is directed. Prophesying builds up the community insofar as the members of the community are ‘edified,’ that is, exhorted and encouraged. Paul returns to this idea in 14:31–32 when he urges prophets to speak in turn and listen to one another.”

[Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 490–491.]

⁷⁹“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 οἰκοδομῆν, παράκλησιν, and παραμυθίαν as reflected in the Vulgate construction *ad aedificationem*.³³ “What is *in effect*’ is the meaning” (Robertson and Plummer’s italics).³⁴ Our use of thereby functions to make this point. Other exegetical

others with intended spiritual benefit, while preaching does. The Corinthian elites were centering attention on the superior status of the tongues speaker, which completely missed the foundational point of edifying love.

Paul lists three positive benefits of preaching over ecstatic expression: οἰκοδομῆν καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν, **upbuilding and encouragement and consolation**. Most commentators correctly note that οἰκοδομῆν is the inclusive label, i.e., Leitmotif, that encompasses καὶ παράκλησιν καὶ παραμυθίαν. Also note the commonality of π with both these terms and also with προφητεύων. This literary device served to link all three terms closely together. Preaching (προφητεύων) should edify (οἰκοδομῆν) through encouraging (παράκλησιν) and comforting (παραμυθίαν) the others in the assembled group.⁸⁰

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.’³⁵ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1086–1087.]

⁸⁰“(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 φουσιόω, to inflate through γνῶσις without love.³⁶ 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 14:4.³⁷ 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 ...’).³⁸ 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).³⁹ In 14:26 ‘prophesying, as a cultic event, is subject to this norm.’⁴⁰

“(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.⁴¹ 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/παρακλήσις are among the most important terms for speaking and influencing in the NT.’⁴² 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).’⁴³

“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).⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.’⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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 παρακλήσις (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.⁵¹

“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,

Second the inherent difference between the two, v.

4: ὁ λαλῶν γλῶσση ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ· ὁ δὲ προφητεύων ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ. *Those who speak in a tongue build up themselves, but those who prophesy build up the church.* Here, while assuming legitimate ecstatic speech, Paul delineates the fundamental difference between ecstatic speech and preaching. The first ἑαυτὸν οἰκοδομεῖ, *builds himself up*, and the second ἐκκλησίαν οἰκοδομεῖ, *builds up the church*. Here the core principle of edifying love means that preaching takes higher priority than ecstatic speech. Thus Paul’s modified admonition μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε, *and especially that you may preach* (v. 1b). Additionally, it points to the private use of ecstatic speech rather than the public role.

Third, a summarizing personal view from Paul, v.

5: θέλω δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς λαλεῖν γλῶσσαις, μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε· μείζων δὲ ὁ προφητεύων ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλῶσσαις ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομηθῆν λάβη. *Now I would like all of you to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.*

Paul in v. 5a expresses the positive desire that all of the Corinthians would reach a level of private devotional experience marked by the Rom. 12:26-27 standards of prayer so deep that it goes beyond human language words. Thus he does not forbid the ecstatic language experience when it is legitimate and not a counterfeit version from pagan religious experience. Clearly he sees this overwhelmingly as a private devotional experience.

But his greater desire for the Corinthians comes out of the edifying love principle: μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα προφητεύητε· *but more importantly that you may preach*. His intense preference for preaching is stressed both by the use of μᾶλλον along with the ellipsis using the indirect command structure of ἵνα προφητεύητε rather than the substantial object infinitive λαλεῖν. *Christian discipleship and spiritual maturity are not the deepening of one’s own religious life. To the contrary, they are centered on and acquired by Christian ministry to others.*⁸¹ It is by

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.⁵² As in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ‘One who prophesies speaks ... encouragement to people’ (1 Cor 14:3).⁵³

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1087–1090.]

⁸¹“The last clause of v. 1 begins this demonstration or argument. If the readers will pay particular attention (μᾶλλον) to the

servicing others that we become more like Christ. Any so-called teaching on discipleship that centers on the individual rather than on the group is inherently false and heretical. It will produce the mess that Paul tried to clean up at Corinth!

In v. 5b, the justifying declaration for this preference on preaching is given: *μείζων δὲ ὁ προφητεύων ἢ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσσαις ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ διερμηνεύη, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομηθῆ λάβη.* *One who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.* This sums up Paul's discussion in vv. 1-5 with preaching having a higher priority than ecstatic speech. Although in the pagan background of the majority of the Corinthian Christians, not much distinction was given between *προφητεύων* and *λαλῶν γλώσσαις* since both were linked to manic, ecstatic experience by the priests and priestesses in a moment of highly charged 'worship' rived up with loud *χαλκὸς ἤχων ἢ κύμβαλον ἀλαλάζον*, noisy gong or clanging cymbal (13:1), Paul drew a sharp line of distinction between these two practices inside Christianity.⁸² For the pagans *προφητεύων* emerged out of *λαλῶν γλώσσαις* as the application in human language of the supposed conversation between the spiritual leader and Zeus etc. that took place in the god's language, i.e., *γλώσσαις*,

The rare exception (*ἐκτὸς εἰ μὴ*) to ecstatic speech being confined to a private moment is when a legitimate interpreter is present. From all indications in Paul's depiction of the situation at Corinth, the elitists practicing ecstatic speech were not concerned with some interpretation in human language. Their interest

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.¹⁷ 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." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1083–1084.]

⁸²"Paul urges his addressees to strive for prophecy. His choice of vocabulary is important. In the Greco-Roman world 'prophecy' was a highly esteemed mantic experience characterized by trances and other ecstatic phenomena. Paul, however, carefully distinguishes prophecy from the gift of tongues. He may have done so in order to distinguish Christian prophecy from the ecstatic speech forms known throughout the Hellenistic world (cf. 14:22–24), where what Paul describes as speaking in tongues would have been subsumed within the category of prophecy." [Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, *Sacra Pagina Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 490.]

was in demonstrating their superiority by the use of ecstatic speech in the assembled gathering, not in edifying the assembled group spiritually. Dazzle the crowd was their goal! In the pagan background of this practice at Corinth in the various temples, the one speaking in non-human language usually followed up by making his own interpretation, usually labeled in Greek as *προφητεία*. But the elitists evidently were not even doing this.

But Paul mandates that any ecstatic speech MUST BE accompanied by an *edifying* interpretation. But careful analysis of the Greek text signals that the 'tongues speaker' must put into human words what he has just mumbled in unintelligible sounds.⁸³ V. 5c does not al-

⁸³"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.¹⁰² 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.'¹⁰³

"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' ἐρμηνεύσαι δυνατὸν ζίως τὰ βασιλεία* (5.182: it is impossible to put it into words adequately!). Here to interpret or to translate simply does not fit.¹⁰⁴ 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.¹⁰⁵ 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 (γλωσσα) 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 (λάβη) this public ministry of building up (ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οικοδομῆν λάβη).

This understanding of these verses has recently been attacked by Christopher Forbes.¹⁰⁶ 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.”¹⁰⁷ 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

lude to a separate person doing interpretation. This wrong understanding of this text is widely circulated in today’s world but is flat wrong in its view of this statement of Paul here. See v. 13 for a confirmation of this understanding, and note that v. 27 properly translated and interpreted also confirm this view.

The words of the ‘interpreter’ then become ‘prophecy’ and are to be treated as such. As Paul will reflect further down, in early Christianity when someone claimed to have a spiritual truth to share with the group, the mere claim of being inspired by God gave no validation to what was shared at all. Every claim to express something from God was to be evaluated by members of the group in oral critiquing of the speaker, and especially by those considered wiser in the ways of God (cf. Gal. 6:1-3 for allusion to these folks).

This pattern merely reflects universal patterns in the first century societies including both Greco-Roman and Jewish. Young school boys were taught to always question the teachings of their teachers. It was through the oral give and take between speaker and audience that true learning took place. Paul experience on Mars Hill in Athens before first arriving at Corinth in the beginning 50s illustrates how this worked in that society (cf. Acts 17:22-34). Learning was not passive, as is typical in modern western hemispheric educational patterns. But intelligible communication of ideas between speaker and audience stood as the foundation of such learning. Ecstatic speech with no interpretation of its meaning in human language does an ‘end around’ on the learning experience. It only dazzles the audience with performance by the speaker. Paul forbids such in Christian gatherings. The bottom line is always ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οικοδομῆν λάβη, **so that the church may received building up**. Thus the Corinthian practice by the elitists immediately becomes suspect as having pagan orientation -- and a poor copy at best -- rather than legitimate Christian orientation.

(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.”¹⁰⁸ 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.”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1098–1100.]

Confirmatio 2, 14:6-33a. Here the parallelism in chapter 14 with chapter twelve becomes even clearer, as reflected in the chart below:

Confirmatio /	12:7-30 /	14:6-33a
Partitio /	12:4-6 /	14:1-5

The second section, *confirmatio*, builds off the foundation laid in the *partitio* which has put forth the issue(s) at hand. But Paul approach to defending his depiction of the general issue of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 12:7-30 is some quite the same strategy of defense in 14:6-33a. Each approach is appropriate for the nature of the issue presented: in 12:4-6 it was the general topic of τῶν πνευματικῶν, while in 14:1-5 it is the two speech grace blessings of preaching and ecstatic speech. In the first *partitio* he is defending the foundational principle of unity in diversity. But in this second *partitio*, it is the defense of the priority of preaching over ecstatic speech.

How he goes about making this defense is quite fascinating and follows first century Pauline reasoning rather than any sort of modern western reasoning.⁸⁴ This must not be ignored, if we are to understand what the apostle is doing here. There is no Cartesian box that one can put vv. 6-33a into! The patterns of dividing out Paul's thoughts into paragraphs provides very limited help and more importantly reflects the limitations of grouping his expressions into subunits of material. This simple fact that should be easily self-evident but is so often overlooked: the apostle just did not reason like a modern western thinker. Commentators and Bible translators feel compelled to 'westernize' Paul's thinking in how they organize their translations and their commentary notes. But heavy dependence on such inevitably will distort Paul's thinking to the modern reader.

Why this is so becomes clear from a block diagram of just vv. 6-9; see diagram on following page. Two initial rhetorical questions (#s 569-570) are defended (γὰρ) by a second pair of rhetorical questions (#s 571-572), which in turn is defended (γὰρ) by a declarative statement (# 573). All of it revolves around comparing ecstatic speech to the musical

instruments of the flute, harp, and the bugle. The block diagram of the remaining verses (vv. 10-33a) are very similar in their non-modern language way of presenting ideas.

Vv. 6-12 actually present several ideas in succession that are not much connected to one another. The lead sentence in v. 13 does not provide a clear launch pad into the personal illustration of vv. 14-19. But in these verses Paul also jumps back and forth between "I" and "you all." Similar patterns likewise surface in vv. 20-33a. This is not modern, coherent logical thinking from a western mindset.

But on the positive side, the one common thread through this myriad of disconnected arguments is his initial premise that preaching is superior to ecstatic speech, which was just the opposite of what the Corinthian elitists were contending. When taken together, these varied arguments overwhelmingly make Paul's point. He has demolished the elitists' position with a barrage of different arguments.

In order to better get Paul's ideas on the table, we should take the small, natural units in succession without attempting to group them into a westernized outline. The single question to ask each time is "How does this prove Paul's point of the superiority of preaching?"

v. 6, Nullified ministry from Paul if in ecstatic speech:

Nῦν δέ, ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν ἔλθω πρὸς ὑμᾶς γλώσσαις λαλῶν, τί ὑμᾶς ὠφελήσω ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω ἢ ἐν ἀποκαλύψει ἢ ἐν γνώσει ἢ ἐν προφητεία ἢ [ἐν] διδαχῇ; **Now, brothers,1 if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?**

14.6 δέ,
 Nῦν
 ἀδελφοί,
 ἐὰν ἔλθω
 πρὸς ὑμᾶς
 γλώσσαις λαλῶν,
 569 τί ὑμᾶς ὠφελήσω
 ἐὰν μὴ ὑμῖν λαλήσω
 ἢ ἐν ἀποκαλύψει
 ἢ ἐν γνώσει
 ἢ ἐν προφητεία
 ἢ [ἐν] διδαχῇ;

⁸⁴The use of paragraphing represents a subtle way of 'boxing' Paul's ideas here, but careful analysis of the paragraphing patterns reflects the limitation of such efforts. Internally none of these paragraphs contains one central point. Instead a variety of disconnected ideas will be found inside each of the paragraphs:

N-A 28th	NRSV	NIV	ESV
6-12	6-12	6-12	6-12
13-19	13-19	13-17 18-19	13-19
20-25	20-25	20-21 22-25	20-25
26-33a	26-33a	26-28 29-33	26-33a

Paul begins his defense with a personal illustration.⁸⁵ Should he come to Corinth and only use ecstatic

⁸⁵"The translation of νῦν δέ 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.'¹¹³ 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.'¹¹⁴ This is well captured by REB's **Suppose, my friends, that when I come to you ...**, which we have
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speech before the various house church groups, no one would benefit spiritually from such a ministry. They can only profit (ὕμᾱς ὠφελήσω) from a personal ministry of Paul in their midst if he speaks in a human language that they can understand. In 13:3, Paul made the declaration οὐδὲν ὠφελούμαι, I gain nothing, if his ministry wasn't shaped and motivated by ἀγάπη. That same principle is now

repeated in the deliberative question of how could he possibly benefit the Corinthians by using ecstatic language with them. The clear implication is that no benefit would come

to the Corinthians. Clearly implicit here is that the Corinthian elitists are producing zero benefit to the church in their ecstatic speech.

He gives four types of pastoral ministry typical in his efforts to spiritually minister to a group of believers: ἢ ἐν

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.'¹¹⁵ **What shall I profit you** (τί ὕμᾱς 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 (διδασχῆ) 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."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1101–1102.]

ἀποκαλύψει ἢ ἐν γνώσει ἢ ἐν προφητείᾳ ἢ [ἐν] διδασχῆ; a spiritual disclosure or some understanding or some spiritual insight into God or some Christian teaching. As Thiselton points out, several of these terms have a sharp tone of rebuttal to the ecstatic speech orientation of the Corinthian elitists.

v. 7, Comparison to musical instruments:

14.7	ὁμῶς	τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν διδόντα,
		εἶτε αὐλὸς
		εἶτε κιθάρα,
	ἐὰν διαστολὴν τοῖς φθόγγοις μὴ δῶ,	
570	πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ ἀύλουμένον	
	ἢ	
	τὸ κιθαριζόμενον;	

ὁμῶς⁸⁶ τὰ ἄψυχα φωνὴν διδόντα, εἶτε αὐλὸς εἶτε κιθάρα, ἐὰν διαστολὴν τοῖς φθόγγοις μὴ δῶ, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ ἀύλουμένον ἢ τὸ κιθαριζόμενον; *If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?*

In his second justifying point he appeals to musical the musical instruments of a flute and a harp, one wind and one stringed. The scenario is posed of these wind and stringed instruments playing διαστολὴν τοῖς φθόγγοις, *incoherent sounds for the notes*. This is not playing inappropriate music for the setting, such as a funeral dirge at a joyous festival. The Greek text clearly means that the musicians cannot make coherent notes to a musical piece with out of tune instruments. Thus ecstatic speech is compared to playing an out of tune musical instrument. Nothing pleasant or correct come out. Consequently the listeners have no idea what the piece of music being played is. It is simply an irritating, meaningless combination of noises. The strong blunt force of this comparison to ecstatic speech hit the elitists hard.

v. 8, Comparison to a misplayed bugle.

καὶ γὰρ ἐὰν ἄδηλον σάλπιγξ φωνὴν δῶ, τίς παρασκευάσεται εἰς πόλεμον; *If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?*

⁸⁶"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**.¹¹⁶ 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.'¹¹⁷ As Héring reminds us, accents would occur neither in Pauline texts nor in such early uncials as P⁴⁶ 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." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1102.]

14.8 γὰρ
καὶ ἐὰν ἄδηλον σάλπιγξ φωνὴν δῶ,
571 τὶς παρασκευάζεται
εἰς πόλεμον;

The γὰρ adds another justifying declaration both reinforcing the previous one and also giving additional foundation to the premise statements in vv. 1-5.⁸⁷ Here the bugle in a military setting fails by giving τὰ ἄψυχα φωνήν, *ambivalent signals* which cannot be understood. Thus the army doesn't know whether to march forward or retreat. They are left in crippling uncertainty by the failure of the bugle to give a clear signal. Thus the Corinthians were put in the same crippling uncertainty by the elitists' use of ecstatic speech.

v. 9, Direct application to the Corinthians.

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης ἐὰν μὴ εὐσημον λόγον δῶτε, πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ λαλούμενον; ἔσεσθε γὰρ εἰς ἄερα λαλοῦντες. *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 speaking into the air.*

14.9 οὕτως
καὶ
ὑμεῖς... ἐὰν μὴ εὐσημον λόγον δῶτε,
572 πῶς γνωσθήσεται τὸ λαλούμενον;
γὰρ
573 ἔσεσθε εἰς ἄερα λαλοῦντες.

Here Paul moves from examples to direct accusation of the Corinthian elitists. The introductory οὕτως καὶ, so also, links this statement to the preceding ones very strongly. The third class conditional protasis, ὑμεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης ἐὰν μὴ εὐσημον λόγον δῶτε, mediates somewhat the severity of the accusation. But the prominent positioning of ὑμεῖς διὰ τῆς γλώσσης in front of the conditional conjunction ἐὰν highlights powerfully focus on the elitists and their wrong use of their tongue.

What they do is to *speak an unintelligible word*, μὴ

⁸⁷“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 δηλός, *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.¹²⁹”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1104.

εὐσημον λόγον δῶτε.⁸⁸ Their meaningless babbling in ecstatic speech was self-serving rather than giving spiritual benefit to the assembled group. Paul makes the very pointed accusation that they ἔσεσθε εἰς ἄερα λαλοῦντες, *will be into the air speaking*. Their gibberish is fruitless and pointless! Additionally in light of the preceding examples it is spiritually harmful to the congregation and must be stopped.

vv. 10-11, making outsiders uncomfortable.

14.10 εἰ τύχοι
574 τοσαῦτα...γένη φωνῶν εἰσιν
ἐν κόσμῳ
καὶ
575 οὐδὲν (ἐστὶν) ἄφωνον·
14.11 οὖν
ἐὰν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς,
576 ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος
καὶ
577 ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος.

10 τοσαῦτα εἰ τύχοι γένη φωνῶν εἰσιν ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ οὐδὲν ἄφωνον· 11 ἐὰν οὖν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος. 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 ca. foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

Now Paul turns to a broader issue of human

⁸⁸“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.¹³⁶ The compound adjective εὖ, *well, readily*, with σῆμα, *sign*, which belongs to the word group σημαίνω, *to communicate, to signify*, and σημειῖον, *sign, distinguishing mark* (by which something is known), σημειῶ, *to mark, to note down*, vividly uses what semanticists call a ‘transparent’ term to indicate the communicative or semiotic principle.¹³⁷ 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).¹³⁸ 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).¹⁴⁰ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1105.]

language in order to make another blunt criticism of the ecstatic speech of the Corinthian elitists. This is readily understandable to every modern person who has lived in a foreign country without knowing the native language. The uncomfortableness of such experience is hard to describe. But when experienced the individual knows full well what Paul is getting at here.

The initial reference of τοσαῦτα...γένη φωνῶν underscores the existence of a huge diversity of human languages, more than Paul could count, εἰ τύχοι. And his central point in this myriad of human languages is οὐδὲν ἄφωνον, *not one is without meaning*. That is, they all are designed to communicate intelligible ideas to the listeners.

Next he introduces an important scenario in a third class conditional protasis: ἐὰν μὴ εἰδῶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς φωνῆς, *If I do not know the meaning of the sound*. This is closely linked to the preceding statement as an implicit implication, i.e., by οὖν. Every human language is designed to communicate meaning, but for that to happen the hearer must understand the language. And if he doesn't know the language, what is the consequence of a person speaking something to him in that language?

ἔσομαι τῷ λαλοῦντι βάρβαρος καὶ ὁ λαλῶν ἐν ἐμοὶ βάρβαρος. *I will be to the one speaking a foreigner and the one speaking will be a foreigner to me*. Paul employs a severely biting pun here with the use of βάρβαρος, *barbarian*. The Greek people divided up all of humanity into two categories: we wise Greeks and you dumb, idiot barbarians. Interestingly when writing Romans at Corinth a few years later Paul will employ this contrast with defining references in Rom. 1:14: "Ἐλλήσιν τε καὶ βαρβάροις, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί, *both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, that is, to the wise and to the mindless I am obligated*. Arrogant elitism was deeply embedded in ancient Greek culture. And this provided Paul with a good analogy of comparison to the ecstatic speech practicing Corinthian elitists.

If someone speaks to me in a foreign language that I do not know, the impact is that both of us appear to be ignorant, mindless individuals, i.e., a βάρβαρος, to each other. That is, the inability to communicate meaningfully with one another fosters a attitude of elitism that looks down on the other person.⁸⁹ With this bit-

⁸⁹That this elitist attitude is mutual is experientially very correct, even though not necessarily logical. If you have ever lived outside the US and have observed a huge percentage of US visitors to that foreign country, the truth of Paul's mutual elitism point is driven home dramatically. Most people in the US are monolingual and when traveling abroad automatically expect the rest of the world to speak English, and often become quite frustrated when they don't. "Why can't these dumb locals speak English, like every human being should?" All the while the local is thinking, "O heck, here's another stupid American who is too dumb to learn my language."

ing comparison Paul takes down the elitism of the Corinthian ecstatic speakers as reflecting nothing more than a pagan Greek cultural mindset that stands as the very opposite of Christian edifying love. Their ecstatic speaking then represented paganism creeping into the Christian assembly.

v. 12, summing up the thesis.

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἐπεὶ ζηλωταὶ ἐστε πνευμάτων, πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας ζητεῖτε ἵνα περισσεύητε. *So with yourselves; since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church.*

14.12 οὕτως
καὶ
ὑμεῖς, ἐπεὶ ζηλωταὶ ἐστε πνευμάτων,
πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας
ζητεῖτε
ἵνα περισσεύητε.

Here Paul reproduces the identical syntactical pattern as in v. 9. Application language directly applies the preceding justifying statements to the Corinthians. The literary pattern is forceful:

Justifying statements:

vv. 6-8 10-11

Application statement:

v. 9 v. 12

He follows the same emphatic structure of placing the subject ὑμεῖς prior to the initial conjunction ἐπεὶ which is uncommon in ancient Greek but possible when extra strong emphasis is given to the verb subject, here ἐστε. The beginning οὕτως καὶ, *so also*, establishes a very close link of v. 12 with v. 11.

Paul stresses the keen interest in spiritual matters with the cause dependent clause ὑμεῖς, ἐπεὶ ζηλωταὶ ἐστε πνευμάτων, *since you indeed are seekers of spiritual things*. Although not the same word as τῶν πνευματικῶν, in 12:1, or τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα in 12:31, or τὰ πνευματικά in 14:1, the common verb ζηλοῦτε in these uses with its noun equivalent ζηλωταὶ and the closely related verb ζητεῖτε, both in 14:10, establish a common link of these admonitions together with each other. Again, Paul acknowledges the eager interest of the Corinthians, even the elitists, in spiritual matters.

But he admonishes them again to focus on edifying the group, πρὸς τὴν οἰκοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, rather than pursuing self-glorifying actions such as ecstatic speech. The objective of this striving for the edification of the church is so that each person in the group may prosper, ἵνα περισσεύητε, along with the group itself. The repeated principle of edifying love takes precedence over individually beneficial actions. Once more the wrongness of focusing on ecstatic speech comes to the surface in a more subtle but clear manner.

Verses 13-19 somewhat stand together as a unit but with diverse elements woven together in a uniquely Pauline manner. In an established manner, he begins with an admonition, v. 13. This is followed by a personal illustration in vv. 14-15 that at first doesn't seem very related to the admonition. Then in vv. 16-17, he turns to the group but with an individualized framework as reflected in the second singular verb λέγεις, and the singular pronoun σὺ in v. 17. The focus here is on ecstatic speech by one of the members in effect discriminating against ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου, **one filling the place of an outsider**, who doesn't know what the speaker is saying. In closing in vv. 18-19, Paul returns to the personal illustration with his declaration of desiring to speak five words in preaching over 10,000 words in ecstatic speech.

The over arching semantic structure of vv. 13-19 is an admonition backed up by a series of justifying declarations. But again, Paul uses a 'shotgun' approach rather than a 'rifle' approach in his defense arguments. It is the collective force of this bundle of arguments that validate his admonition, rather than each individual argument.

v. 13, pray for understanding skills. Διὸ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω ἵνα διερμηνεύη. **Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret.**

^{14.13} Διὸ
579 ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω
ἵνα διερμηνεύη.

This second use of Διὸ (other use in 12:3) conveys the idea of an intensified inference over the similar conjunction οὖν (cf. v. 11). So in light of the preceding emphasis in vv. 6-12, the ecstatic speech speaker should ask God for help in putting into human, understandable language, his sighs and groanings uttered verbally in ecstatic speaking. Although God knows the meaning of these sounds not even the ecstatic speaker can know them apart from God showing him/her the meaning.⁹⁰

⁹⁰“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.¹⁵⁰ 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*.¹⁵¹ 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

Here the focus, especially as signaled by the personal illustration that follows, is on ecstatic speech in private devotions rather than the public practice of the Corinthian elitists. This is also partly signaled by the use of the singular γλώσση (v. 13) in contrast to the plural γλώσσαις at the beginning of the previous unit in v. 6.

Unquestionably this verse links understanding of and ecstatic speaking to the same person, not two separate individuals. To assume a separate interpreter here is a huge misunderstanding of Paul's words, and Paul's statement in v. 27 doesn't contradict this when properly understood from the Greek text.

14-15, Paul's personal illustration. 14 ἐὰν [γὰρ] προσεύχωμαι γλώσση, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται, ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν. 15 τί οὖν ἐστιν; προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι, προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοί· ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι, ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοί. **14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. 15 What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also.**

^{14.14} [γὰρ]
ἐὰν προσεύχωμαι
γλώσση,
580 τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται,
δὲ
581 ὁ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν.
^{14.15} οὖν
582 τί ἐστιν;
583 προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι,
δὲ
584 προσεύξομαι καὶ τῷ νοί·
585 ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι,
δὲ
586 ψαλῶ καὶ τῷ νοί.

Clearly this point made by the series of declarations in vv. 14-15 stands as a justifying statement for the admonition given in v. 13. The subsequent manuscript copyists were, however, divided over whether this needed a direct indication by the inclusion or omission of the causal conjunction γὰρ at the beginning of v. 14.⁹¹ This is in part due to the absence of γὰρ at v.

possible potential on the part of the subject or agent of the verb.¹⁵² [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1107–1108.]

⁹¹14 ° P⁴⁶ B F G 0243. 1739. 1881 b sa; Ambst
‡ txt & A D^s K L P Ψ 048. 81. 104. 365. 630. 1175. 1241. 1505.
2464 M lat sy bo

6 to introduce a series of justifying statements for the premise in vv. 1-5. The inclusion of γὰρ simply makes explicit what is clearly implicit without it.

So how does the illustration justify the need for the ecstatic speaker to pray for God's help in putting his thoughts into intelligible words for his own benefit spiritually? As Paul develops the illustration the link becomes very clear, even though at first we may wonder.

Notice how Paul contrasts praying from two angles. If one's prayer is done as ecstatic speech, then only τὸ πνεῦμά μου, *my spirit*, is engaged and ὁ νοῦς μου, *my thinking*, remains on hold as ἄκαρπός, *unfruitful*. What does Paul mean by πνεῦμά and νοῦς with them set in contrast to each other?⁹² These two anthropological

[Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Nestle-Aland: NTG Apparatus Criticus*, ed. Barbara Aland et al., 28. revidierte Auflage. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 545.]

⁹²“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.¹⁵⁸

“The history of Western philosophical and Christian theological tradition makes it misleading to translate τὸ πνεῦμά 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.’¹⁵⁹ A lack of cognitive reflection had led to ‘the enthusiasts’ claim that the

terms used by Paul here are almost impossible to translate into modern western languages because of the massive accumulation of psychological and theological baggage attached to the available modern terms.

In a first century world, the terms are shaped by Paul's perspective out of his Jewish heritage with additional Christian insight added. To pray γλώσση signifying that only one's πνεῦμά is engaged actively means, against the backdrop of Rom. 8:26-27, to pray using non-intelligible sounds the στεναγμοὶς ἀλαλήτοις, *sighs too deep for words*. But this means that reflective analysis of such words, i.e., the disengagement of one's

parousia had already come; this had shaken them from a right mind (ἀπὸ τοῦ νοῦς, 2 Thess 2:2).¹⁶⁰ 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).¹⁶¹ 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.¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³ 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.’¹⁶⁴

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1109–1111.]

νοῦς, the opposite of ἀλαλήτοις in Rom. 12:26, does not produce fruit for either the prayer or especially for the group hearing the ecstatic mumbling being spoken: ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστιν. This for Paul is wrong and counterproductive.

What then is the solution to this dilemma?, Paul asks with τί οὖν ἐστιν; (v. 15).⁹³ He answers his own question with two sets of declarations:

προσεύξομαι τῷ πνεύματι,
 προσεύξομαι δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ·
 ψαλῶ τῷ πνεύματι,
 ψαλῶ δὲ καὶ τῷ νοῖ.
 I will pray with the spirit,
 but I will pray with the mind also;
 I will sing praise with the spirit,
 but I will sing praise with the mind also.

Prayer and praise of God must reach down into the deepest part of who we are spiritually, i.e., τὸ πνεῦμά μου. But it MUST ALSO be expressed out of clear reflective meaning in intelligible words that everyone can understand, i.e., ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου. Thus both τῷ πνεύματι and τῷ νοῖ have to be brought together for authentic prayer and praise of God. With this personal illustration Paul has taken square aim at the phony ecstatic speech of the Corinthian elitists. Paul has rejected their false assumption from pagan religion heritage that ecstatic speech signals the individual can reach beyond his/her humanity and communicate with a deity in the god's language. No, a million times over!

The correct assessment is that believers must always reach out to God from the depths of their inner being in intelligible words reflecting spiritual insight that can give meaning to both their prayers and praise for both themselves and for the people around them. Thus prayer and praise focuses on God and communicating with Him, not on a self-glorifying action that enhances the status of the individual before the assembled group. The Corinthian elitists with their claim to superior ἡ γνῶσις have become puffed up, φυσιοῖ, with

⁹³“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 νοῖ). The connecting phrase τί οὖν ἐστιν; links the logic with the previous verse, almost certainly with the sense of So what follows? (Cf. Conzelmann, *What is the conclusion from this?*)¹⁶⁵ 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.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1111.]

pride and arrogance (cf. 8:1-3). In the process, they completely ignore or are totally ignorant of the superiority of ἀγάπη, the edifying love that builds everyone up, οἰκοδομεῖ.

vv. 16-17, discrimination against the outsider.

16 ἐπεὶ ἐὰν εὐλογῆς⁹⁴ [ἐν] πνεύματι, ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ιδιώτου πῶς ἐρεῖ τὸ ἀμήν ἐπὶ τῇ σῆ εὐχαριστίᾳ; ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν· 17 σὺ μὲν γὰρ καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς ἀλλ’ ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται. 16 Otherwise, if you say a blessing with the spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say the “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since the outsider does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may give thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up.

14.16 ἐπεὶ
 ἐὰν εὐλογῆς [ἐν] πνεύματι,
 ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον
 τοῦ ιδιώτου
 587 πῶς ἐρεῖ τὸ ἀμήν
 ἐπὶ τῇ σῆ εὐχαριστίᾳ;
 ἐπειδὴ
 τί λέγεις
 588 οὐκ οἶδεν·
 14.17 γὰρ
 589 σὺ μὲν καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς
 ἀλλ’
 590 ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται.

Paul now turns pointedly to the Corinthian elitists individually with the shift to the second person singular frame of reference.

The scenario stated in the protasis, ἐὰν εὐλογῆς [ἐν] πνεύματι, is of one of the Corinthian ecstatic speakers mumbling an εὐχαριστία while speaking [ἐν] πνεύματι, i.e., in ecstatic expression that is meaningless sounds. The setting here is of public assembly in one of the house church groups.

The response of the individual present hearing this meaningless sound is the apodosis and result main clause: ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ιδιώτου πῶς ἐρεῖ τὸ ἀμήν ἐπὶ τῇ σῆ εὐχαριστίᾳ; **The one filling the place of the idiots, how will he say “Amen” to your blessing?** With this rather creative label Paul identifies both fellow believers and non-Christians present in the group assem-

⁹⁴“The aorist subjunctive εὐλογῆσης is read by P⁴⁶, 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.¹⁸² The UBS 3rd and 4th ed. Greek New Testaments adopt the present without serious question.¹⁸³” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1114.]

bly to hear such mumbling. The phrase ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου gets close to the earlier Greek βάρβαρος (v. 11), but covers everyone not understanding meaning from the ecstatic mumbling. It takes a clear shot at the arrogant elitism of these ecstatic speakers in the Corinthian church, and reflects the superiority attitude toward everyone else by these elitists.

The ἰδιώτης, the source of the English word 'idiot,' is used five times in the NT with three uses here in chapter fourteen: 14:16, 23, 24 (+ 2 Cor. 11:6; Acts 4:13). The term in ancient Greek often served as the designation of the opposite to someone educated, powerful, in leadership etc. Although commentators speculate over its meaning here, the context clearly specifies a non-ecstatic speaker who is present in the assembled group. Consequently he/she is looked down up by the elitists as being inferior because of the 'lack of the ecstatic speech skill.' Paul alludes to such people being present in the house church group. They could be fellow believers who don't practice such mumbo jumbo, prospective individuals interested in Christianity, or simply visitors to the group as non-believers. The term is not synonymous with ὁ ἄπιστος, **unbeliever**, referenced often in 1 Cor: 6:6; 7:12, 13, 14, 15; 10:27; 14:22, 23, 24. An ἄπιστος would be an ἰδιώτης, but ἰδιώτης covers more than just ἄπιστος. In its ancient Greek usage ἰδιώτης always designates the opposite contextually of some individual or group perceived as exceptional or unique. Thus its meaning highly depends on the context of its usage. In vv. 23 - 24, Paul will use the phrase τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, **some unbeliever or outsider**, to designate not just a non ecstatic speaker but a prospective member to the group who may be either non-Christian or a believing non-member of this group. In either instance the individual doesn't use ecstatic speech and is rather puzzled if not frightened by it (cf. v. 23).

When such an individual, whoever he or she may precisely be, is present and listening to someone mumbling in ecstatic speech, this individual is completely excluded from participating in the worship experience since they are unable intelligently to say "Amen" to what was being mumbled: πῶς ἐρεῖ τὸ ἀμήν ἐπὶ τῇ σῆ εὐχαριστία; ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν, **how can he say "Amen" to your blessing? Since he does not know what you are saying.**

Significant is πῶς ἐρεῖ τὸ ἀμήν, **how can he say "Amen"?**⁹⁵ The amen is a signal of active participation

⁹⁵"In the NT and the surrounding Christian world the Heb. [אמן] is usually taken over as it stands. It is used in three ways.

"1. It is a liturgical acclamation in Christian worship (1 C. 14:16). As in the heavenly worship of Rev. 5:14 the four beasts respond to the praise of all creation with their Amen, so the congregation acclaims the εὐχαί and εὐχαριστία of the president with theirs (Just. Ap., 65, 3).⁶ The Amen thus retains its character of response, since it is to another that the people (the ἰδιῶται of 1 C. 14:16) reply with their ἀμήν (Did., 10, 6; Act. Thom., 29 to the

apostle; Act. Phil., 146 to the heavenly voice; Act. Joh., 94 to the Christ-Logos). To say Amen is the right of the baptised λαός (Act. Phil., 147). And the Amen first makes the προσφορά perfect (Act. Phil., 143). Sometimes the president himself joins in this Amen (M. Pol., 15, 1; Act. Phil., 117 f.).

"2. Christian prayers⁷ and doxologies themselves mostly end with Amen. Cf. for prayers M. Pol., 14, 3; 1 Cl., 45, 8; 61, 3; 64; Mart. Ptr., 10; Act. Joh., 77; for doxologies R. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gl. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tm. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tm. 4:18; Hb. 13:21; 1 Pt. 4:11; 5:11; Jd. 25; 1 Cl., 20, 12 etc.; 2 Cl., 20, 5; M. Pol., 21, 1; 22, 3; Dg., 12, 9 etc. This does not mean, however, the self-confirmation of the one who prays. It expresses the fact that in divine service prayer and doxology have their place before the people whose response they evoke or anticipate. We are to understand the ἀμήν in the same way when it comes at the end of a prophetic word (Rev. 1:7) or an epistle or book (R. 15:33; Gl. 6:18; Rev. 22:20). The last instances shows how a liturgical use can be turned to literary account. From the use of ἀμήν at the end of a doxology, in which it becomes part of the doxology or prayer, we can understand how it can come to have a place at the beginning as well, especially when it forms the link between a preceding doxology and that which follows (Rev. 7:12; Mart. Mt., 29). The combination with ἀλληλουῖά (Rev. 19:4; Mart. Mt., 26) may be explained by the acclamatory character of both terms and the tendency of exclamations to become more extensive.⁸

"That this Christian Amen has retained its original inward meaning may be seen from three passages in the NT. In Rev. 1:7 it occurs in close proximity to ναί == Yes. But Rev. 22:20 shows that it is the answer of the ἐκκλησία to the divine Yes. The Yes does not here introduce the eschatological petition but acknowledges the divine promise which is the basis on which the petition can be made. The Amen of the community makes the divine Yes valid for it. The Amen of 2 C. 1:20 is to be seen in the same light. Because the ναί of God, the fulfilment of His promises, is declared in Christ, by Him (== by the ἐκκλησία) there is uttered the Amen or response of the community to the divine Yes, so that the divine Yes forms a sure foundation for them (βεβαιῶν, v. 21). In the same way, in reminiscence of Is. 65:16, Christ Himself can be called ὁ Ἀμήν in Rev. 3:14, and the meaning of this ὁ Ἀμήν is brought out by the addition: ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ. He Himself is the response to the divine Yes in Him. And to the extent that in Himself He acknowledges and obediently responds to the divine Yes which is Himself, He is the reliable and true Witness of God.

"3. If, however, this meaning of Amen is retained in the Christian community, it is best preserved in the ἀμήν which Jesus places before His sayings in the Synoptic Gospels⁹ (30 times in Mt., 13 in Mk. and 6 in Lk., though the latter also uses ἀληθῶς at 9:27; 12:44; 21:3 and ἐπ' ἀληθείας at 4:25), and also in John's Gospel (25 times, liturgically doubled). That Jesus' command not to swear played any part in its use¹⁰ is nowhere indicated. For ܐܡܝܢ or ܐܡܝܢ ܡܢ might also have been adopted. The point of the Amen before Jesus' own sayings is rather to show that as such they are reliable and true, and that they are so as and because Jesus Himself in His Amen acknowledges them to be His own sayings and thus makes them valid. These sayings are of varied individual content, but they all have to do with the history of the kingdom of God bound up with His person. Thus in the ἀμήν preceding the λέγω ὑμῖν of Jesus we have the whole of Christology in nuce. The one who accepts His word as true and certain is also the one who acknowledges and affirms it in his own life and thus causes it, as fulfilled by him, to

in the worship experience of the assembled group. And it is based on understanding of what each speaker is saying. When something positive and spiritually correct is said in human language, the listeners can and should respond in affirmation of the truth being spoken.⁹⁶ This signals the listeners' commitment to the spiritual truths being spoken.

But in the case of ecstatic speaking, the listeners cannot respond positively with τὸ ἀμήν. They indeed should never naively respond thusly without clearly understanding and agreeing with what is spoken. Here Paul defines the content of the ecstatic mumbling as an intended εὐχαριστία by the speaker. That is, he supposedly was expressing thanksgiving to God in his ecstatic speech.

As the justifying amplification (γὰρ) in v. 17 expresses, the speaker supposedly speaks a good expression of thanksgiving: σὺ μὲν γὰρ καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς. But the ὁ ἕτερος, other person, alluded to as ὁ ἀναπληρῶν τὸν τόπον τοῦ ἰδιώτου in the preceding declaration, is not built up, οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται, i.e., made stronger spiritually. Thus the first and most important principle of edifying love is violated, and therefore invalidates what the speaker supposedly said.

It is important to note the intense distance between the ecstatic speaker and the listener set up here by Paul. First, the contrast is heightened by the μὲν... ἀλλ' structure that is very intense. Second, the listener is referenced as ὁ ἕτερος rather than the milder ὁ ἄλλος, furthering stressing the difference between the two. Third, Paul does not allow for personal benefit by the ecstatic speaker in this action. Rather, he frames it as σὺ μὲν καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς with the sense of 'you said your blessing correctly' in that speech directed toward God should always denote thanksgiving. What the ecstatic got out of his action was the attention of the group in a supposed demonstration of spiritual superiority. become a demand to others."

[Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 1:336–338.]

⁹⁶What is interesting is the radical difference in the mid-first century Corinthian practice of using τὸ ἀμήν and the dominant way it is used in modern western Protestant worship today. For Paul, τὸ ἀμήν comes out of rational reflection and recognition of something truthful being, spoken ἐπειδὴ τί λέγεις οὐκ οἶδεν. But in modern practice the saying of "Amen" is most often associated with an emotional response to something said by the speaker which may or may not be rationally understood. Typically the more emotional and less rational a worship experience is the more frequently listeners will say amen. Paul's teaching here reflects clearly the ancient Jewish practice in temple worship where the congregation responded in unison with τὸ ἀμήν, or more precisely with the Hebrew equivalent, ׀ם

Over and over Paul makes the point of the supreme priority of every action by an assembled group of believers for benefiting others present in the group: cf. the six uses of the verb οἰκοδομέω in 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4 (2x), 17, and the five uses of the noun οἰκοδομή in 3:9; 14:3, 5, 12, 26. The failure of οἰκοδομή happening with ecstatic speech invalidates such speech in public assembly: ἀλλ' ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται.

vv. 18-19, Paul's preference for preaching.

18 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ· 19 ἀλλ' ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοῦ μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσσει. 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 also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

591 14.18 Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ·
14.19 ἀλλ' ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοῦ μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσσει.

Now Paul returns (cf. vv. 14-15) to the personal illustration as a further proof of his thesis in vv. 1-5 and especially in v. 6.

Some basic observations must be noted for proper interpretation to happen. From the diagram notice the pivotal role of ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, in church.⁹⁷ The strong contrast is between what Paul does privately (v. 18) and what he does publicly in the assembly of believers (v. 19). He never uses ecstatic speaking personally in a public setting; it is always a private action away from an assembled group of believers.

Paul does make use of ecstatic language privately in the sense defined in Rom. 12:26-27. As an apostle divinely called by God, quite naturally he would reach out to God in his prayers quite a lot more than the typi-

⁹⁷"Virtually all commentators appear to agree that ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ has the force of **in the assembled congregation**.¹⁹⁷ 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).¹⁹⁸ 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." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1117.]

cal believer in the Corinthian church: cf. Gal. 1:1, 15-17. His relationship with God through Christ was in large measure defined by his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles. To him came unique divine revelation detailing the content of the Gospel that he was to preach and teach in the Diaspora world outside Palestine.

Thus his declaration in v. 18, *Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ, I am grateful to God that I speak in ecstatic language more than all of you.* This is not bragging. Rather, it is asserting that his experience with God went deeper and was more profound than that of all the Corinthians collectively. Indeed, he was no ἰδιώτης (v. 16) because he refused to use ecstatic speaking in public assembly. Rather, he was one of the chosen apostles of Christ! In this declaration is a sharp critique of the invalidity of the Corinthian elites' practice of ecstatic speech. They 'performed' publicly in order to dazzle the others present. This represented the importing of the pagan religious practices of ecstatic speech into the life of the Corinthian church. In spite of using "correct" ecstatic mumbling as a *εὐχαριστία* (vv. 16-17), no benefit was derived either to them or to the congregation. Just the opposite. It was injecting a phony sense of elitism into the life of the congregation that contributed then to the divisions and other messes in the church.

Thus Paul opts for the principle of edifying love when speaking to an assembled group of believers (v. 19). The strong contrastive conjunction *ἀλλ'* highlights this preference. His expressed desire to speak just five profitable prophetic words to the group over 10,000 unprofitable ecstatic mumbling dramatically highlights this principle of edifying love.⁹⁸

The point of the contrast is not statistical but rather quantitative in the sense of 'a few' in contrast to 'thousands upon thousands.' Also note that the preaching words are spoken *τῷ νοῦ μου, with my mind*, in contrast to the ecstatic language (cf. v. 15). That is, these 'few

⁹⁸“The numbers **five** (πέντε) in **five words** (NRSV, NJB) or **five intelligible words** (REB, NIV) and *ten thousand* (μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλῶσση, NRSV, NIV, NJB) are not numerical quantifiers (see also above on *μᾶλλον* as **more gifted**). **Five** is ‘a round number for ‘several’ ‘ (Luke 12:6; 14:9).¹⁹⁹ 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*.²⁰⁰ 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 worshipping people of God.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1118.]

words' come out of reflective understanding of God's thinking and are cast in intelligible human language so as to benefit others.

This personal illustration sets forth in no uncertain terms Paul's condemnation of the Corinthian elitists' practice of ecstatic speaking in public assembly. Their self-glorifying use of *γλώσσαις* was utterly false and pagan in its orientation. How anyone could try to justify public use of tongues speaking is impossible to understand in light of Paul's repeated and adamant condemnation of such.

vv. 20-25, the proper roles of αἱ γλώσσαι and ἡ προφητεία based on sacred scripture.

20 Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσὶν ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶν τέλειοι γίνεσθε. 21 ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χειλέσιν ἐτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος.

22 ὥστε αἱ γλώσσαι εἰς σημεῖόν εἰσιν οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις, ἡ δὲ προφητεία οὐ τοῖς ἀπίστοις ἀλλὰ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. 23 Ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε; 24 ἐὰν δὲ πάντες προφητεύωσιν, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων, 25 τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερὰ γίνεται, καὶ οὕτως πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον προσκυνήσει τῷ θεῷ ἀπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν.

20 Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking; rather, be infants in evil, but in thinking be adults. 21 In the law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people; yet even then they will not listen to me,” says the Lord.

22 Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all. 25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, “God is really among you.”

In this inner connected unit, Paul gives an ancient Jewish scribal midrashic treatment of Isaiah 28:11-12 in applying this OT text to the Corinthian situation.⁹⁹ He

⁹⁹**Isaiah 28:11-12** LXX. 11 διὰ φαυλισμὸν χειλέων διὰ γλώσσης ἐτέρας, ὅτι λαλήσουσιν τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ† 12 λέγοντες αὐτῷ Τοῦτο τὸ ἀνάπαυμα τῷ πεινῶντι καὶ τοῦτο τὸ σύντριμμα, καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησαν ἀκούειν.†

11 Truly, with stammering lip and with alien tongue he will speak to this people, 12 to whom he has said, “This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose”; yet they would not hear.

point to the significance of both ecstatic speech and preaching? Here is a real challenge, since the apostle did not use any sort of modern western reasoning to link up the text to his issues at hand.¹⁰³ Although very clear is that Paul is alluding to this passage in Isaiah, but he makes several significant modifications of the OT text as he reproduces his version of it.¹⁰⁴

Foundational is solving the question of how Paul linked up as parallel situations the issue of God with the sinful Israelites, i.e., Ephraim as addressed by Isaiah, and the Corinthian struggle over ecstatic speech.

Proper understanding of the historical setting for the Isaiah 28 statement helps throw some light on this issue.¹⁰⁵ Thus Paul quote portrays himself in the role

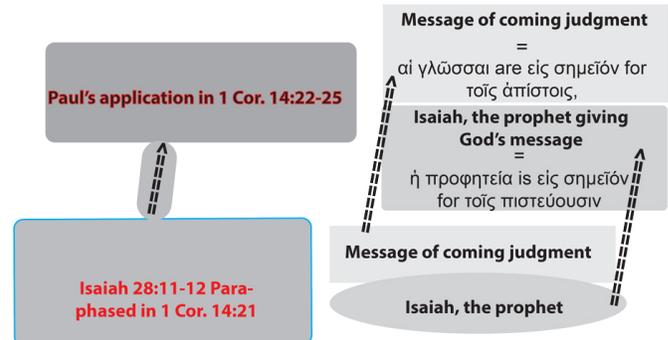
¹⁰³“The quotation, however, reflects precisely neither the LXX nor the Hebrew. C. D. Stanley observes in his specialist study: ‘Determining the precise relationship between the wording of 1 Cor 14:21 and the text of the LXX is one of the greatest challenges in the entire corpus of Pauline citations.’²⁰⁸ 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.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1120.]

¹⁰⁴“The main differences include (1) Paul’s choice of ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χειλέσιν ἐτέρων for the LXX’s διὰ φαυλισμὸν 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.²⁰⁹” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1120.]

¹⁰⁵“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.²¹⁰ 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.’²¹¹ ‘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 foreign-

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

Paul sees the message of coming doom by Isaiah as a signal, σημεῖόν, to unbelievers in the message of Isaiah equating hearing ecstatic speech as it signals that God exists and judges. But he sees the prophet Isaiah delivering this προφητεία to the people as the σημεῖόν of him giving προφητεία to the Corinthians for edification of believers. This is consistent with his amplification of the application in v. 22 through the explanation in vv. 23-25. Thus the Isaiah 28 oracle of doom has a double thrust to the Corinthian situation.



of the prophet Isaiah whose warnings of coming judgment were ridiculed by the corrupt leaders, priests, and prophets of Israel. These leaders saw themselves as wise and the prophet of God, Isaiah, as dumb. So they dismissed his message in favor of their ‘superior wisdom’ to opened the door for continued pagan influences into the lives of the Israelites. God resorted to a wide array of means to try to get this message across, but the people would not listen.

Now the connection of Isaiah to the Corinthian situation becomes clearer. The Corinthian elitists in their pagan wisdom felt themselves far superior in wisdom to the apostle Paul and were unlikely to heed his message to the church. This in spite of an assortment of unusual ways used by God to communicate His warning to them.

The application, vv. 22-25, expressed with ὥστε in v. 22 becomes clear. So also does the initial admonition in v. 20: Ἀδελφοί, μὴ παιδία γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσὶν ἀλλὰ τῇ κακίᾳ νηπιάζετε, ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶν τέλειοι γίνεσθε. **Brothers and sisters, do not be children in your thinking; rather, be infants in evil, but in thinking be adults.**

Paul begins this section with a twin negative/positive admonition. Don’t think like small kids; think like mature adults. This has some echo with the earlier criticism in 3:1-3.¹⁰⁶ He desires greatly to speak in wisdom [ers] would soon be teaching them a lesson....²¹² Bruce, Kistemaker, Allo, and Schrage paint a similar background.²¹³ [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1120–1121.]

¹⁰⁶**1 Cor 3:1-3.** 1 Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλήσαι ὑμῖν ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ’ ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ. 2 γάλα ὑμᾶς ἐπότισα, οὐ βρῶμα· οὐπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε, 3 ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε. ὅπου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε;

1 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

with them as he mentioned in 2:6.¹⁰⁷ But he recognizes in regard to the Corinthians what he has already stated about them in 2:14-15.¹⁰⁸ If they are going to get his point here in v. 20, they are going to have to think like mature adults and not like infants. And his point is taken from the divine revelation given by God to the prophet Isaiah and is very relevant to their situation in Corinth as divine truth as well: God has little tolerance for His people not obeying Him completely. And He is trying a variety of ways to get this message across to them, just like He did to the Israelites centuries earlier.

Interestingly, both ecstatic speech and apostolic preaching are being used by God for this purpose at Corinth, as vv. 22-25 describe. Thus is of ὥστε as a coordinate conjunction in v. 22a signals the application of the Isaiah text to the Corinthian situation.

Verse 22 makes the core application in a rather interesting manner, that can be charted out as follows:

αἱ γλῶσσαι	=	σημεῖόν	
εἰσιν		οὐ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν	___
		ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀπίστοις,	___
ἡ δὲ προφητεία	=	(σημεῖόν)	
(εἰσιν)		οὐ τοῖς ἀπίστοις	___
		ἀλλὰ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν	___

Both ecstatic speech and preaching function as a σημεῖόν but for two different groups in light of the divine revelation given to Isaiah. That is, αἱ γλῶσσαι are εἰς σημεῖόν to τοῖς ἀπίστοις, while ἡ προφητεία is εἰς σημεῖόν to τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. What is meant here turns completely on the meaning of σημεῖόν in this context. The question is how this Isaiah text points both to σημεῖόν and προφητεία? Here we see ancient Jewish scribal midrashic application at work, which is different than what one finds in the modern western world.

In this usage, σημεῖόν specifies a signal of application linkage. Thus the unbeliever should be alerted

2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3 for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?

¹⁰⁷1 Cor. 2:6. Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων·

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

¹⁰⁸1 Cor. 2:14-15. 13 ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς συγκρίνοντες. 14 ψυχικὸς δὲ ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γνῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται.

14 Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

by hearing αἱ γλῶσσαι that God is and has an awesome judgment awaiting sinners. This was what Isaiah sought to deliver to the corrupt elitists among the Israelites through ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χεῖλεσιν ἐτέρων, *people speaking in strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners*. Paul understood Isaiah to be declaring that God was trying to communicate to His people through the Babylonians speaking their form of Aramaic which the Israelites would have had a difficult time understanding at this point in their history. To be sure, it was an unusual and a somewhat strange way for God to get His message through, as Isaiah asserts. The unbelievers hearing ecstatic speech as being practiced by the Corinthians should signal to them the existence of God and a foreboding sense of the awesome power of this God these Corinthians were supposedly communicating with in ecstatic speech.

But on the other side, the prophet Isaiah both orally and in written expression did deliver this προφητεία to the Israelite people so that they could understand God's displeasure with their sinning. This becomes for Paul the σημεῖόν for believers in the church to hear his message in this letter as God's warning of His displeasure over what they were doing. Thus his letter as προφητεία should be heard and carefully obeyed. It came in very understandable speech.

What is fascinating in Paul's interpretive approach is that the elitist ecstatic speakers at Corinth are represented as the pagan Babylonians speaking, while he and those speaking the truth of God in the church represent the prophet Isaiah faithfully delivering God's message in very clear language to His people.

Thus εἰς σημεῖόν means 'this is equal to that' in building a bridge from Isaiah to the situation at Corinth. Although somewhat unusual in its application approach to moderns, it stands as a good example of how Jewish scribes in the beginning Christian era made contemporary applications of OT texts given to people centuries earlier.

The introductory admonition in v. 20, then becomes a 'heads up' alert that the Corinthians needed to 'put their thinking caps' on in order to follow him. Those out of a Jewish background in the church most likely would have understood clearly what Paul was doing, since in their Jewish heritage this was a standard way to understand the OT. It probably was more challenging for the non-Jews in the church to stay with Paul here in his treatment of Isaiah 28. But Paul clearly expects the mature thinkers in the congregation to understand him: ταῖς δὲ φρεσὶν τέλειοι γίνεσθε, v. 20b.

In verses 23-25, Paul amplifies the core application made in v. 22: 23 Ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται

ἢ ἄπιστοι, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε; 24 ἐὰν δὲ πάντες προφητεύωσιν, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων, 25 τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερά γίνεται, καὶ οὕτως πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον προσκυνήσῃ τῷ θεῷ ἄπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν. 23 *If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reproved by all and called to account by all. 25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, "God is really among you."*

The inferential conjunction οὖν defines this link as making explicit in the following statements what is considered to be implicit in the previous statement. He does this by two third class conditional declarations which can be charted out in the Greek as follows:

Protasis 1: λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις

Ἐὰν οὖν συνέλθῃ ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, εἰσέλθωσιν δὲ ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι,

Apodosis 1:

οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε;

Protasis 2: πάντες προφητεύωσιν

ἐὰν δὲ πάντες προφητεύωσιν, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης,

Apodosis 2:

ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων, τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερά γίνεται, καὶ οὕτως πεσὼν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον προσκυνήσῃ τῷ θεῷ ἄπαγγέλλων ὅτι ὄντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν.

The two conditional sentences play λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις against προφητεύωσιν as negative then positive. The common setting is a gathered assembly of one of the house church groups with ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι / τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης present in the gathering. In the first negative scene the 'outsiders' or unbelievers observe the ecstatic speaking going on and conclude that the group is made up of morons: οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε *will they not say that you are crazy?*

On the positive side with the opposite scene of preaching taking place τις ἄπιστος ἢ ἰδιώτης, *some unbeliever or outsider*, who comes into the meeting will

a) come under conviction by hearing the preaching, ἐλέγχεται ὑπὸ πάντων;

b) will be called to account for his living, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων;

c) the secrets down inside him will become clear, τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας αὐτοῦ φανερά γίνεται;

and d) he will fall down in worship declaring, "God truly is in your midst."

One should not conclude from the apodosis statements listed above that Paul is here outlining a process

of conversion. Instead, he is describing in idealized terms the potential impact of the working of the Holy Spirit upon the person who hears the Gospel message through προφητεία. Note carefully what the outsider/unbeliever exclaims. It is not a faith commitment to God of conversion. Instead, it is an acknowledgement that he has powerfully experienced the presence of the true God in this group. Hopefully for the ἄπιστος, this will lead then to an open faith commitment to Christ. For the ἰδιώτης, understood as a non-member believer visiting the group, the similar reaction becomes an affirmation of the sincere integrity of this house church group of believers, and thus he/she will be inclined to join the group. Thus only where the Gospel is communicated in clear, understandable human language is where the true presence of God can be experienced.

It is how Paul takes the Isaiah passage to new boundaries of application to the situation at Corinth that is very interesting. He sees καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος, *yet even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord*, in his understanding of the Isaiah text as negating the value of the use of strange languages in order to successfully communicate the Lord's warning. Thus even though αἱ γλώσσαι are a σημεῖόν for unbelievers, they fail to communicate successfully the message of God through the Gospel. Thus the unbeliever upon hearing all these mumbling going on in an assembled group of believers comes to the conclusion that Christians are crazy people. For some unbelievers the conclusion may have very well flowed along the lines of these Christians being worse than most all of the pagan temple deity followers. In them, at least it was only the priests and/or priestesses doing the mumbo-jumbo stuff, in contrast to most all the Christian group (πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις, v. 23).

vv. 26-33a, how to approach orderly worship at Corinth.¹⁰⁹ 26 Τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἀδελφοί; ὅταν συνέρχησθε,

^{109c}The term 'controlled speech' constitutes a recurrent refrain in William R. Baker's recent volume on personal speech-ethics.²⁶⁶ 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.'²⁶⁸ 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

ἕκαστος ψαλμὸν ἔχει, διδαχὴν ἔχει, ἀποκάλυψιν ἔχει, γλῶσσαν ἔχει, ἔρμηνείαν ἔχει· πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω. 27 εἴτε γλῶσση τις λαλεῖ, κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος, καὶ εἷς διερμηνευέτω· 28 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ᾗ διερμηνευτής, σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἐαυτῷ δὲ λαλείτω καὶ τῷ θεῷ. 29 προφηῆται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλείτωσαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν· 30 ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῇ καθημένῳ, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω. 31 δύνασθε γὰρ καθ' ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν, ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται. 32 καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται, 33 οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' εἰρήνης. 26 **What should be done then, my friends?c** When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person 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 the prophets, 33 for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

As the block diagram on the right will illustrate visually, the arrangement of this material is relatively easy to uncover. **First**, Paul raises a typical rhetorical question: in light of what I've just said, what is the proper thing to do? (v. 26a). **Second**, the first part of the answer in v. 26b is

(Plato, *Laws* 701C). Plutarch appeals to the symbolic 'fence of teeth in front of the tongue' as a guard for the ethics of speech.²⁶⁹ 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."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1131–1132.]

14.26 οὖν
Τί ἐστίν,
 ἀδελφοί;
 ὅταν συνέρχησθε,
 ἕκαστος ψαλμὸν ἔχει,
 διδαχὴν ἔχει,
 ἀποκάλυψιν ἔχει,
 γλῶσσαν ἔχει,
 ἔρμηνείαν ἔχει·
 πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν
πάντα... γινέσθω.
 14.27 εἴτε γλῶσση τις λαλεῖ,
 (ἔστω)
 κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς
 καὶ
 (ἔστω)
 ἀνὰ μέρος,
 καὶ
 εἷς διερμηνευέτω·
 14.28 δὲ
 ἐὰν μὴ ᾗ διερμηνευτής,
σιγάτω
 ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ,
 δὲ
ἐαυτῷ λαλείτω καὶ τῷ θεῷ.
 14.29 δὲ
προφηῆται δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλείτωσαν
 καὶ
οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν·
 14.30 δὲ
 ἐὰν ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῇ καθημένῳ,
ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω.
 14.31 γὰρ
 καθ' ἓνα
δύνασθε... πάντες προφητεύειν,
 ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν
 καὶ
 --- πάντες παρακαλῶνται.
 14.32 καὶ
πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται,
 14.33 γὰρ
οὐ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς
 ἀλλ'
 ----- **εἰρήνης** - ----.

a summarizing statement of basic principle concluded with the foundational principle of everything being done for mutual edification of the group. **Third**, he lays down very limited use of ecstatic speech in public assembly (vv. 27–28) the restricts such to no more than three individuals who must also provide an intelligible interpretation of what they have just muttered. Otherwise, no ecstatic speech is permissible. **Fourth**, in vv. 29–

33a he lays down guidelines for the use of προφητεία, preaching for the congregation. Thus the over arching structure is a rhetorical question posed and followed by a three part answer.

First in v. 26a (# 606) comes the rhetorical question: τί οὖν ἐστίν, ἀδελφοί; *What then is the situation, brothers?*¹¹⁰ The inferential conjunction οὖν signals that what follows makes explicit something implicit in the previous expression. It follows the earlier expression τί οὖν ἐστίν; in v. 15a. Both instances link two sections together via drawing an inference from the first statement and expressing it directly in the second.

Therefore what Paul put on the table especially in vv. 20-25 carries with it implications for conducting a gathering of a house church properly, rather than chaotically, which is displeasing to God.

Second, in v. 26b (#s 607-612) comes a summarizing set of principles using an unusual grammar pattern. In this compound sentence form, the first half is composed of a set of statements (#s 607-611) built around the proposed scenario introduced by the indefinite temporal dependent conjunction ὅταν, *whenever*, followed by the present tense subjunctive mood verb συνέρχησθε rather than the much more common aorist subjunctive verb form. The shift to the present tense emphasizes repetitiveness of occurrence rather than a one time instance. This becomes almost impossible to preserve in English translation. As the diagram above illustrates, this temporal dependent clause covers the following five main clauses (#s 607-611).

The depicted scenario ὅταν συνέρχησθε presents a typical gathering of the house church groups across the city.¹¹¹ How often and at what times these meetings

¹¹⁰“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?*).²⁷¹ 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.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1132–1133.]

¹¹¹“NJB uses **suppose** for εἰάν with the aorist subjunctive in 14:6 and 23, but arguably the present subjunctive here with ὅταν signifies repetition: whenever you assemble together.²⁷² Dunn believes that this verse provides ‘the *description of a typical gathering for worship*’ (my italics).²⁷³ 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.’²⁷⁴ 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

occurred could have easily varied from one group to the other. This is built into the indefinite temporal nature of the conjunction ὅταν and then reenforced by the use of the subjunctive verb συνέρχησθε. But the fascinating aspect is the window that this provides into what took place when believers met together in the house churches in Corinth. Whether this should be understood as a universal pattern in the Pauline churches or not is unclear. The listing of five items should be taken as a random sampling of actions rather than as an inclusive listing of what happened at each gathering. To be sure, Paul presents this in idealized form of what could happen possibly, rather as a precise historical description.

The contrast to modern patterns of worship ‘at church’ could not be greater. Two key terms need clarification for proper understanding: ἕκαστος and ἔχει. The pronoun ἕκαστος normally designates one person in distinction from others. Does the syntax of the Greek mean that one person possesses the five items listed as direct objects of the verb ἔχει? Although theoretically possible with the Greek syntax, it is not likely that Paul intended this meaning. The most natural sense of Paul’s statement is that an individual claims to have one or more of the speech ‘gifts’ ready to present to the congregation. And this should not be taken to imply that ever person present has something to say to the group.¹¹²

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.’”²⁷⁵ 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.’²⁷⁷

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1133.]

¹¹²“We have already discussed the impressionist (as against numerical) understanding of πάντες λαλώσιν 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.’²⁷⁹ 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*

The idea inherent in ἔχει is the opposite of spontaneous. Instead, the individuals come to the assembly prepared to offer some assumed insight to the group. In the dialogue between the speaker and the members of the group, a determination will be made collectively on whether or not what is presented is viewed as coming from God.

What are these five items that could function as a part of the assembly of the house church groups?

1) ἕκαστος ψαλμὸν ἔχει, One has a psalm. Although the term could include some Christian poetic composition, the most natural meaning is the sharing of a poetic expression found in one of Hebrew psalms. Not chanting it but simply saying it, probably in the LXX Greek version rather than the original Hebrew. This would especially be likely from the Jewish Christians present in the group.

2) διδαχὴν ἔχει, one has a teaching. Someone in the group comes to the meeting prepared to share a reflection on some aspect of the Gospel with those present. Whatever the source of the idea, the individual feels that it would enhance the spiritual life of the group and thus desires to share it in the meeting.

3) ἀποκάλυψιν ἔχει, one has something disclosed. Here the idea is very similar to the previous reference. Since the last meeting the individual either in personal meditation or reflection has come to a spiritual conclusion of some sort and thus comes prepared to share it.

One should note that these first three items relate closely to Paul's category of προφητεία which is elaborated in detail in the following verses of 29-33a. Thus a sharp distinction between ψαλμὸν, διδαχὴν, and ἀποκάλυψιν since all three are expressions of προφητεία.

The standard use of chiasmus at an informal level gives structure to how Paul presents this material:

- A προφητεία items in v. 26b,c,d.
- B γλώσση items in v. 26 e, f
- C foundational principle for all:
πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω, v. 26g
- B' γλώσση limits imposed in vv. 27-28
- A' προφητεία limits in vv. 29-33a

Clearly the most important principle is that every action in the meeting of the assembly should build up the entire group. Paul has repeated this theme over and over again: 14:3, 5,12, 26. These repetitions build off

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 ψαλμὸν), their item of teaching (διδαχὴν), or something disclosed (ἀποκάλυψιν)?" [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1134.]

3:9 and are further reinforced by the use of the verb οἰκοδομέω in 8:1, 10; 10:23; 14:4, 17. If all those present are not helped spiritually, then the action -- speaking etc. -- must not be permitted to happen in the meeting. And as the apostle has made abundantly clear, only oral communication in human based language has the possibility of benefitting the group. Ideas MUST be presented so that the mind can grasp and learn from it.

4) γλώσσαν ἔχει, One has tongues. One comes to the meeting to share something he has experienced in his private devotions during the week. The use of the singular γλώσσαν and γλώσση in v. 27, rather than the plural αἱ γλώσσαι (v. 27), underscores the private devotional experience of communicating with God. He may or may not repeat the στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις (Rom 8:26) experience earlier. But he has discovered something important to share with the group.

5) ἐρμηνείαν ἔχει, one has an explanation. Just as the first three items are inner connected under προφητεία, so items 4 & 5 are inner connected under γλώσση. In light of the statement Διὸ ὁ λαλῶν γλώσση προσευχέσθω ἵνα διερμηνεύῃ, *Thus let the one speaking in ecstatic expression be praying that he may be able to explain it* (v. 13), the contextual assumption is that the one wanting to share his γλώσση experience in private devotions must also be able to explain its meaning in clear human based language to the group. In the detailed explanation that follows, this point is made absolutely clear to his Corinthian readers.

Third, vv. 27-28, strict limits are imposed on ecstatic language use. 27 εἴτε γλώσση τις λαλεῖ, κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς καὶ ἀνά μέρος, καὶ εἷς διερμηνευέτω· 28 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ᾖ διερμηνευτής, σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἑαυτῷ δὲ λαλείτω καὶ τῷ θεῷ. *27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God.*

	^{14.27}	εἴτε γλώσση τις λαλεῖ,
613	(ἔστω)	κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς
		καὶ
614	(ἔστω)	ἀνά μέρος,
		καὶ
615	εἷς διερμηνευέτω·	
	^{14.28}	δὲ
		ἐὰν μὴ ᾖ διερμηνευτής,
616	σιγάτω	ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ,
		δὲ
617		ἑαυτῷ λαλείτω καὶ τῷ θεῷ.

After the more summarizing statements in v. 26, Paul now turns to the two central speech categories

seen as blessings of the Holy Spirit, γλώσση and προφητεύειν, and then lays down strict guidelines on how both must be utilized in the gathered assembly of each house church group.

Here it is clear both grammatically and contextually that the τις in v. 27a is the same person as the εἷς in v. 27c. Unfortunately most English translations do not make that clear in the way they handle these two references. The ecstatic speaker can only share what he has gained in personal devotional experience of ecstatic speech if he can share it through human language expression to the group.

Also Paul limits such sharing absolutely to no more than three individuals in the duration of the meeting. In contrast to what was happening at Corinth as per πάντες λαλῶσιν γλώσσαις in v. 23, only one person at a time can share his experience with the group: κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος. Finally, if one person can't explain what he has experienced earlier in his devotional time, then he must keep his mouth shut and not speak in the group: ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ᾗ διερμηνευτής, σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (v. 28a).

On his on outside the meeting he is free to practice this as he wishes, but he should remember that authentic speech is a communication between himself and God (v. 28b; cf. v. 2 also). Whatever he seeks to do in this regard had better be real rather than faked. This fakery was the current practice among the elitists in the assembled meetings and Paul absolutely calls a total halt to this. It reflects even a deviant practice from the pagans in the local temples. I can just imagine there being few 'amens' from the elitists as this letter was read to each of the house church groups at Corinth. It is understandable that a segment of the church became infuriated with Paul as 2 Cor. 10-13 describes.

Fourth, vv. 29-33a, strict limits are imposed on προφητῶν. 29 προφηται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλεῖτωσαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν· 30 ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῆ κατημένω, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω. 31 δύνασθε γὰρ καθ' ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν, ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται. 32 καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται, 33 οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' εἰρήνης. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person 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 the prophets, 33 for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

Paul now returns to the προφητεία category alluded to in the first three items of the initial listing in v. 26. There must be order and structure in what they do as

14.29 δὲ
618 προφηται δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλεῖτωσαν
καὶ
619 οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν·
14.30 δὲ
ἐὰν ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῆ κατημένω,
620 ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω.
14.31 γὰρ
καθ' ἓνα
621 δύνασθε... πάντες προφητεύειν,
ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν
καὶ
--- πάντες παρακαλῶνται.
14.32 καὶ
622 πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται,
14.33 γὰρ
623 οὐ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς
ἀλλ'
624 ----- εἰρήνης - -----
well.

He slaps a limit of no more than three individuals sharing with the group as well: προφηται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλεῖτωσαν. Thus in every meeting a maximum total of six individuals are allowed to share some spiritual understanding with the group. His phraseology for both categories clearly indicates his preference for less than six individuals to speak.

Part of the reason for this is expressed in the second declaration: καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν. All the others in the group are to engage in a critical dialogue with each speaker. The objective here is to come to a conclusion about whether what is spoken is authentically from God or not. This kind of 'hashing out' the truth, although very normative in both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures,¹¹³ meant that should disagreements arise over the legitimacy of something being said, the discussion could continue on quite some time. The typical custom in Paul's world was to keep on discussing an idea until some kind of consensus was reached by the group regarding its authenticity. The imperative verb διακρινέτωσαν means to thoroughly discuss in critical evaluation, and can include very heated debate. The present imperative form of the verb understands this as

¹¹³Those members of the church with a Jewish heritage would have well understood what Paul says here. The Friday evening synagogue gathering in the mid first century would have centered on vigorous debate and discussion of the pre-scribed readings of the Hebrew Bible. After the opening prayers, the scripture text would be read, and then the men in the assembly would be expected to discuss not only its meaning but also how it should apply to their present life and situation. Somewhat similar patterns existed all throughout the Greco-Roman society in the various social groups that functioned in gatherings either in some temple or in private homes.

a continuing process that goes on rather than one that momentarily happens.

One side note: ‘church’ in Paul’s world was not passive at all but a lively engaging of ideas by the members of the group. Modern worship practice seldom ever is this ‘free wheeling.’ Sometimes Bible study groups approach the ancient pattern with dialogue between the teacher and the group. But this is not the norm. I suspect less nonsense would take place in the modern setting if some of this ancient dynamic were injected into the modern practice.¹¹⁴ To be sure, some real cultural shifts would be absolutely essential. At the center of this shift would be realization that challenging what one says in no way is a challenge to the credibility and integrity of the individual himself/herself. The debate is about ideas, not people who express ideas.

In v. 30, Paul lays out another guideline to be followed: ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῆι καθημένω, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω, and if another seated person has been given some disclosure, let the first person be silent. That is, everyone must take turns with no individual ‘hogging’ the meeting. Respect for the other person here reflects the edifying love principle. No single individual has a monopoly on possible divine revelation.

Thus the rationale for this (γὰρ) is given in v. 31: δύνασθε γὰρ καθ’ ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν, ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται, for you all are able to preach one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged. Within the limits of the maximum three speakers (v. 29), all of them must have their turn to speak. Hopefully what each one says will be helpful and encouraging to the entire group. The discussion and debating of each one of the three speakers’ statements opens this possibility up much more effectively.

The second rationale in v. 32 is broader in principle expression: καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται, And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets. When one is speaking to the assembled group of believers he/she absolutely must lose a sense of awareness of what is going on in the group. The tendency for the speaker is to get so caught up in what is being spoken that all awareness of everything else vanishes. Paul demands that such no thing happen in a Christian gathering. Behind this ‘loss of control’ stands the powerful temptation toward egotism and the false thinking of the speaker that he is the only one with worthwhile ideas. Now Paul is clearly alluding to the

¹¹⁴My European friends reading this will understand the dynamic far better than those in the western hemisphere. Especially will this be true for those who experienced the older, more traditional German and French educational patterns in secondary school and university studies. My first encounter with this tradition in 1980 in Freiburg Germany was something of a shock. But I learned to fit in and came to enjoy this pattern immensely as by far the best way to come at the truth of some issue.

Corinthian elitists’ practice, and demanding that it be stopped. And not just with ecstatic speech but with all expressions to the group.

Why? The final statement in v. 33a introduced with γὰρ answers this question: οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ’ εἰρήνης, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. Probably a slightly better translation would take into full consideration the genitive of advantage functions of ἀκαταστασίας and εἰρήνης. Thus: for God is not for chaos; instead, He is for harmony and productivity.

Critical here is understanding both ἀκαταστασίας and εἰρήνης, since they have been greatly distorted in the interpretive history of this statement.¹¹⁵ Paul is not

¹¹⁵“Our translation follows Moffatt and NJB, which is also that of NRSV, REB, and NIV except for the word order of the negative (*God is not a God of disorder ...*). We have searched in vain for a stronger, more colorful word than **disorder** for the negated intensive compound word ἀκαταστασία. KJV/AV renders it *confusion*, which is acceptable lexicographically and reflects the Corinthian situation. Similarly, BAGD and other lexicons offer *disturbance*, *commotion*, and *unruliness* alongside *disorder*; which would cohere with the theme of God’s sovereign rule and the semantic contrast with **peace**.³³¹ However, chs. 12–15 portray the ordered nature of God’s purposive action in apportioning gifts and in creation and in resurrection, and Paul’s larger point is that this order in the nature of the God who acts coherently, faithfully, and without self-contradiction should be reflected in the lifestyle and worship of the people of God. Thus a gift given by the Holy Spirit to benefit everyone (vv. 28–32) would be undermined in a self-contradictory and chaotic way if the Spirit himself ‘fell upon’ this or that individual in such a way that responsible processes of ministry were disrupted and confused, and some missed out on part of what the Holy Spirit was communicating through responsible human agents.

“This perspective is confirmed with reference to the close affinity of the Greek words in a parallel expression of thought in Jas 3:16–17. The competitive jealousy and strife (ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις) which bedeviled church life at Corinth and rendered it self-centered (‘fleshly,’ σαρκικοί, 3:3; cf. 1:11 [ἔριδες], 12) are paralleled by the jealousy and strife (ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία) which bring unruliness or disorder (ἀκαταστασία) in Jas 3:16. James sets this in contrast to the wisdom which comes from God (ἡ δὲ ἄνωθεν σοφία), which brings peace (εἰρηνική, v. 17). In his book on the ethics of controlled speech in James and in the biblical, Jewish, and hellenistic background, W. R. Baker notes how the reciprocity of controlled speech and openness to listen and to learn in meekness and in modesty reflect the wisdom which characterizes the providence of God and God’s dealings with the world in divine wisdom: ‘A mature Christian knows how and when to deliver this powerful word for God’s good purposes.... James 3:18 bears witness to the integral part that peace and actions which promote it [including silence and refraining from speech] play in James’ hopes for the Christian community and even society at large.’³³² The source of this ‘wisdom,’ however, is God himself: it is ‘the perfect gift from God (1:17), whose nature such controlled order expresses and reflects.’³³³

“Yet the aspect of disturbance and commotion is not lost from view. ‘The God who gives the inspiration is not on the side of disorder and turbulence, but on that of peace. He cannot be the pro-

contrasting the modern liturgical and charismatic styles of worship here. Such didn't exist in Paul's world. This should be abundantly clear by this point in the exegesis of chapter fourteen. The content of the first century house church gathering was free flowing with a rice variety of elements possible surfacing in the process of each meeting.

It was not controlled by an ecclesiastical leader. Note that the standard leaders of house churches, the πρεσβύτεροι and διάκονοι, are never mentioned directly in all of this discussion. The πρεσβύτεροι normally would have presided over the gatherings but would not have been obligated to deliver a sermon etc. Mostly he/she would have provided a place of meeting and made arrangements for the meeting to take place. Very basic and limited leadership to the group would have come from them. Of course, they could -- and most likely often did - contribute to what was said. But the content of the meeting originated from those accepted to speak to the group. Usually these individuals came from inside the group. But on occasion when a recognized Christian leader attended the meeting, this person would be invited to speak. The pattern was modeled after that in the Jewish synagogue, as Luke describes in Acts 13:15-16a. The presiding πρεσβύτεροι in the Christian assembly functioned much the same way as the οἱ ἀρχισυνάγωγοι did in the synagogue.

Paul most likely did not bring them directly into the discussion because the elitist mentality had infected many of the πρεσβύτεροι and διάκονοι of many of the house church groups as well as other members. His instructions were targeting the entire group and not making the leadership primarily responsible for cleaning up the messes plaguing many of the house church groups. Their function solely in ministering to the group gave them no ecclesiastical authority over the group.¹¹⁶

moter of tumult, and therefore cannot inspire two people to speak simultaneously to the same audience. Inspiration is no excuse for conflict and confusion, and jealousies and dissensions are not signs of the presence of God (v. 25).²³³⁴ It is far more important to read ch. 14 in the light of the earlier chapters and of chs. 12-13 than to impose upon it a lens forged out of modern controversies surrounding charismatic renewal and theologies of church order as 'ecclesiologies.' Paul insists on 'order' not as self-contained 'doctrine of the church,' but because the church must reflect the nature of God and respect for 'the other'."

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1145-1146.]

¹¹⁶The modern Christian mindset with authoritative ecclesiastical leaders stands about as opposite of mid first century Christian practice as possible. It was only with the corruption of this first century apostolic model beginning in the second century that specific individuals claimed authority over everyone else in the congregation. And this perversion now is so embedded in Christian thinking that it is hard to conceptualize a church without authorita-

Any influence they had over a group came from their godly example as 1 Peter 5:1-5 makes very clear.

Thus, 'orderly' worship was to be a reflection of God and His way of doing things. Enthusiasm in worshipping God was not excluded but everything being done out of careful reflection and understanding of God's ways was mandated. The present pattern at Corinth, that Paul criticizes, reflected ἀκαταστασίας and produced observations that Christians were crazy people as v. 23 asserts. The opposite of ἀκαταστασίας here is εἰρήνης. The modern word 'peace' is woefully inadequate here since it normally defines as situation where war is absent. But biblically εἰρήνης references everything positive from God's blessings. The idealized picture of εἰρήνης is both the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve's sinning, along with the picture of Heaven in Rev. 22. The gatherings of God's people in assembly on earth should move as close to this ideal as possible.

But how could it when discussion and debate over the ideas being spoken is a central part of the meeting? For western hemisphere Christians and others in different parts of the world, such is hard to conceptualize. But European cultural traditions make such an understanding of a meeting with intense discussion being εἰρήνης is rather easy to conceptualize. Edifying love in Paul's mind in no way meant naive acceptance of what the other person said. Instead, it meant great respect for him and a willingness to challenge his thinking, especially if it was perceived to be wrong. The Truth that is God would only come to the surface in this kind of atmosphere, and acquiring this truth was at the heart of the assembly.

Conclusio, 14:33b-40.

Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἀγίων 34 αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλ' ὑποτασέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. 35 εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἀνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἐστὶν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ. 36 ἢ ἀφ' ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν, ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν;

37 Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή· 38 εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοεῖται. 39 Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί [μου], ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεύειν καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις· 40 πάντα δὲ εὐσημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω.

(As in all the churches of the saints, 34 women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church 36 Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the

tive leaders of some sort.

625 ^{14.34} αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν ·

γάρ

626 οὐ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν,

ἀλλ’

627 ὑποτασσέσθωσαν,

καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.

^{14.35}

δέ

εἰ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν,

ἐν οἴκῳ

628 τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν ·

γάρ

629 αἰσχροὺν ἐστὶν γυναικὶ

λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.

^{14.36}

ἢ

ἀφ’ ὑμῶν

630 ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν,

ἢ

εἰς ὑμᾶς

μόνους

631 κατήντησεν;

only ones it has reached?)

37 Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized. 39 So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; 40 but all things should be done decently and in order.

In reality, the *conclusio* summation of this discussion of Paul is contained only in vv. 37-40.

vv. 33b-36, the issue of wives. The pericope on women in vv. 33b-36 seems to be dropped into the text very arbitrarily as an interruption to the thought flow on the priority of preaching over ecstatic language.¹¹⁷ The diversity of viewpoint on these verses is massive.¹¹⁸ On

¹¹⁷“The translation and exegesis is immensely complex. Contextual factors are vital, including presuppositions about what the addressees were assumed to understand by language of which we know only Paul’s part of the dialogue. Nevertheless, the main themes of ‘controlled speech’ and ‘order’ (14:24-40) continue. We also note below the problems caused by issues of whether parts of these verses are un-Pauline, either by interpolation of by allusive quotation.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1146.]

¹¹⁸Allison, R. W., “‘Let the Women Be Silent in the Churches’ (1 Cor 14:33b-36): What Did Paul Really Say, and What Did It Mean?” *JSNT* 32 (1988): 27-60.

Barton, S. C., “Paul’s Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 225-46.

Ellis, E. E., “The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor 14:34-35),” in E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (eds.), *NT Textual Criticism and Its Significance for Exegesis: In Honour of Bruce Metzger* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 213-20.

Fitzner, G., *Das Weib schweige in der Gemeinde*, TEH 10 (Munich: Kaiser, 1963).

Flanagan, N. M., and E. H. Snyder, “Did Paul Put Down Women in 1 Cor 14:34-36?” *BTB* 11 (1981): 10-12.

Harrington, W., “Paul and Women,” *Religious Life Review* 25 (1986): 155-63.

Horrell, D. G., *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 184-95.

Klauck, H.-J., *1 Korintherbrief* (Würzburg: Echter, 1992), “Das Schweigen der Frau,” 104-6.

Kroeger, C. and R., “Strange Tongues or Plain Talk?” *Daughters of Sarah* 12 (1986): 10-13.

Maier, W. A., “An Exegetical Study of 1 Cor 14:33b-38,” *CTQ* 55 (1991): 81-104.

Manus, C. U., “The Subordination of Women ... 1 Cor 14:33b-36 Reconsidered,” *Review of African Theology* 8 (1984): 183-95.

Munro, W., “Women, Text, and the Canon: The Strange Case of 1 Cor 14:33-35,” *BTB* 18 (1988): 26-31.

Nadeau, D. J., “La probl me des femmes en 1 Cor 14:33b-35,” *ETR* 69 (1994): 63-65.

Niccum, C., “The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1 Cor 14:34-35,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 242-55.

Odell-Scott, D. W., “In Defence of an Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-6 ...,” *BTB* 17 (1987): 100-103.

———, “Let the Women Speak in Church: An Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-36,” *BTB* (1983): 90-93.

Osburn, C. D., “The Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35,” in Osburn (ed.), *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (Joplin: College, 1993), 1:219-42.

Payne, P. B., “Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14:34-35,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 240-62.

Petzer, J. H., “Reconsidering the Silent Women of Corinth ... 1 Cor 14:34-35,” *ThEv* 26 (1993): 132-38.

Ross, J. M., “Floating Words: Their Significance for Textual Criticism,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 153-56.

Rowe, A., “Silence and the Christian Women of Corinth ... 1 Cor 14:33b-36,” *CV* 33 (1990): 41-84.

one end of the spectrum is a complete denial of the Pauline origin of this pericope.¹¹⁹ To be sure, the text

Sigountos, J. G., and M. Shank, "Public Roles for Women in the Pauline Church," *JETS* 26 (1983): 283–95.

Wire, A. C., *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 149–58.

Witherington, B., *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

———, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, *SNTSMS* 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 90–104.

Wolff, C., *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, "Exkurs," 341–47.

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1146–1147.]

¹¹⁹*“An Interpolation?”* For more than a century various scholars have been convinced that 1 Cor 14:33b–36 has been interpolated into Paul’s text by someone other than Paul at a relatively early stage in the history of the tradition of the manuscript. On this view the verses are an expression of the social and ecclesial discipline represented by such NT passages as Eph 5:22–24; Col 3:18; 1 Tim 2:11–15; and 1 Pet 3:1–6.

“Scholars who favor the interpolation theory include Christian Holsten (1880), Daniel Völter (1889), Alfred Loisy (1922), Walter Schmithals (1956), Robert Jewett (1978), Gerhard Sellin (1987), Eduardo de la Serna (1991), Jouette Bassler (1992), J. H. Petzer (1993), Richard Hays (1997) and, especially, Winsome Munro. In a series of articles (1973, 1988, 1990) Munro claimed that the interpolation consists of a somewhat larger segment containing vv. 32–38. In the NRSV and some other recent translations of 1 Corinthians vv. 33b–36 are printed in parentheses or brackets, an editorial procedure that betrays the editors’ hesitancy as to the authenticity of the verses.

“Those who doubt the authenticity of these verses argue that they break Paul’s line of thought. The other side of this argument is that v. 37 seems easily to follow v. 33a. In addition, some of the language is non-Pauline, especially the phrase ‘the law says,’ used as a cipher for a substantive argument in a discussion. Paul generally expresses a somewhat negative view of the law (*ho nomos*; cf. 15:56). When he wants to develop a scriptural argument he cites the pertinent passages of Scripture (cf. 9:9; 14:21), rather than making a merely general reference under the rubric of ‘the law.’ A final argument in favor of the inauthentic character of vv. 33b–35 is that the silence of women in the Christian assembly conflicts with 11:5. That verse establishes a kind of dress code for women who pray and prophesy during the assembly. To these various internal arguments against the authenticity of 14:33b–36 one can add that the idea of the subjection of women expressed in 14:34 goes contrary to Paul’s view of women as his coworkers (14:19, see note; Phil 4:2–3; Rom 16:1–5) and Paul’s idea that the Christian is not enslaved to anyone (cf. 6:12).

“That some majuscules (D, F, G) and some Western witnesses to the Latin text type (including some Old Latin manuscripts and Ambrosiaster) place the verses at the end of ch. 14 (after 14:40) adds an external argument in favor of the hypothesis of interpolation. Such ‘movement’ of a passage from one location to another within text is often an indication of the weak hold that it has on the claim that it belongs to the text. The phenomenon is not unknown in the history of the manuscript tradition of the NT (cf. John 7:53–8:11), but instances of it in the Pauline corpus are relatively rare. P. B. Payne (1995, 1998) introduced into the discussion of the

did bother some copyists enough that its location was shifted from following v. 33a to after v. 40.¹²⁰ But the shift reflects uncertainty over its location rather than over its authenticity.¹²¹ The majority of the manuscript state of the text the evidence of a Latin manuscript (Codex Fuldenis, 546 or 547 C.E.) and the scribal sigla in B. He cites Bishop Victor of Capua, under whose authority the Codex Fuldenis was produced, as an ancient witness to the idea that the passage is an interpolation.

“There are, indeed, various reasons to consider vv. 33b–36 as a later interpolation into Paul’s text. The arguments are, however, not weighty. The manuscripts where the passage wanders to the end of ch. 14 are few in number and closely related. They belong almost entirely to the Western type of text. The oldest manuscripts (P⁴⁶, κ , A, B) along with Ψ and the Byzantine tradition read the letter with the problematic verses in their canonical location.”

[Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 515–516.]

¹²⁰Verses 34–35 following 14.40 D F G it^{ar, b, d, f, g} vg^{ms} Ambrosiaster Sedulius-Scottus

[Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).]

¹²¹“The UBS 4th ed. Greek New Testament classifies vv. 34–35 as ‘B,’ i.e., ‘the text is almost certain,’ although the UBS 3d ed. also used ‘B’ but in that earlier edition this classification indicated ‘some degree of doubt.’ The basic facts are that the Western, D, E, F, G, the later 88*, and fourth-century Ambrosiaster displace vv. 34–35 to after v. 40. However, the very early P⁴⁶ (Chester Beatty, c. AD 200, together with κ , B, A, 33, 88 mg, Vulgate, Old Syriac, and most other MSS) read these verses in their normal, accepted place. Many writers (including Weiss, Conzelmann, Klauck, and Senft) use this displacement in the Western text as part of an argument for the view that these verses are an interpolation, but *we must keep our textual judgments distinct from arguments of other kinds*. Surprisingly, Fee is one of those who place most weight on the textual variants, indicating ‘a very early marginal gloss that was subsequently placed in the text at two different places,’ and that these verses were ‘not part of the original.’³³⁶ This variant displacement ‘may not be shunted aside.’³³⁷

“While others agree that vv. 34–35 (or vv. 33b–36) are an interpolation, few place the weight that Fee does on a textual variant which Wire, with meticulous scholarship, shows to rest on a single MS tradition (see below). Metzger and Zuntz in fact find it entirely understandable that an early copyist should move vv. 34–35 to the end of the chapter for any of several reasons.³³⁸ Fee’s claims about the paucity of evidence for this type of displacement in the NT where the displacement is artificial seems to be answered by the range of evidence put forward by J. M. Ross.³³⁹ A thorough assessment is offered by A. C. Wire. She points out that every ‘displacement’ MS is either a Greek-Latin bilingual or a Latin text, that E is a direct copy of D, and that F and G are so close to each other that it is widely agreed that they copied the same edited text. In practice only D and G remain as two witnesses, which in turn almost certainly come from ‘a single common archetype.’³⁴⁰ This distinctive Western text gives rise only to the appearance of a variety of Latin text-types, since these depend on the same single tradition. Wire further explains why the anomalous twelfth-century 88* reading is not a survival of earlier pre-Latin texts, but reflects a reactive

evidence, however, favors its inclusion after v. 33a, even though the wording in them varies somewhat.¹²²

scribal activity. Finally, in contrast to Fee, and with Metzger, she offers several possible reasons why the D tradition should have displaced the original authentic sequence which occurs in our texts (UBS 3d and 4th eds.). One relates to errors in copying (e.g., haplography) and their correction; a second, to an attempt to 'improve' the text; a third, to ideological interests on the part of a corrector: 'it is not scientific to exclude a priori the possibility of a translator's or scribe's ideological decision to displace or omit a passage silencing women.'³⁴¹ She cites the period of Montanism and Tertullian as a possible background for such changes.

"The debate has become intensified by two highly detailed and meticulous studies by Philip Payne (1995) and by Curt Niccum (1997), each of which reaches different and opposing conclusions: Payne argues on the basis of the Vaticanus 'bar umlaut and/or umlaut text-critical sigla ... of the textual variations' that new textual and internal evidence 'strengthens an already strong case that 1 Cor 14:34–35 is an interpolation'; Niccum reviews every aspect of the debate (including Wire and Payne), and concludes, 'No extant MS offers evidence for an original omission of 1 Cor 14:34–35.... No other reading has claim to being 'original' other than that of preserving the traditional sequence of verses.'³⁴² Payne urges that Metzger overlooked the textual evidence of Codex Fuldensis as an important witness to the omission of the verses. Niccum attacks Payne's appeal to 'bar umlauts' marks as at best confused and as postdating the fourteenth century. The earliest known witness to a transposition of sequence in the passage is Ambrosiaster (late fourth century). He cites good reasons for a later reapplication of 'in all the churches.' Niccum's pages are packed with powerful and succinct arguments which prove convincing.

"Further arguments concerning the strictly textual issue are urged by others mainly in the same direction as Wire (anticipating Niccum) but sometimes with Fee. Horrell defends Fee's position, arguing that Wire has failed to address the issues fully.³⁴³ Earle Ellis argues that vv. 34–35 constitute a marginal note added by Paul himself after reading through the draft of 1 Corinthians.³⁴⁴ Stephen Barton accepts and develops this idea further.³⁴⁵ On the other side, however, even Conzelmann, who believes that the verses are an interpolation on internal grounds (i.e., exegetical and theological, not textual), concedes that the Western readings are themselves 'no argument for the assumption of an interpolation.'³⁴⁶ Witherington expresses strong scepticism about the weight of the textual arguments: 'Displacement is no argument for interpolation. Probably these verses were displaced by scribes who assumed that they were about household order, not order in worship, scribes working at a time when there were church buildings separate from private homes.'³⁴⁷ (The earliest Western text witness is around AD 375.) Again, many of Fee's points seem to be amply addressed by J. M. Ross, who categorizes different types of displaced or 'floating' texts within the NT. He argues that if the verses were an interpolation, this would be 'very early, almost before any copies had been made, certainly before the writing of 1 Tim 2:11–13.... We are bound to accept the unanimous testimony of the manuscripts, however deeply we may regret that Paul expressed this opinion.'³⁴⁸

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1148–1150.]

¹²²**34-35** {B} include verse 34-35 here (with minor variants)
P⁴⁶ x A B Ψ 0150 0243 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175
1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464 Byz

Internally with the wording, phraseology etc., compelling reasons exist to suggest that the pericope has a Pauline origin.¹²³ The best conclusion is that they do belong here in Paul's letter.

Next, the challenge is how to properly understand them.¹²⁴ This is especially complex in light of the chapter seven discussion of proper appearance for women when preaching and praying in a leadership role in the Christian assembly. Yet the thrust of this pericope seems to move along somewhat similar lines to 1 Tim. 2: 11-13.¹²⁵ **2 Tim. 3:6-7 makes it clear, however, that at** [K L] *Lect it^o vg syr^{p, h, pal} cop^{sa, bo, fay} arm eth geo slav* Origen Chrysostom Theodoret; Pelagius [Kurt Aland et al., *The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition (with Apparatus); *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (with Apparatus) (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; Stuttgart, 2000).

¹²³There are, moreover, substantial internal arguments that confirm the Pauline character of the text. These bear principally upon its vocabulary and syntax. The disputed passage's references to speaking, being silent, being subject, and the assembly link these verses to what Paul has said in the immediately preceding paragraph. It may be argued that Paul's vocabulary is somewhat unusual, but six key expressions occur in 1 Corinthians in an immediately adjacent or similar context: 'to be silent' (sigaō) in 14:28, 30; 'to be subject' (hypotassō) in 14:32 (cf. 15:27–28 [6x]; 16:16); 'the law says' (ho nomos legei) in 9:8; 'to learn' (manthanō) in 14:31 (cf. 4:6); 'their own husbands' (idioi andres) in 7:2 (in the singular); 'shameful' (aischros) in 11:6. Verses 33b–36 are, moreover, structured in a way that is similar to Paul's exhortations to prophets and those speaking in tongues. In each instance the instruction is followed by a conditional clause and with regard to women and to prophets there is a final motivation (vv. 34b; 35b).

"To the extent that some of the phraseology and some of the content of 14:33b–35 has a non-Pauline sense this may be due to Paul's summarizing not his own thought, but the argument of another. In any case the argument for 14:33b–36 as an interpolation into Paul's text does not have sufficient merit. These verses belong to the letter and must be explained in context. Verses 33b–36 represent a conservative argument that Paul rebuts by means of the double rhetorical question in v. 36. To demand the silence of women in the Christian assembly is to claim for oneself a monopoly on the word of God. Such a monopoly no one can claim."

[Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 516–517.]

¹²⁴"All this is further compounded by the fact that many view these verses (or some verses) as a non-Pauline interpolation by a copyist; others view them as a quotation of a Corinthian view which Paul rejects; yet others perceive them as a pre-Pauline tradition which Paul accepts and adapts." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1147.]

¹²⁵**1 Tim. 2:11-15.** 11 Γυνή ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ μαθησθήτω ἐν ᾧ κυρίου ὑποταγῇ· 12 διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκα οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρὸς, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ. 13 Ἀδὰμ γὰρ πρῶτος ἐπλάσθη, εἶτα Εὕα. 14 καὶ Ἀδὰμ οὐκ ἠπατήθη, ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν· 15 σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης·

11 Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. 12 I

Ephesus false teachers found the women in the church to be easy prey for their heretical teachings.¹²⁶ He accuses them of having some of the traits that the apostle criticizes among the Corinthian elitists. First Corinthians was written from Ephesus some eight to ten years earlier. Does the issue of young wives out of control at Ephesus play a role in the issue of lack of controlled speech at Corinth as well?¹²⁷ One must never forget

permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

¹²⁶**Tim. 3:6-7.** Ἐκ τούτων γάρ εἰσιν οἱ ἐνδύοντες εἰς τὰς οἰκίας καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντες γυναῖκάρια σεσωρευμένα ἀμαρτίας, ἀγόμενα ἐπιθυμίαις ποικίλαις, 7 πάντοτε μανθάνοντα καὶ μηδέποτε εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἔλθεῖν δυνάμενα.

6 For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, 7 who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

¹²⁷Christian assemblies took place on a rather small scale. They occurred in the homes of Christians. At home, and particularly in Greco-Roman society, women took a more active role than they did in public civic life. Some commentators (Stephen Barton, Caroline Vander Stichele, etc.) suggest that there may have been some blurring of the distinction between domestic and community roles among the Christian women of Corinth, women assuming a role in the assembly that was normally theirs as wife and mother simply because the assembly took place at home. If this were the situation, Paul would be reminding the Christians at Corinth that their gathering really enjoyed the character of a public assembly. Roles that were appropriate at home should not be indiscriminately brought into a Christian assembly, exception always to be made for the kind of privileged communication between God and human, and vice-versa, that can be appropriately called prophecy and prayer as in 11:5. What is appropriate at home is not necessarily appropriate in a Christian assembly (cf. 11:22).

“On another reading of the sub-unit on women’s role in the assembly the situation Paul had in mind was disorderly chattering (*lalein*), perhaps under the guise of prophecy or speaking in tongues. Some women may have been speaking in a frenzied fashion similar to that experienced in the cult of Dionysus. Since Paul focuses on their questions in v. 35 it might be that he had in mind women raising questions in the assembly or, following a Delphic model, female prophets responding to questions, often about one’s personal life, that other people had asked. Other commentators suggest that the situation might be that of an early Gnostic woman’s liberation movement in which some women wanted to speak their mind in the presence of the Christian assembly. Paul would have considered such interventions as these as being ‘out of order.’ One difficulty with this line of reasoning is that Paul’s ‘rule’ seems to be general and not specific to the situation at Corinth (see, however, note on v. 33b).

“Since v. 35 speaks about women getting information from their husbands at home some commentators (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, etc.) are of the opinion that Paul is not talking about women in general, but only about married women. It would have been on married women that the injunction to be silent falls. As a sign of their subordination they should remain silent in the assembly. If they need to know something they should speak to their

the social situation in the mid first century world. The vast majority of the wives in the church were teenagers and the percentage would diminish with the number of older women. The huge majority of them were illiterate and could neither read nor write. Greco-Roman education was for boys and girls were to be trained by their mothers on being good mothers and wives. Some of this emphasis shows up inside the NT, e.g., Titus 2:3-5.¹²⁸ Only in isolated instances did girls receive any kind of formal education remotely like their brothers did.

With vv. 33b-36 placed in between two strong emphases on self control and worldliness in the assembly (vv. 26-33a, and 37-40), the context argues strongly that lack of control by at least some of the women in the assemblies was a part of the problem at Corinth as well as at Ephesus. To be sure, Phoebe who led a house church group at Cenchreae some few kilometers south of Corinth served as an excellent model (cf. Rom. 16:1). At the beginning, the church in Corinth had the example of Christian leadership given by Priscilla (Acts 18:1-4, 18).

Another way of viewing vv. 33b-36 has gained increasing accepts across the scholarly world over the past fifty or so years.¹²⁹ This way of viewing the text husbands at home. To this one could object that 11:2-16 speaks of the appearance of women who pray and prophesy in the assembly, presumably married women as well (cf. 11:3). For Antoinette Wire the discussion on women’s appearance in 11:2-16 is a concession on the part of the apostle. His real goal is to obtain the silence of women in the Christian assembly. As such Paul would be urging a kind of social conservatism that would anticipate the discipline of the churches of later generations (1 Tim 2:11-12; cf. Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1). Paul has, however, such favorable things to say about women, many of whom he looks upon as his coworkers (1:11; 16:19; Rom 16:1-16; Phil 4:2-3; Phlm 2; cf. Acts 16:11-40; 17:34; 18:2-26; Col 4:15; 2 Tim 4:21), that Wire’s opinion seems quite implausible.”

[Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 513-514.]

¹²⁸**Titus 2:3-5.** 3 πρεσβύτιδας ὡσαύτως ἐν καταστήματι ἱεροπρεπεῖς, μὴ διαβόλους μὴ οἶνω πολλῷ δεδουλωμένας, καλοδιδασκάλους, 4 ἵνα σωφρονίζωσιν τὰς νέας φιλάνδρους εἶναι, φιλοτέκνους 5 σώφρονας ἀγνάς οἰκουροὺς ἀγαθὰς, ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, ἵνα μὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ βλασφημῆται.

3 Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.

¹²⁹It may be that Paul is not at all encouraging women to be silent in the assembly, at least no more than he enjoined men to be silent. It may be that in vv. 33b-36 Paul is dealing with men who wanted to maintain their own patriarchal status and so require women to be silent in public and subservient to their husbands at home. The argument of these men took the form of an appeal to

answers most of the questions that the text raises in a satisfactory manner. Yet unresolved tensions between chapters eleven and fourteen do remain. This approach sees vv. 33b-35 as reflecting a sexist stance against women in the church that is intended to maintain male dominance. Vv. 36-40 then become his rebuke of this Corinthian elitist position. But criticisms of this approach have been put forth with serious analysis that make it somewhat less likely to be what Paul is doing here.¹³⁰

accepted *halakah* and the practice of the synagogue (vv. 33b-34). To this would have been added an argument from shame (v. 35b), so important in the social circumstances of first-century Mediterranean culture. For women to speak in an assembly dishonors, these people might have claimed, the women themselves as well as their husbands. On this view vv. 33b-35 represent the position of some people at Corinth, much in the fashion of the 'slogans' summarizing positions with which Paul was constrained to take issue. Some of these slogans appear to have been buzzwords circulating among the Corinthians (6:12, 13; 7:1; 10:23), but others may have been Paul's own formulation (1:12), as could be the case here.

"Having summarized their argument in this casuistic section of this letter, the apostle rejects it out of hand. His double rhetorical question is a quick dismissal. To those who would appeal to traditional *halakah* in an effort to silence female prophets Paul offers a blunt reminder that the word of God did not originate from them; neither do they enjoy some sort of an exclusive claim on the word of God. If the Spirit wills (12:11), the gift of prophecy can be allotted to women. Gender is not a qualification for the gift of prophecy, which is given for the benefit of the whole community (see 14:29). To prevent a woman who was so endowed from speaking within the assembly is an obstacle to God's working within the community."

[Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 7, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 514-515.]

¹³⁰“D. W. Odell-Scott is perhaps most widely associated with this view, both in an article of 1983 and a further response to Jerome Murphy-O'Connor in 1987.³⁵² However, Manus, Flanagan and Snyder, and Allison all offer variants of this view also (see below). Odell-Scott regards the key particle ἤ, *Or*, at the beginning of v. 36, as offering a resounding rhetorical rejoinder to the conservative patriarchal rule expressed by a group at Corinth in the words of vv. 34-35: *Or was it from you that the word of God went out?* (v. 36). According to Odell-Scott, since this can be understood as a strong rebuttal of vv. 34-35, the passage emphatically endorses the authority of women to speak in the public congregation.

“This view also finds expression in slightly different terms in C. Ukachukwu Manus. He understands it as Paul's rebuttal of a male sexist group at Corinth who insisted on a strong subordination of women especially here within marriage.³⁵³ This approach, however, develops a view which was formulated more tentatively in 1981 by N. M. Flanagan and E. H. Snyder.³⁵⁴ More recently in 1988 R. W. Allison provided perhaps the most detailed development of this same approach. He regards vv. 33b-36 as coming from an earlier letter from Paul to Corinth, in which vv. 34-35 represent the hierarchical view of a conservative group at Corinth, v. 33b is an editorial link, and v. 36 introduces Paul's indignant rhetorical questions following the disjunctive particle ἤ.³⁵⁵ He suggests an original setting in which Paul argued for eschatological freedom. ‘Paul's rhetorical questions are his sarcastic rebuttal of

But is there an alternative understanding that is better? A number of scholars have proposed another understanding of the text that gives substantial consideration to cultural standards -- especially [honor/shame](#) principles -- as well as to the precise meaning of four key terms contextually: λαλέω (repeatedly from 14:14 to 32), σιγάω (14:28, 30, 34), ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (14:28, 35; cf. 34); and ὑποτάσσω (14:32, 34).¹³¹ Standing in the background may very well have been the notorious frenzied speech and public behavior traditions of the priestesses especially of the cult of [Dionysus](#). A lot of this was also associated with the cult of [Aphrodite](#), which had one of its major temples in Corinth. Clearly Paul is concerned to put as much distance between Christianity and paganism as is possible. Very possibly the behavior of many of the women, especially the married ones, in the meetings would have blunted greatly that distinction to an outsider visiting the group. These women mostly in their teens and twenties would have been a real distraction.

Again the social background in mid first century Corinth stands some of the women, mostly married, who are not necessarily into the ecstatic speech thing. Instead, in the dialogue exchange after a member's sharing of some spiritual insight, they vigorously join in the discussion, often disagreeing with husbands and most others in the group.¹³² In their passionate

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. 33.³⁵⁸ 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.’³⁵⁹ 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).’³⁶⁰ The decisive objection, however, arises under the next heading.”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1151-1152.]

¹³¹Here I will summarize the view of Thiselton, NIGTC, who has the most detailed and best articulated depiction.

¹³²“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

questioning of the legitimacy of what was spoken as a προφητεία, they severely ruffle the feathers of most everyone else in the group. Very critical here is the critically important social custom of [honor/shame](#) in that world. A woman's public contradiction of a man's publicly stated view was considered a hugely shameful action that produced shame not just on the woman, but also the man. And if he was her husband, then shame came down hard on the entire household by her action.¹³³

This social principle -- both Greco-Roman and especially Jewish -- seems to stand behind Paul's statement αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, [for it is shameful for a woman / a wife to so speak in church](#) (v. 35b). If the confrontation came from a woman with little or no education and especially without formal education in rhetoric that was central in the boys' training, then Paul's words are more understandable. The disagreeing would quickly disintegrate into mere shouting without rational reflection, which Paul demanded of every speaker (cf. v. 32).

The sense of order in the meeting asserted by Paul in both vv. 33a (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' εἰρήνης) and 40 (πάντα δὲ εὐσημῶνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω) requires decorum and proper respect being shown in the meeting. Anyone violating this must stop speaking in the group, the contextual sense of σιγάτωσαν in v. 34, and also in vv. 28 and 30. This is further signaled by ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν in v. 35, where the sense is ['let her interrogate her husband at home'](#) rather than publicly before the group public meeting. The demand in v. 34b, ἀλλ' ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει [moves along the Jewish need for propriety especially in public](#) theology or even the prophet's lifestyle in public.³⁹¹ 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." [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1158.]

¹³³“In the Roman world honor was bound up with public life and was largely an issue for males in a patriarchal culture. Men represented the public face of a family or kinship group, and their task was to represent in an honorable way their family or constituency. The main role of women was to protect the family from shame, in particular from sexual shame.” [“Honor and Shame and the Apostolic Life,” [The Bible and Culture](#) online.]

for a husband, with the wife showing proper respect to her husband. Paul bases this on the Jewish Torah with the scribal introductory formula καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει, [just as the Law also says](#). This includes also the οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, [for there exists no permission](#).¹³⁴ Here the public image of the Christian group is at stake and wives bickering with their husbands especially over the legitimacy of a spoken προφητεία, [that perhaps the husband had shared with the group](#),¹³⁵

¹³⁴“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.³⁶³ 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.³⁶⁴” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1152.]

¹³⁵“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.³⁹³ 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.’³⁹⁴ 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.’³⁹⁵ 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.³⁹⁶ 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).³⁹⁷ 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 (*ἐπρώτησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν*) while in v. 61 the same verb moves from judicial investigation to virtual accusation.³⁹⁸ In hellenistic literature the word may be used of questioning the gods sometimes in the LXX sense of inquiring into God’s will.³⁹⁹ 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.⁴⁰⁰ They convincingly explain the compound *ἐπί* as having a directive force, which governs an accusative (here in v. 35 τοῖς ἰδίους ἄνδρα). 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.⁴⁰¹

“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.⁴⁰² 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.⁴⁰³ 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

would have done as much damage to the image of the church as the outsider’s assessment of mania upon observing lots of people using ecstatic speech at the same time in a meeting (cf. v. 23).¹³⁶

The sharp rebuke in v. 36 takes aim at the Corinthian elitists, along with those women who were disrupting the meetings with their behavior: ἡ ἀφ’ ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν, ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν; **Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?** The ἀφ’ ὑμῶν / εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους is Paul’s sharpest rebuke at elitism in the church thus far in this letter. The ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, *Word of God*, is the Gospel of Christ delivered by apostolic messengers, and not the property of the Corinthian elitists. But in their assumed ‘superior wisdom’ they felt that they had a monopoly control over it that excluded Paul and others representing the apostles.

vv. 37-40, concluding warning.

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.⁴⁰⁵ 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).’⁴⁰⁷ 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.⁴⁰⁸ We must keep in mind, however, our introduction on ‘controlled speech’ in biblical traditions (see above).”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1158–1161.]

¹³⁶Remember that in the Jewish synagogues in Corinth -- and elsewhere -- women were not permitted to even be in the same room with the men, much less say anything in the Friday evening gatherings. The participation of women in Christian gatherings (chap. 7) even as leaders represented a radical departure from the Jewish heritage. But for this to be abused with out of control women would have shifted the image of Christianity from being liberating of women to that of uncontrolled women as typically found in the pagan temples of Corinth. Early Christianity was having to thread its way through a very delicate balance between the two religious extremes that dominated the first century world.

14.36 ἢ
 630 ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν,
 ἢ
 εἰς ὑμᾶς
 μόνους
 631 κατήντησεν;
 14.37 Εἰ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός,
 632 ἐπιγινωσκέτω
 ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν
 ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή·
 14.38 δέ
 εἰ τις ἀγνοεῖ,
 633 ἀγνοεῖται.
 14.39 Ὡστε,
 ἀδελφοί [μου],
 634 ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεύειν
 καὶ
 635 τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις·
 14.40 δὲ
 εὐσχημόνως
 καὶ
 κατὰ τάξιν
 636 πάντα... γινέσθω.

37 Εἰ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή· 38 εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ, ἀγνοεῖται. 39 Ὡστε, ἀδελφοί [μου], ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεύειν καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις· 40 πάντα δὲ εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω. 37 *Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.* 38 *Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized.* 39 *So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; 40 but all things should be done decently and in order.*

The organizational structure of this unit is very clear. Paul begins with a likely scenario in the Corinthian church (# 632) in the first class conditional structure. He then moves to a second likely scenario at Corinth (#633) with a first class conditional structure. He then draws three consequences in #s 634, 635, and 636, as admonitions. In all of the main clauses, the apodosis, of these five declaration the imperative form of the verb is used, with the one possible exception of # 633. And considerable uncertainty over the spelling of the verb ἀγνοεῖω exists in the manuscript copies.¹³⁷ Probably the

¹³⁷Some 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 P⁴⁶, B, D^{b,c} [A²], most later MSS).⁴¹⁸ Many modern VSS and some textual specialists are divided. Thus Metzger, NIV, and

indicative passive voice spelling ἀγνοεῖται is original, and the issue becomes exegetical: Who is not recognizing him? The church or God? Probably the latter is the intended meaning.

The two protasis clauses set up opposite scenarios in the Corinthian church that Paul assumes will actually happen upon the reading of this letter, as noted in the charting out:

Εἰ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός,
 Since someone assumes himself to be a preacher

or led by the Spirit,

εἰ δέ τις ἀγνοεῖ,

And since some will not acknowledge (this),
 That the Corinthian Christian community already had numerous individuals claiming one or the other, or both abilities, the first scenario is a given. The second trait πνευματικός does not inherently allude to γλώσσαις, although it does exclude it either. What Paul always means by πνευματικός is a person under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The English translation 'spiritual' is very misleading since it loads up the English word with centuries is 'baggage' not found inside the NT.

The second protasis, v. 38, assumes that not all the Corinthians will acknowledge Paul as the apostolic teaching giving them the message of Christ. The apostle functioned out of realism and not idealism. He well understood that the entrenched position of the Corinthian elitists would not melt away just with the words of this letter. The church at Corinth would have to take action itself in order to clean up these dirty messes that were plaguing them. As the [intensive interaction](#) between himself and the church through visits, letters, and contacts from associates illustrates, an all out effort was launched to help the church recover.

It is interesting how he frames this scenario. He does not use more common Greek verbs for acknowledging the correctness of something. Instead, through

NJB favor the passive indicative, Zuntz, NRSV (but not RSV), REB, ASV, and KJV/AV favor the imperative.⁴¹⁹ 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 P⁴⁶ 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.*" [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1162–1163.]

the use of ἀγνοέω, the idea is literally ‘to remain ignorant of the correctness of this.’ Sometimes ἀγνοέω references an unintentional ignorance of something, e.g., Rom. 2:4. But here it is a very intentional ignorance that is chosen by some in the Corinthian church, as is asserted of pagans in Rom. 10:3. They will not accept Paul as the source of divine revelation from Christ since their own sense of having a superior wisdom would be demolished.

The two apodosis define Paul’s expectation and hopes for the right outcome of each scenario.

ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή
let him fully understand that what I write to you
is divine commandment from the Lord.

ἀγνοεῖται.

he is not acknowledged (by God).

The first apodosis in v. 37 expects everyone with spiritual insights to fully grasp (ἐπιγινωσκέτω) the divine origin of this letter from Paul. Paul’s teachings, especially in chapters twelve through fourteen, did not originate just in Paul’s mind. Rather, what is being given to them has the full backing of the Lord. Here Paul’s role as an apostle comes to the forefront. He is the vehicle of divine revelation, not the originator of it. Contained in this very clearly is the accusation of the Corinthian elitists considering themselves as originators of divine truth. This has already been put on the table in places like 2:6-16; 3:18-23; 4:14-21 et als. Now Paul pressures them to accept his teachings as being from God, which implies the chunking of their thinking that comes out of pagan ways of thinking.

If these elitists reject Paul’s teaching, then the second apodosis asserts primarily that such rejection reveals that they do not know God and have never come to saving knowledge of Him. The divine passive voice indicative mood ἀγνοεῖται carries a similar tone to what Paul will later on write while at Corinth to the Romans that God has ‘given up’ on the pagans who persist in rejecting Him, cf. Rom. 1:18-32. The play on ἀγνοέω in both the protasis and apodosis here follows the pattern in 8:1-3 with γινώσκω about knowing God.¹³⁸ It is

¹³⁸“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.⁴²⁵ 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).⁴²⁶” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International

not unreasonable also to see in ἀγνοεῖται the additional sense of “*he is not to be acknowledged (by the church).*” This would be the natural secondary implication of the divine passive voice understanding. But what is very unlikely is the alternative reading ἀγνοεῖτω with the sense of “*Let him stay ignorant.*” The Pauline intention here is that such shock treatment might wake these elitists up to their very dangerous spiritual condition of falsely assuming relationship with God.

What does all this imply? The result conjunction Ὅστε introduces three statements that come out of the above two scenarios. The pastoral touch, ἀδελφοί [μου], *my brothers*, enhances the appeal of the apostle to his Corinthian readers.¹³⁹ Paul uses ἀδελφοί some 37 times in First Corinthians in reaching out to the Corinthians in a pastoral manner, and often with the pronoun μου, *my*, attached.

The three declarations in the form of admonitions gather up the discussion in chapter 14 into basic axioms. They also function as an ending inclusio to the introductory axioms in vv. 1-5.

First, ζηλοῦτε τὸ προφητεῦν, be seeking to preach.

The present imperative ζηλοῦτε stresses a continuous pursuit of the speaking of helpful insights to the community.¹⁴⁰ In Paul’s unique expression τὸ προφητεῦν,

Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1164.]

¹³⁹“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**.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1166.]

¹⁴⁰“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.⁴³⁸ (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 προφητεῦν 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.” [Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1166–1167.]

the emphasis falls upon the individual speaking something helpful to the community as detailed in v. 26. No emphasis at all is given to being in the role of a prophet. Clearly this is the heart of the activities to legitimately take place in the house church meetings.

Second, καὶ τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις, and the speaking in tongues do not prevent.

Once again the unusual grammar expression τὸ λαλεῖν μὴ κωλύετε γλώσσαις enables Paul to de-emphasize the role of γλώσσαις. As clearly lined out in vv. 2, 4-5, 18-19 etc. ecstatic speech is not an activity for group gatherings. Rather, it has possible legitimacy in private devotions, but again only when expressed as Paul defines in Rom. 8:26-27 as στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις unintelligible sighs during our prayers to God. This sets Christian ecstatic speech distinctly apart from the pagan practices in the Corinthian temples which the elitists in the church were importing into the Christian assemblies. In rare instances, genuine ecstatic speech may occur in the assembly but ONLY when the one speaking then turns to the group with a clear, intelligible explanation of what was just mumbled to God. But consistently (added to vv. 2, 4-5, 18-19 are vv. 13-17, 20-23) Paul down plays such action in the assembled group knowing that the pagan practice will capture the group actions and bring down the wrath of God.

Third, πάντα δὲ εὐσχημόνως καὶ κατὰ τάξιν γινέσθω. But let all things be done decently and in order.

He concludes with an emphasis similar to οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλ' εἰρήνης, for God does not promote anarchy but peace (v. 33) as the basis for the 'spirit of the prophets' always being under the control of the prophets: καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται (v. 32).

The Christian gathering must reflect first εὐσχημόνως.¹⁴¹ The core sense of the adverb comes

¹⁴¹“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.⁴⁴¹ *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 εὐσχήμων means **what is fitting** in 1 Cor 7:25, and **what is publicly presentable** in 1 Cor 12:24.⁴⁴² In other contemporary writers the term also means *reputable*.⁴⁴³ 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.⁴⁴⁴ 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

from the noun built off the same stem: εὐσχήμων meaning ‘elegant,’ ‘decent,’ and ‘noble.’¹⁴² Its opposite ἀσχημοσύνη denotes that which is shameful, indecent, and utterly improper especially in public display.¹⁴³ In the contextual background stands the worship patterns of the pagan temples with their frenzied patterns of ecstatic speech etc. Christian gatherings in no way should resemble this pagan meetings. Everyone must ‘behave themselves’ in worship with proper decorum and dignity. Here Paul especially targets the Corinthian 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 ...).’⁴⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁴⁶ 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).⁴⁴⁷ Clement's next chapter considers diversity, but again, each in his or her own ‘order’ (ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι).⁴⁴⁸ **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).”

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1167–1169.]

¹⁴²**2360 εὐσχημονέω** (euschēmoneō): vb.—behave with decorum or dignity (1Co 13:5 v.r.); not in LN

2361 εὐσχημόνως (euschēmōnōs): adv.; ≡ Str 2156—1. LN 88.50 with propriety, fittingly, decently, becoming in manner (Ro 13:13; 1Th 4:12+); 2. LN 66.4 properly, with an implication of pleasing (1Co 14:40+)

2362 εὐσχημοσύνη (euschēmosynē), ης (ēs), ἡ (hē): n.fem.; ≡ Str 2157—LN 79.13 attractiveness, presentability (NJB), modesty (NIV, NKJV), seemliness (NASB), comeliness (KJV, ASV), respect (NRSV, REB), propriety (NAB), honour (NEB), (1Co 12:23+)

2363 εὐσχήμων (euschēmōn), ον (on): adj.; ≡ Str 2158; TDNT 2.770—1. LN 79.15 attractive, presentable, proper, a good ordered way (1Co 7:35; 12:24+); 2. LN 87.33 honored, prominent, of high standing (Mk 15:43; Ac 13:50; 17:12+; Ac 17:34 v.r. NA26)

[James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).]

¹⁴³“ἀσχημοσύνη G859 (*aschēmosynē*), ungracefulness, indecency, shameful act; ἀσχημονέω G858 (*aschēmoneō*), to behave disgracefully; ἀσχήμων G860 (*aschēmōn*), shameful, subst. pl. the unpresentable parts, genitalia; εὐσχημοσύνη G2362 (*euschēmosynē*), gracefulness, decorum, respectability; εὐσχήμων G2363 (*euschēmōn*), elegant, decent, noble; εὐσχημόνως G2361 (*euschēmōnōs*), decently, properly” [Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 1:434.]

elitists who through their pagan thinking were bringing pagan ways into the Christian gatherings. Such HAD TO STOP in the church! But it also includes lifestyle and not just worship as illustrated in Paul's use of εὐσχημόνως in Rom. 13:13-14.¹⁴⁴ Christians must be different both in how they worship God and in how they live!

Their meetings must also be conducted κατὰ τάξιν, *in order*. The rich military background of this Greek idiom of an army marching in strict formation provides a dramatic picture for Paul's readers. But what does such a picture mean in church practice? The prepositional phrase used here κατὰ τάξιν connotes the idea of everything being conducted in an orderly manner. This especially alludes to the expressions κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς καὶ ἀνὰ μέρος, *only two or at most three, and by turns* (v. 27) and δύο ἢ τρεῖς, *only two or three* (v. 29). Additionally anyone using ecstatic speech must immediately provide an interpretation (εἶς διερμηνεύτω, v. 27) and those preaching must not 'hog the platform' but give way to the next one desiring to speak (ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῇ καθημένω, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω, v. 30). Plus after each shares something with the group, there must be critical evaluation of it by the group, before the next person shares (καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν, v. 29). When Paul states that everything must be done κατὰ τάξιν, he unquestionably includes these guidelines for church meetings. But the scope of κατὰ τάξιν includes πάντα and thus goes well beyond just these guidelines. These principle simply illustrate what is to be universal in the meetings. Christianity had the burden of demonstrating to the world around it in Corinth that they were not a bunch of maniacs as asserted in v. 23, οὐκ ἐροῦσιν ὅτι μαίνεσθε; When the ἰδιῶται ἢ ἄπιστοι (v. 23) visited the meetings they should see decorum and orderliness in the meetings. This would hopefully lead to the declaration "Ὅντως ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν, *Indeed God is in your midst!*" (v. 25c).

One should also note along with Thiselton, "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."¹⁴⁵

NOTE ON APPLICATION TO MODERN WORLD

¹⁴⁴Rom. 13:13-14. 13 ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν, μὴ κόμοις καὶ μέθαις, μὴ κοίταις καὶ ἀσελγείαις, μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ, 14 ἀλλ' ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιήσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν.

13 let us **live honorably** as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

¹⁴⁵Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1168.

How then does Paul's description in chapters twelve through fourteen relate to a modern church setting? No simple answers can be adequate here! Let me summarize the essence of what Paul said so that it will be clear on how to move from the 'then' to the 'now' meaning of this very important text.

1) What Paul describes as taking place at Corinth inside the Christian community is unique to Corinth even in the first century. No other Christian community alluded to in any of Paul's other letters, the other general epistles, or Acts comes close to the situation being dealt with at Corinth. Thus extreme caution must be exercised in making generalized statements of principle from these chapters. Only where Paul gives signals of basic religious principles can the modern interpreter draw certain conclusions of contemporary application.

The uniqueness of the Corinthian situation applies both to the dynamics inside the various house church groups in the city and also many of the social dynamics that would not have been found outside Corinth usually either at all, or else to the extent that they were present in Corinth. Having these distinctions clearly in view is absolutely essential to proper interpretation of these three chapters. Failure to achieve this stands behind much of the obvious failures to understand what Paul is saying that one finds in so many of the commentaries.

What are some of those distinctives? Although stated in generalized ways as Ἕλληνες σοφίαν ζητοῦσιν, the Greeks *seek wisdom* (1:22), what happened at Corinth among the elitists in the church was a wholesale adoption of it that combined with the traditional Greek feeling of being superior to all others. The irony here is that at the middle of the first century AD, Roman influence over the city was greater than the Greek. Greek cultural domination of the city pre-dated the Roman sacking of it in 44 BCE and did not return until well into the second century AD. This may well suggest something about the background of the elitists inside the church at this time.

The result was the importation of Greek thinking into the life of the church that unleashed a Pandora's Box of evils. Virtually every mess that Paul treats throughout the entire letter body can be traced back to some aspect of Greek philosophy and cultural practice. Among the ancient cities of the Roman empire, and especially of the two Greek culturally oriented provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, Corinth was legendary for its corruption and perversion.¹⁴⁶ It represented the abso-

¹⁴⁶Corinth's control of the harbors of Lechaenum and Cenchreae, and of the road across the 6 km-wide isthmus, enabled it to levy taxes on both north-south and east-west trade (Strabo, Geogr. 8.6.20). Thus from the time of Homer (Il. 2.570) the adjective inevitably applied to Corinth was 'wealthy' (Dio Chrysostom, Or. 37.36). A vast plain, proverbial for its agricultural richness,

lute worst side of Greek culture and thinking run amuck in the first century world. After the Roman sacking of the city around 44 BCE, it was repopulated by the Romans mainly with *aporoι*, freed slaves from other parts of the empire.¹⁴⁷ Thus the background of most of the residents in Paul's time clearly did not come from the upper realms of either Roman or Greek societies. Paul alludes to this in 1:26.

It should not be surprising to see such problems surface in a Christian community sitting in the middle of the worst forms of it. The religious life of the city reflected this as well.¹⁴⁸ The corrupting influences of both the traditional deities as well as the influence of the newer mystery cults into the city was substantial. One can gain some sense of the atmosphere from Apuleius' rather sordid tale of a woman copulating with a donkey

stretched out to the west. As host to the biennial Isthmian Games, the economy of Corinth benefited from the great influx of spectators." [Jerome Murphy-o'Connor, "Corinth," ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 1:733.]

¹⁴⁷"Strabo's assertion that the new settlers were for the most part freed slaves (8.136) harmonizes with Appian's view that they were *aporoι* (Hist. 8.136), provided that this adjective is understood to apply to those who felt themselves locked into a certain socioeconomic level through lack of opportunity. Thus they were not Romans but had been brought originally from Greece, Syria, Judea, and Egypt (Gordon 1924: 94–95). In a new colony they had everything to gain. Distance would have made their ties to former masters meaningless, and their children would be free. As a group they had the technical, financial, and administrative skills to make the project work. Their enterprise and industry are attested by the fact that, though they had to begin by robbing graves, they quickly found a lucrative market in Rome for the bronze vessels and terra-cotta reliefs that they discovered (Strabo 8.6.23). The great demand for the former prompted some of the wilier colonists to recommence the production of bronze (Stillwell, Scranton, and Freeman 1941: 273), and other traditional industries were soon re-established." [J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinth (Place)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1136.]

¹⁴⁸"The religious and ethnic diversity of the population of Corinth is graphically attested by excavated remains. The imperial cult is attested by a temple just off the forum (Stillwell, Scranton, and Freeman 1941: 168–79), but also by additions to the Isthmian Games. A series of competitions known as the Caesarea and run on a quadrennial basis was added under Augustus, and the imperial contests appear under Tiberius (Kent 1966: 28). Numerous shrines dedicated to Apollo, Athena, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Demeter and Kore, Palaimon, and Sisypus witness to the continuity of Greek cults (detailed references in 2 Corinthians 32A, 15–18). Egyptian influence is documented by the worship of Isis and Sarapis (Smith 1977). The physical evidence for a Jewish community is late (possibly 4th–5th century A.D.) and meager, only a marble impost inscribed with three menorahs separated by lulab and etrog (Scranton 1957: 26, 116) and a cornice stone reused as a lintel and bearing the lettering [syna]gōgē hebr[aiōn] (West 1931: 78–79)." [J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinth (Place)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1138.]

(*Metamorphoses* 10:19–23, also known as [The Golden Ass](#)).¹⁴⁹

The composition of the population, the recent history of the city dating back to the re-colonization in 44 BCE, the strategic commercial location of the city etc. all came together to give Corinth a distinct image in the Roman empire. Planting a Christian community there offered strategic opportunity for spreading the Gospel elsewhere in the region. But it also ran the huge risk of the powerfully corrupting influence of the local culture there to overwhelm the Christian community. First Corinthians stands as a major effort by Paul to prevent this from happening. How successful Paul was is not clear, since Clement of Rome wrote a long letter, [First Clement](#), to this same Christian community about half a century later around 96 AD and touches on a whole host of problems still plaguing the church.

2) *The occasional nature of Paul's letters means that these chapters primarily are addressing a local issue at Corinth and not fundamentally attempting to lay down universal principles.* This urges great caution in making applications from the Corinthian problems with τῶν πνευματικῶν, the general topic of chapters 12–14.

Thus the mentioning of a variety of 'grace gifts' in chapter twelve should never be taken as normative or inclusive for all churches. The wide variety of different items in different lists elsewhere in Roman, Ephesians, Colossians et als makes this abundantly clear.

Thus making accurate comparisons of the 'tongues' issue at Corinth to the modern charismatic movement is very difficult. In chapter fourteen Paul does lay down basic guidelines that have a universal thrust.

i) Ecstatic speech is for personal private devotion rather than for public assembly of the Christian community.

ii) The principle of edifying love over rides all other concerns. Everything said or done in meeting must benefit the entire group, or else it must not be allowed.

iii) The automatically gives priority to προφητεία over γλῶσσα. Paul defines προφητεία in 14:26 as meaning edifying sharing of spiritual insight with the entire group in understandable human based language.

iv) Thus if ecstatic speech surfaces in the gathered assembly, the speaker must immediately provide an intelligible explanation to the group of what was just spoken to God.

v) Every idea shared with the group must be critically evaluated by the group to determine whether it comes from

¹⁴⁹"The mildly erotic tale of a young man in the toils of a vampire (Philostratus, V.A. 4.25), all that remains is Apuleius' salacious tale of a woman copulating with a donkey (Met. 10.19–23), an act that others considered suitable for the theater (10.34–35)." [J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinth (Place)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1138.]

God or not.

vi) In these guidelines Paul clearly distinguishes what the Corinthian elitists were doing with γλώσσαίς from authentic ecstatic speech as defined in Rom. 8:26-27 as στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις prompted by the Holy Spirit in individual, private prayer to God. What the Corinthians were doing was merely importing the pagan γλώσσαίς practices of the local temples into Christian meetings in order to dazzle the rest with their religious superiority. Paul makes it clear that if they refuse to accept his teaching on this, they stand rejected by God: εἰ δέ τις ἄγνοεῖ, ἄγνοεῖται, v. 38.

What most commentators fail to do in treating this passage is to recognize the legitimate and illegitimate practice of γλώσσαίς in Paul's discussion. Instead, the dominant tendency of modern commentators is to assume a modern charismatic scenario taking place at Corinth and then proceed either to condemn or justify the modern practice from chapter fourteen. A key in this failure is ignorance of the social dynamics both culturally and religiously in mid first century Corinth. Increasingly the more technical scholars, especially on the European side, are very sensitive to this essential factor in interpreting especially chapter fourteen.

How can one properly compare the situation at Corinth to the modern charismatic movement? In my judgment, the only legitimate way is to take the guidelines laid down by Paul for how the Corinthians were to function and see whether the modern practice compares. If it measures up to Paul's guidelines, it has legitimacy. But if not, then it should be considered as pagan intrusion into Christianity as Paul considered most of what was happening at Corinth to be. If there is stubborn refusal to acknowledge Paul's teachings as coming from the Lord, then the legitimacy of the individual's claim to being Christian is seriously in doubt.

Chapters 12-14 stand as a major section of First Corinthians. But the background social / religious dynamics in the mid first century city of Corinth become even more crucial to correct understanding of Paul's words. Chapter 13 stands as the stack pole around which chapters 12 and 14 revolve. And chapter 13 is but an elaboration of Paul's earlier axiom in 8:1, ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῦ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, [knowledge puff up but love builds up](#). This sums up these three chapters as well as any other statement. The principle of edifying love takes priority over everything else. For Christianity to be genuine it MUST ALWAYS look beyond the tip of its nose.